

Orange County Sheriff's Department & FBI Leverage Othram's Forensic Sequencing Platform to Identify a 1983 Homicide Victim

After 41 years, a woman whose remains were discovered by children in a culvert in present-day Lake Forest, California, has been identified as **Maritza Glean Grimmett**, who was 20 years old when she went missing in 1979.

Solved



Summary

In April 1983, the skeletal remains of an unidentified individual were discovered by children in a culvert in present-day Lake Forest, California. Lake Forest is located just southeast of Santa Ana. Upon responding to the scene in the area of Old Trabuco and Canada Roads, an excavation was performed to recover additional remains belonging to the individual. Upon examination, it was determined that the remains were that of a female who was likely black or mixed race. The woman was estimated to be between 5'3" and 5'6" tall and between the ages of 18 and 24 years. It was determined that the woman was a victim of homicide.

In August 2010, details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP7655. Multiple forensic renderings of the woman were released over the years. Despite extensive efforts by law enforcement

investigators to identify the woman, no matches were found, and the case went cold due to a lack of viable leads.

2019 Rendering



In 2022, the Orange County Sheriff's Department submitted forensic evidence to Othram in The Woodlands, Texas in hopes that advanced DNA testing could help to finally identify the woman. Othram scientists successfully developed a DNA extract from the forensic evidence and used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile for the unknown woman. After successfully completing the process, the DNA profile was delivered to the FBI's forensic genetic genealogy team and the FBI team performed the necessary work to generate new investigative leads in the case.

2022 Rendering



Using these new leads, investigators contacted a distant genetic relative of the victim, who suggested Jane Doe's forensic renderings be posted to a Facebook group for Jane Does and missing women from the 1970s and 1980s. Approximately one month after the posting, a woman contacted investigators and said she believed the Lake Forest Jane Doe could be her missing mother. Lake Forest Jane Doe is now known to be Maritza Glean Grimmett, a Panamanian native, married a US Marine in the summer of 1978 and gave birth to a daughter. In late 1978, the family moved to the US. The family resided in Columbus, Ohio and Millington, Tennessee in late 1978 through mid-1979. In July 1979, the couple began divorce proceedings. Maritza told her sister she was going to California. Her family never heard from her again. She was 20 years old at the time of her disappearance.

Investigators are actively investigating Maritza's homicide. Anyone with information on this case is asked to contact Investigator Bob Taft at [714-647-7045](tel:7146477045) or coldcase@ocsheriff.gov. Anonymous tips may be submitted to OC Crime Stoppers at 855-TIP-OCCS ([855-847-6227](tel:8558476227)) or at occrimestoppers.org.

The identification of Maritza Glean Grimmett represents the 39th case in the State of California where officials have publicly identified an individual using technology developed by Othram. Most recently in Oxnard, California, [Gertrude Elliott-Littlehale](#), who was born in 1864 and died in 1915.

Funding for the advanced DNA testing and forensic genetic genealogy used in this case was provided by NamUs, a national clearinghouse that assists the criminal justice community with the investigation and resolution of missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons cases across the United States and its territories. NamUs is funded and administered by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and is managed through a contract with Research Triangle Institute International. We are grateful for the support of RTI, NamUs, and the NIJ.