



## Fort Lauderdale boy's 1983 disappearance to be subject of documentary

### Film to focus on Lauderdale teen who vanished without a trace

By Mike Clary |South Florida Sun-Sentinel11:01 PM EDT, March 25, 2009



Maurice Jefferson's grandmother Ethel Mitchell looks through an old album with his photo inside.

Below: Maurice Jefferson in a family photo.  
(Mike Stocker, Sun Sentinel / March 4, 2009)



Known as "Red" because of the color of his hair and complexion, Maurice Jefferson was never easy to forget. A busy Dillard High School 10th-grader, he played basketball, ran on the track team, and drilled with the Junior ROTC.

At 16, he dreamed of becoming a doctor.

Then, one day in November 1983, the slender sophomore disappeared, "like the earth opened up and he went down in," said his grandmother Ethel Mitchell, of [Fort Lauderdale](#) more than 25 years later, Jefferson's fate remains one of South Florida's most perplexing mysteries. The case has been investigated by police, publicized by groups dedicated to missing children, and looked into by private sleuths.

"I can't help but think about him," said Mitchell, 76, who still lives in the house she shared with her grandson. "I see his picture, and I say, 'Red, I sure would like to know where you're at.'"

Now, a California woman who saw Jefferson's face on a missing persons flier says she can help revive interest in the case when she comes to town next month to film a documentary about the disappearance.

"There was something about that face that moved me," said Terry O'Neal, who describes herself as a writer and community activist in Elk Grove, a suburb of Sacramento.

O'Neal wrote to Jefferson's mother, Bettye Bridges, who now lives in Williston, S.C. O'Neal told Bridges that her son's picture "called out to me for some sort of peace and understanding."

Working through her nonprofit educational organization, LendYourHand, O'Neal said she has budgeted about \$10,000 to complete her first film.

"The ultimate goal is to find out what happened to Maurice," O'Neal said. "This family is still out there looking for peace."

Bridges said she welcomes O'Neal's involvement. "Some have a tendency to let go; we have a tendency to hold on," said Bridges, 58, who runs a beauty supply business. "We trust and believe he's somewhere out there, alive and well."

Broward Sheriff's Office spokesman Jim Leljedal said the notion that a work by a novice filmmaker could help solve the long-cold case "sounds far-fetched."

But, Leljedal added, "If they want to make a movie, that's fine. It might just generate a lead.

"Maybe someone has been keeping a secret for 25 years, and they want to let it out."

Dinorah Perry is a [Pembroke Pines](#) real estate agent who runs Missing Children International Ministries and has looked into the case.

"There are people still alive who know what happened to Maurice," she said. Perry theorizes the teen was slain "because he saw something he shouldn't have seen."

On Northwest 30th Terrace, meanwhile, Jefferson's grandmother keeps the faith. In a small living room decorated with religious icons and pictures of her children and grandchildren, she indicates the couch where she last saw Jefferson that Monday afternoon so long ago. After a post-school nap, he ate some popcorn, telephoned a friend and headed out the door for basketball practice.

He never came home.

"I've got the same phone number I've always had, so he could call," Mitchell said.

Anyone with information is asked to call Crimestoppers at 954-493-TIPS.

Mike Clary can be reached at [mclary@sunsentinel.com](mailto:mclary@sunsentinel.com) or at 305-810-5007.



Case Handled By: [www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com) National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

**MAURICE LARON JEFFERSON**

**Case Type:** Non Family Abduction **DOB:** Aug 8, 1967 **Sex:** Male **Missing Date:** Nov 30, 1983 **Race:** Black **Age Now:** 41 **Height:** 5'11" (180 cm) **Missing City:** FORT LAUDERDALE **Weight:** 120 lbs (54 kg) **Missing State :** FL **Hair Color:** Black **Missing Country:** United States **Eye Color:** Brown **Case Number:** NCMC601778