

# Mississippi Office of the State Medical Examiner & Bureau of Investigation Partner with Othram to Identify a 2005 Jane Doe

After nearly two decades, a Mississippi woman who died during major flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina, has been identified as **Tonette Waltman Jackson**, born February 8th, 1959.

Solved

## Summary



In September 2005, about a week after the devastating hurricane Katrina made landfall, a search and rescue team in St. Martin, Mississippi discovered the remains of an unidentified individual between the slabs where two houses once stood. St. Martin is located in Jackson County, just east of Gulfport. Investigators were able to determine that the remains were that of a black female, estimated to be between 50 and 59 years old, and who stood between 5' 1" and 5' 5".

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. Soon after the woman's body was discovered, she was buried at Machpelah Cemetery in Pascagoula, Mississippi where the headstone read "Jane Love". Details of the case were entered into the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) as UP101305. For nearly two decades, the woman's identity remained a mystery.



In 2023, the Mississippi Bureau of Investigations and the Mississippi State Medical Examiner's Office, driven by a commitment to solve the case, exhumed the woman's remains and submitted forensic evidence to Othram in the Woodlands, Texas to determine if advanced DNA testing could help identify her. Funding for this effort was provided by Mississippi native and philanthropist Carla Davis, who is committed to resolving the backlog of cold cases in Mississippi. Othram scientists successfully developed a suitable DNA extract from the skeletal remains and then used Forensic-Grade Genome Sequencing® to build a comprehensive DNA profile for the unidentified woman. After successfully completing the process, Othram's in-house forensic genetic genealogy team then leveraged this profile to conduct genetic genealogy research, ultimately providing critical leads to the Mississippi Bureau of Investigations.

Using these new leads, a follow-up investigation was conducted, leading to genetic relatives of the woman. In May 2024, through additional DNA testing of a close family member, the unidentified woman was positively identified as Tonette Jackson. According to family, Tonette and her husband, Hardy, were forced into their attic when flood waters began to rise in Biloxi, Mississippi during Hurricane Katrina. Their home was split in half, and both Tonette and Hardy were swept away by the flood. Hardy managed to grab onto a tree and saw his wife in the water. Though he tried to hold onto her, Tonette urged him to let go and take care of their children and grandchildren. Tonette was swept away, and her body was never found. Hardy honored the promise he made to Tonette until his death in 2013. This comparison confirmed the identity of Jackson County Jane Doe as Tonette Waltman Jackson.

The identification of Tonette Waltman Jackson represents the 27th case in the State of Mississippi where officials have publicly identified an individual using technology developed by Othram. Most recently in Prentiss, [Derrick Washington](#) was identified as the suspect in a 2020 sexual assault.