

Cold case update: Investigators identify woman found killed on Maryland farm in 1998

LaQuanda Williams was the woman found dead on an abandoned farm in Bel Alton, Maryland, in June 1998. Investigators are now trying to find people who knew her in their attempt to find her killer

By [Megan McGrath, News4 Reporter](#) • Published March 22, 2024 • Updated on March 22, 2024 at 7:32 pm

Twenty-five years ago, a woman was found dead on an abandoned farm in Charles County, Maryland. She had been murdered. Investigators had no idea who she was, and she remained a Jane Doe for more than two decades.

Finally, we know her name: **LaQuanda Denise Williams.**

That mystery finally began to untangle last year, after one of her relatives saw a story on News4 about the cold case. They contacted investigators.

Now Williams' family and the Charles County Sheriff's Office know she was the victim. After decades of wondering, her family may finally have some closure.

She was 31 when she died and had grown up in the Anacostia neighborhood of Southeast D.C.

Williams, who most people called Niecey, was "a compassionate giver who always served others with a smile. Though cut short, her life was a testament of grace and perseverance," her family said in a statement.

25 years of questions

Williams' nude body was found hidden in some brush on an old farm in Bel Alton, off Crane Highway, on June 18, 1998. The location is south of LaPlata, off Route 301. There was an abandoned house and three motels nearby. Investigators don't know if she was killed there or somewhere else.

They didn't have much to go on. All of the evidence in Williams' case fit in a single box. They came up with a composite sketch of the victim, but she remained a Jane Doe.

After a relative of Williams saw a story about the cold case on News4, they called a former coworker, who now happens to be on the forensic team working the case.

"It was a shock. It was somebody that I hadn't talked to in 10 years," said Noelle Gehrman, deputy director of forensic science for the Charles County Sheriff's Office.

"I ended up asking her to send a photo, and when I saw the photo, I immediately was taken back by the striking similarities between the sketch and LaQuanda," she said.



Williams' killer is still out there. But learning her name is a big break.

"The name is huge. We have a starting point now," said Shreya Kamath, who's on the forensic team.

"It's powerful," said Detective Chris Shankster. "For 25 years, we've had no answers to who this lady was sitting in our field."

'Did you know Niecey?'

Investigators are planning reach out to D.C. residents for help and ask, "Hey, did you know Niecey?" Shankster said. "Did you know her in the summer of 1998? Do you know who she was hanging out with? Was she dating someone? Did she have enemies?"

The Charles County Sheriff's Office is working with D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department, and they have some new leads, officials said.

"Now that we have a wealth of information, we feel energetic about it — optimistic, for sure, and working with the Metropolitan Police Department, I think we're going in the right direction," said Detective Sgt. John Elliott.

A lot has changed in the part of Bel Alton where Williams' body was found. Trees and brush were cut, and the old house was torn down. The commitment to closing the cold case remains the same, officials said.

"We never stop pursuing justice for our victims," an investigator said.

Anyone with information that could put Williams' killer behind bars is asked to contact the sheriff's office.

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