

# Monique Phoenix Jane Doe 1997



Success Stories

## **DNA Doe Project identifies Jane Doe found in Arizona in 1997 Woman found dead in burning car identified as **Monique Boggs****

Phoenix, AZ – Nearly 30 years after the charred body of a woman was found in an abandoned vehicle in Phoenix, the DNA Doe Project has identified her as Monique S. Boggs. Boggs was born in 1948 and was 48 years old at the time of her death. She was raised in the Detroit area, and her family, who knew her as Shirley Jefferson, was not aware that she had ended up in Arizona.



Monique Boggs

On February 4, 1997 the partially burned body of a woman was found in an abandoned car that was engulfed in flames in Phoenix, Arizona. An empty purse with writing on the outside that included the name "Monique" was found near the body. Forensic scientists determined that the unidentified

woman was African American and between 20 and 50 years old. Witnesses said that she was possibly an unhoused woman who had been seen in the local area before.

Decades later, the Phoenix Police Department brought this case to the DNA Doe Project, whose expert volunteer investigative genetic genealogists work pro bono to identify John and Jane Does. A team of volunteers began working on this case in June 2020, but they soon ran into multiple roadblocks.

“This case faced certain challenges that we often encounter in African American research,” said Harmony Vollmer, team leader. “African Americans are underrepresented in the DNA databases we have access to, while part of the devastating impact of slavery was to rip families apart and leave few traceable connections between their descendants.

Nevertheless, the team assigned to this case persevered and, in January 2025, this hard work paid off. The team came across a woman who was born in Mississippi but who'd moved to Michigan as a young child. Her name was Monique Boggs, and further DNA analysis soon confirmed that she was the woman formerly known only as Monique Phoenix Jane Doe. “She was a distant cousin of multiple DNA matches to the Jane Doe, and she appeared to have fallen off the radar in the 1990s,” said case manager, Eric Hendershott. “But the most striking detail was that she had changed her name in the 1980s to Monique – the same name written on the purse found with our Jane Doe.”

The DNA Doe Project is grateful to the groups and individuals who helped solve this case: the Phoenix Police Department, who entrusted the case to the DNA Doe Project; HudsonAlpha Discovery for extraction and sequencing; Kevin Lord for bioinformatics; GEDmatch Pro and FamilyTreeDNA for providing their databases; our generous donors who joined our mission and contributed to this case; and our dedicated teams of volunteer investigative genetic genealogists who work tirelessly to bring all our Jane and John Does home.

## **Description**

On February 4, 1997 a partially burned body was found in an abandoned blue Honda Accord in the area of North 24th and East Monroe Streets in

Phoenix, Arizona. An empty brown vinyl purse with writing on the outside containing the name "Monique" was found near the body; on the body were found a watch and two yellow metal necklaces. Forensic scientists determined the deceased was a 20 to 50-year-old Black/African American who stood approximately 5'3" tall and weighed about 100 pounds; she had black hair. Witnesses said the deceased was possibly a transient who had been seen in the local area before.

**NamUs ID:** UP1944

**Date Body Found:** February 4, 1997

**Race:** Black/African American

**Gender:** Female

**Estimated Age:** 20-50

**Estimated PMI:** Unknown

**Location:** Phoenix, AZ

**Agency of Jurisdiction**

Phoenix Police Department

Tobi Myers and Christen Eggers

602-506-2083

[tobi.myers@phoenix.gov](mailto:tobi.myers@phoenix.gov)

**Link to More Information**

<https://www.namus.gov/UnidentifiedPersons/Case#/1944>

<https://unidentified.maricopa.gov/Home/Case?CaseNumber=97-0372>

<https://www.phoenix.gov/policesite/Documents/090553.pdf>

<https://www.doenetwork.org/cases/software/main.html?id=794UFAZ>

**Status:** Research in progress

**Image Credit:** Stephen Missal

**Last Updated:** March 3, 2025