

NYC woman murdered 33 years ago finally ID'd as missing mom with advanced DNA testing: DA

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A woman who was murdered by a group of men in Queens more than three decades ago has finally been identified – through advanced DNA testing – as a mom who went missing soon after celebrating her daughter's first birthday, prosecutors said.

Judy Rodriguez was 30 when her family reported her missing on January 23, 1991, a short time after her daughter Stephanie's first birthday party.

Several months later, on Aug. 25, 1991, an unidentified woman's body was found hidden under a large wooden board – with a cord binding her ankles – in a grassy area where the Cross Island and Southern State parkways meet, according to the Queens District Attorney's Office.

An in-depth DNA analysis revealed — 33 years later — that Rodriguez was in fact the victim of the gruesome slaying.



Judy Rodriguez's family reported her missing in 1991, a short time after her daughter's first birthday.

“It really is heartwarming to have answers,” Anna Salvadore, Rodriguez’s sister, [told NBC 4 New York](#).

The investigation revealed that four men approached Rodriguez sometime between July 15 and Aug. 15, and took her on a nightmarish drive where two of them tied her up, according to the DA’s office.

They drove her to the drop-off spot – pushing her out of the car, where one of the brutes struck her on the head with a large metal flashlight, prosecutors said.

The blow caused her death, according to prosecutors, who said that the violent foursome then drove away.

The crew returned to the scene about two weeks later, and attempted to conceal the body by covering their victim with a large wooden board, the DA’s office charged.

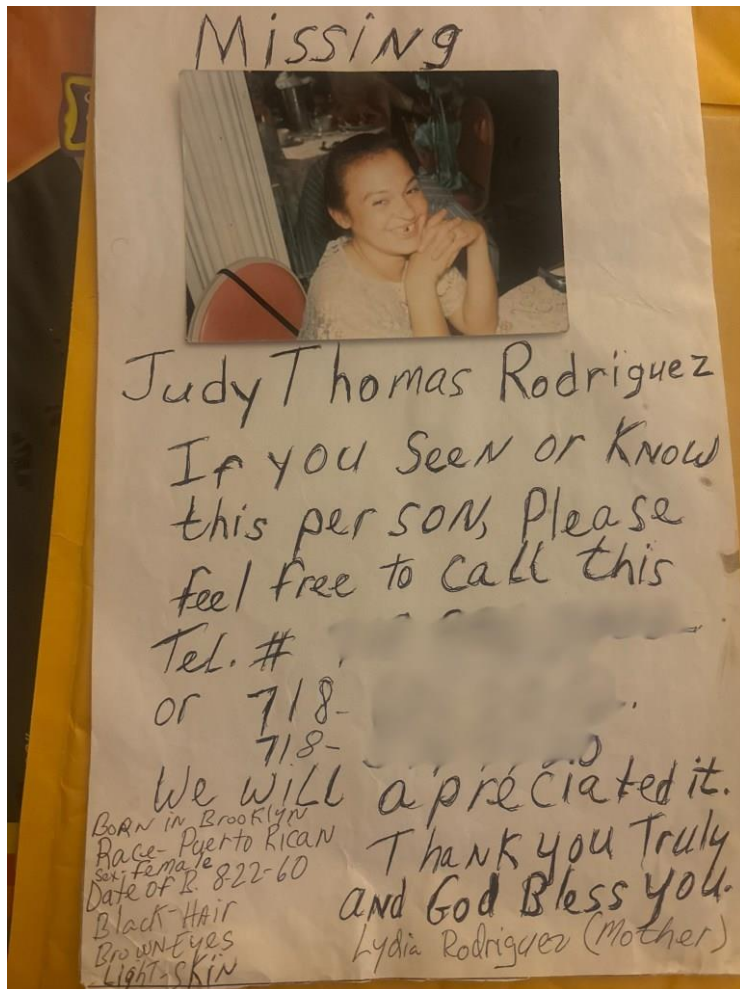
Four men – two 20-year-olds and the others ages 18 and 19 at the time of the killing – were arrested and charged in August and September of that same year, prosecutors said.

One of them pleaded guilty in September of 1992 to first-degree manslaughter and was sentenced to 8 1/3 to 25 years in jail.

He was cut loose in 2009 on parole, which discharged him in August of 2016.

Two others pleaded guilty in October 1992 to first-degree reckless endangerment and were sentenced to 2 1/3 to seven years in prison, the DA’s office said.

Both were released in 1996 and discharged from parole in April of 1998.



Investigators used DNA gathered from Rodriguez's skeletal remains to build a genealogical profile.

The final suspect pleaded guilty in February of 1993 to hindering prosecution and received a sentence of 1 ½ to 4 ½ years in prison.

He was also released to parole in 1996 and ultimately discharged in July of the following year.

The investigation was revived in November of 2023, when the Queens DA's Cold Case Unit and the NYPD called in a private lab to help them with clues on the victim's identity.

Then in April of 2024, DNA Labs International used advanced DNA testing of the victim's skeletal remains to produce a comprehensive genealogical profile, which was uploaded to public databases, the DA's office said.

Detective Joseph Rodriguez of the NYPD's Investigative Genealogy Squad then used the results to build a family tree.

Salvadore told NBC her own daughter had submitted a DNA sample to a database and allowed law enforcement to review it – which ultimately opened the door to answers.

An NYPD genealogist called Salvatore, confirming “a possible DNA match to a missing person,” she told the network.

“I immediately got chills when I heard the message,” she said.

A detective then asked Judy Rodriguez’s daughter Stephanie to submit samples for testing as well, the outlet reported.

“It came back a 100% match on the anniversary of my mom’s passing,” she told NBC. “I felt like it was my mom giving us answers. It was incredible.”

The family is now planning to bury Judy near her near her parents and hold a proper memorial service.

“Honestly happy that we are able to put her to rest. And that we were able to find her,” Stephanie Rodriguez told the network. “It’s bittersweet but I’m so grateful we have answers. So grateful, beyond blessed.”

Queens District Attorney Melinda Katz commended all of the agencies involved for finally bringing closure to the grieving family.

“Three decades ago, four men were convicted for a gruesome killing of an unidentified woman,” Katz said in a statement. “Though justice was served, the family went 33 long years without any answers about their loved one.”

“Thanks to our partners at the NYPD and the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, we have now provided those crucial details, which I hope brings a measure of solace,” she added. “This case is a prime example of the determination of my Cold Case Unit in identifying victims and solving the borough’s oldest, most challenging homicides.”

Rep. Grace Meng, who secured a \$500,000 grant for the DA’s office to investigate cold cases, also applauded the long-awaited break in the investigation.

“This latest case from 1991 underscores why this money is so important, and it’s an example of the types of cases it will be used to solve,” Meng said. “I’m proud to work with District Attorney Katz in pursuing justice for the victims of cold cases in Queens, and I continue to stand with her in never forgetting about them and their loved ones.”