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HOME

NEWS

national

▶ local

international

business

releases

OP-ED

LIFESTYLES

SPORTS

HISTORY

CLASSIFIEDS

OBITUARIES

FAMILY

CALENDAR

ABOUT US

REGISTRATION

NETWORK
SITES

SEARCH

LINKS



LOCAL NEWS



“Hope of Finding a Son: The Maurice ‘Red’ Jefferson Story” to be filmed locally

by Charles Moseley
Westside Gazette
Originally posted 3/25/2009

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Blackman Weekly



By all accounts, 16-year-old Maurice ‘Red’ Jefferson was an All-American boy. He sang in the church choir at First Baptist Church Piney Grove, played basketball for Dillard High School, and was the product of a loving and caring family. Jefferson was just a typical teenager who appeared to have a bright future ahead. He even had hopes of one day practicing medicine. Things all changed however, one autumn day on Nov. 28, 1983 when Jefferson left home for basketball practice a short distance from his Northwest Fort Lauderdale neighborhood, never to be seen again.

“Hope Finding a Son: The Maurice ‘Red’ Jefferson Story” is a documentary based on this Fort Lauderdale teenager’s mysterious disappearance, which anticipates shedding some light on this unsolved case and generate new interest by the public, which might lead to bringing closure for his family. This documentary is presented by Lend Your Hand.org and author and poet Terry a O’Neal. It is expected to air in November 2009.

“The goal of this documentary is to create awareness about the disappearance of Maurice “Red” Jefferson. We are reaching out to the city of Fort Lauderdale, Fla. and surrounding communities in search of unanswered questions about Red’s disappearance. Our objective is to gather enough missing pieces of his story to bring closure for his mother, grandmother, close family and friends,” said O’Neal.

Jefferson lived with his grandmother, Ethel Mitchell, 74, who still recalls the day Jefferson disappeared...

“He was headed to basketball practice at Franklin Park basketball court, but he never made it there. It’s like the earth opened up and swallowed him,” she said.

Mitchell fondly recalled the days shortly before Jefferson’s disappearance as he prepared to sing a solo at his church, at the pastor’s anniversary celebration.

“As we drove up to the church, Maurice saw all the cars in the church parking lot and told me he didn’t know if he still wanted to go ahead with singing his solo. I said to him that he had promised his choir director and that he had to go through with it. Maurice smiled at me and said that he was just kidding and was ready to sing.”

Jefferson’s family has hired a private detective to investigate the case, which is still open but listed as “inactive” by the Broward Sheriff’s Department. Sergeant Bill Weir, a supervisor on the Sex Crimes and Missing Persons Unit at BSO, has worked on the case and is still searching for someone that knew Jefferson who may have seen or heard something, to come forward with some helpful information. He appealed to the community for any clues that might help unlock the mysterious disappearance of Jefferson.

“We’d like to do whatever is necessary to solve this case. Since 1983 it still remains open and will remain so until it is resolved. We’re still unable to explain what led to his disappearance; however, we re-main optimistic that leads can be developed that will help us solve the case. The community has been very cooperative and concerned.”

There are some who are familiar with the case who feel that someone close to Jefferson either was involved with his disappearance or knows what happened and refuses to come forward.

Dinorah Perry founded a ministry known as Missing Children’s International, a volunteer

group which helps to locate missing children and adults. They have been searching for answers to this unsolved case since Jefferson disappeared 25 years ago. She adamantly denies the notion that Jefferson may have run away from home and is alive today, living somewhere under another name and identity. She believes that foul play was involved in his disappearance.

"It's a sad situation. I know that there are people right here in Fort Lauderdale who could start opening their mouths and start talking. Everybody in that neighborhood knew Maurice; for him to just vanish is just baffling."

Perry raises questions as to the possibility that Jefferson may have met his end in an abandoned house near his home, according to an anonymous source. She is asking anyone who will listen to investigate her theory. She appealed for someone with access to equipment which may detect bones under-ground to do so at that location.

"Someone said that Maurice was bound and tied. I read the police report and it said that the home was boarded up, but I do not think detectives ever went inside the boarded home. I believe that someone in the Fort Lauderdale area can lead me to Maurice's remains. Either he's at a medical examiner's office or buried in a shallow grave somewhere. I know Maurice's entire family... he had NO reason to run away. Once you spend only one second with Maurice's family, you too will agree with me."

According to O'Neal, since they have posted information on this case on 'Face Book' they have made contact with Maurice's father, Eddie Washington and his sister, Tanjella Jackson.

Once contacted, Washington, in a very somber tone stated his frustrations on the disappearance of his son. "It is still a great loss and I don't feel good about it. At that time I didn't spend a whole lot of time with him or his mother but I cared just the same. I never closed it out of my life. I don't know if he is alive or dead. It's like he just fell off the face of the earth.

"If anybody knows anything, please tell his mother and grandmother so that they can have some closure 'cause their lives are so incomplete and please be careful with your kids."

Filming for the documentary will begin on April 2-6, in Fort Lauderdale. If anyone has any information vital to this case, you are encouraged to call 1-800-THE-LOST. To be interviewed for this film, call 1-866-552 2211; or email HopeofFindingaSon@gmail.com

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