

Episode 201 - Unsolved with Steve Gregory **The Disappearance of Raymond Collins Jr.**

Announcer

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Steve Gregory

On any given day in Southern California, hundreds of investigators are working more than 10,000 unsolved cases. That's thousands of friends and families who have lost loved ones, thousands of people who got away with a crime and thousands of murderers who still walk the streets. Killers who may be your neighbor, go to your church, or could be dating a close friend. For the next two hours, we'll highlight cases that have gone cold, baffled investigators or just needs that one witness to speak up. This is Unsolved with Steve Gregory. Case number 015-02299-2834-400, the disappearance of Ray Collins Jr.

Music

<music lyrics>

Steve Gregory

That's Collins also known as Ray Rich. He's in his own music video promoting his services as a music video producer. I got a call from LA County Sheriff's Homicide Detective Shaun McCarthy. He told me he got this case and wanted to talk to me about it. He says he and his partner have met with Collins' his family and McCarthy says it's become his mission to give this family some closure. So I headed out to Homicide Bureau in Monterey Park.

Steve Gregory

Joining us now detectives Shaun McCarthy and Rich Tomlin both with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's department's homicide bureau. We're talking about the disappearance of Ray Collins who was last seen on February 15. He left his parents home about four in the afternoon, but he was last seen at 10 o'clock that night, Detective McCarthy walk us through kind of that day's events.

Detective McCarthy

Okay. At approximately four o'clock in the afternoon, Ray advises parents that he was going to go to the city of Compton to meet a client. Ray was an aspiring rap producer and was scheduled to meet this client for a period of time and then return home later that night. He borrowed his parents vehicle, left the house and was never seen again.

Steve Gregory

Detective Tomlin you know, you hear Detective McCarthy say that he had a client. What is it that that Ray did what was he known for?

Detective Tomlin

Basically, Ray was known mainly as a producer and aspiring rapper, but also a producer. And so, he would help his clients develop their music, and try to do a good job where it would be eventually hopefully be produced.

Steve Gregory

Who were his clients, mostly?

Detective Tomlin

Ray had an array of clients. Now, in his business, though, you have a different you have all different types of music, and some you ever hear the term gangsta rap? Those are individuals who portray themselves to be in the gang life talk about the gang life, and their music or their lyrics are based on that type of lifestyle. Because he was a producer and I want to make this perfectly clear, he was not gang affiliated, however he did, some of the aspiring rappers were gang members. And so and they were affiliated with certain gangs, whether it be a Crip gang or a Blood gang. So, Ray was able because of his ability as a producer, he was able to float between both gangs, if you will, it was all about business for him. And the gang members realized, they wanted

a good product, they knew he could give them a good product. So he was able to stay above the gang membership and the affiliation.

Steve Gregory

Well, then Detective McCarthy when you say he was not gang affiliated. Is it safe to say he was immersed in the gang culture?

Detective McCarthy

Yes.

Steve Gregory

Okay, so...

Detective McCarthy

He grew up in the city of Compton. And whether people dispute this or not, my experience down there and I was a gang investigator down there for 10 years. There's not an area in the city of Compton that you can go to that isn't immersed with gang members in gangs. Every neighborhood in the city of Compton has at least one gang, if not multiple gangs. It's a high crime, high gang city that has gotten much better over the last 20 years. And I'm gonna pat the sheriff's department on the back a little bit. Back in 2000, when the Sheriff's Department took over, began policing, the city of Compton, they had they had nearly 100 murders, and most of them gang related murders, in a year. In in 2021, I think we were in the low 20s, maybe mid 20s. You can see the community, it took 20 plus years, but the community has a better trust of law enforcement now than it did 20 years ago or 22 years ago. But there's still a lot of gang influence and a lot. It's still a very high crime city.

Steve Gregory

Detective Tomlin, what types of gangs? Are we talking about all kinds of gangs or did he have any specific gangs he worked with more than others?

Detective Tomlin

All types of gangs, but our investigation has shown that he was some of his clients, if you will, were from the Blood gang, different Blood gang sets and different Crip gang sets.

Steve Gregory

Now, obviously, I've been covering law enforcement for many years, but I don't know a lot about the inner workings of of gang activity like you guys do. But when you start blending relationships between gangs, doesn't that cause a problem to you? Because don't they expect loyalty in one way or another?

Detective McCarthy

Yeah. As the Detective Tomlin pointed out, he was able to float between Crip clients, Blood clients, but trust me, it didn't, it did not go unnoticed by particular gangs in particular sets, if you will, it did not go unnoticed. And I think another another thing that needs to be pointed out is the key term in all of this is that he was an aspiring rap producer. And it's a tough business to get into, and you have to start at the bottom, if you will. And the bottom is the inner city ghetto areas, where there are a lot of aspiring rappers, who have strong gang affiliations also. So because he was an aspiring rap producer, he started at the lower level and was dealing with a lot of hard core street gang members.

Steve Gregory

We're talking with Detectives McCarthy and Tomlin with the LA County Sheriff's Department's Homicide Bureau on the disappearance of Ray Collins. Detective Tomlin. You know, when you look at this, you're you're not you weren't the original detectives on this original investigating officers, obviously, you're looking at this years later. How do you approach something like this, after all this time has gone by, how when you open this file, and you look at this, and you've got a guy who was an aspiring rap artist, producer works with two of the most notorious gangs in the country? Where do you start?

Detective Tomlin

Well, the first thing you have to do is you have to do a background check actually, on the individual that is missing, you have to

try to find out what his life was about as as, as Detective McCarthy mentioned, you know, he was in college, but he was starting from the bottom, he was no longer a big thing also is he was no longer living in Compton. He was, one would say, he's an outsider coming in. So you have to first look at that you review the reports and then you go out and you try to recontact people that were in the original reports. Maybe people remember something, what you're hoping for is that time has passed by now, it's been seven years, people grow, people mature, and maybe someone who was younger at the time and they were hesitant to step forward. Now you're hoping that they will step forward and provide more information.

Steve Gregory

We're talking with Detectives, Sean McCarthy and Rich Tomlin about the disappearance of Ray Collins. When we come back, I want to get a little bit more into Mr. Collins' family a little bit of where it comes from, and some connections he's got to some pretty famous artists, apparently so we'll talk about that. But first, this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI AM 640, time now for a news update.

Steve Gregory

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Welcome back, we're talking with Shaun McCarthy and Rich Tomlin, both detectives with the LA County Sheriff's Department's Homicide Bureau, about the disappearance of Ray Collins. It happened on February 15, 2015. Ray was last seen at 10pm that night. So, gentlemen, before the break, one of the things you sort of pointed out is that Ray Collins was going to meet a client. So, I suppose even if you're looking at this case, years later, who was the client? And is that kind of where you start?

Detective McCarthy

Correct. He was a person that Ray advises parents he was going to see to discuss a wrapped production. He was a person that Ray had, according to his parents, had association with on prior occasions. And literally, when he came up missing, the first thing the original detectives did was contact this client.

Steve Gregory

And what you learn?

Detective McCarthy

Well, what they learned was is this person was cooperative. And I can't mention his name right now, he was cooperative, at least initially. He confirmed that Ray came there to discuss a contract to negotiate contract for rap production. He said that discussion went on for several hours. He admitted that they went to a local In & Out Burger in the city of Carson during their time together, and went through the drive thru. And that at approximately 10pm, Ray dropped him off at his house in the city of Compton and that was the last time that he saw him.

Steve Gregory

Detective Tomlin, when you look at something like this, you know, just listening to Detective McCarthy. When you got a client in this particular case, a potential witness or somebody, a person of interest if you will, starts out being cooperative and then gets hostile. What does that tell you?

Detective Tomlin

Well, the first thing I think anybody will wonder is why? You you, you would like to think that a person would want to help the family and find their son, and they would go over and beyond to do that. So but also, the reality is, sometimes people just don't want to get involved. Okay, they just for no other reason, I don't want to talk to you and I don't want to cooperate.

Steve Gregory

So there's really, there's really not much to read into here.

Detective McCarthy

Well, if you don't mind me intervening. You've heard the term polygraph before. Polygraph is a very sensitive word in investigations. Because the minute you ask somebody to submit to a polygraph, many times they immediately form the impression that you're looking at me as a suspect. Now somebody could be totally cooperative up until that point, and then you ask him to submit to a polygraph test, attitudes can change on a dime when you do that and that's why we're very cautious. Because polygraphs aren't admissible in court. We're very cautious when we ask somebody to take a polygraph. And in this case, the reason they asked him to take a polygraph test is because they went and got the surveillance video at the In & Out Burger. And they reviewed it at the time that he said that they went through there and ordered food and Ray's vehicle was never part of that surveillance video. So the question is, why are you telling us, if you're being truthful and trying to help us, why are you telling us you went to an In & Out Burger in the city of Carson and then we get their surveillance video and in Ray's vehicle never goes through that drive thru at the time that you said it went through. And that's when this client said 'I'm not going to cooperate. with you anymore without my attorney present.'

Steve Gregory

So, is this quote, unquote client Person of Interest still to this day?

Detective McCarthy

Yes.

Steve Gregory

And is this client a member of a gang?

Detective McCarthy

Yes.

Steve Gregory

Can you say the gang?

Detective McCarthy

Nutty Block

Steve Gregory

Say that again...Nutty Block.

Detective McCarthy

Nutty Block

Steve Gregory

That's the Nutty Block Crips?

Detective McCarthy

Nutty Block Crips

Steve Gregory

What do you know about that gang?

Detective McCarthy

Well, I did, I have never investigated a case that involve Nutty Blocks, but but because of my association in my 10 years as a gang investigator, it's one of the most violent gangs in South Central, but there's a lot of violent gangs in South Central they just happen to be one of them.

Steve Gregory

Detective Tomlin. By the way, we're talking with Detectives Tomlin and McCarthy from LA County Sheriff's Department. Detective Tomlin, did Ray have apparently Ray had connections to what you would say today are famous artists, right?

Detective Tomlin

Yes, based on information provided by his mother. Several what we would call successful rap artists now used to be personal friends of Ray. They were all growing up as adolescents and they would actually go to each other's homes.

Detective McCarthy

Kendrick Lamar who is a very famous rap artist or hip hop artist. I don't want to offend anybody, by labeling them wrongly.

Steve Gregory

Sure.

Detective McCarthy

Kendrick Lamar has won Grammy Awards. He grew up with Ray, according to his mom Annie, Kendrick has been in residence on multiple occasions when they were adolescents. Ray grew up with a rapper called The Game who's another well known rap artist, who socialized that at the family house when Ray was an adolescent. So Ray had some connection to successful rap artists, but he was still an aspiring rap producer. Even though he had those influences, he still was at the bottom trying to work his way into the business and that's why he was producing videos of street gang rappers and then you have the the the danger aspect when you're dealing in floating between rival gangs to produce their videos, you're potentially ruffling feathers, if you will. And Ray was warned on at least one occasion about floating from one gang and producing a rap video for one of their members to another rival gang and producing a rap video for one of their or multiple of their members. He was warned. And I have a specific instance that I think is important to this case.

Steve Gregory

Okay, then hold on that because we're going to pause. More on the disappearance of Ray Collins, but first this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI AM 640, time now for a news update.

Steve Gregory

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Talking with detectives Shaun McCarthy and rich Tomlin from the LA County Sheriff's Department's Homicide Bureau about the disappearance of Ray Collins. Before the break, Detective McCarthy, you are about to give us an instance or you said an example in this case, that might help you shed some light.

Detective McCarthy

Yes, as I said earlier, I'm sorry my partner said earlier, Ray Ray, because of his profession, had to float between rival gangs to produce rap videos for those those members the aspiring rap artists of those gangs. And as I, as I said, it didn't go unnoticed. On at least one occasion, he was warned about producing a rap video for a rival gang. And specifically, he was warned about producing a video for the client that he was meeting on February 15. He had been warned about a year before, do not rub elbows with Nutty Blocks, specifically this client. And during that contact, when he was warned to stop producing videos for that rival gang, Nutty Block, he was assaulted and he was robbed of all of his production equipment by members of this rival gang.

Steve Gregory

So he was already a victim because of his affiliation.

Detective McCarthy

Yes. And I don't want to get..

Steve Gregory

Well I don't want to say affiliation, you've already specified no affiliation. But you know what I mean, by virtue of his connection, or his working with working relationship, he's already been a victim at least once.

Detective McCarthy

Correct. This particular gang, and they were called ATF Crips, members of that gang, warned him not to produce videos for Nutty Block, and then in that same contact, they assaulted him and they robbed him of of approximately, well, I don't I don't want to get into specific numbers, but thousands of dollars worth of production equipment that he had in his car. And, for lack of a better term, the fatal mistake in the streets, the streets would say this, is that he reported to the Sheriff's Department.

Steve Gregory

Oh.

Detective McCarthy

And that one of our Compton patrol units responded, took a crime report. He was able to identify the people who assaulted and robbed him from prior contacts. And they were arrested for for the assault and the robbery.

Steve Gregory

That had to have not gone over well.

Detective McCarthy

Clearly, it did not. That's a big no, no, in the gang world, you don't you don't snitch no matter, no matter if you were a victim of a crime and even a violent crime. You don't snitch it gets worked out in other ways. Most likely, retaliatory violence against that particular gang. But he had lost thousands of dollars worth of equipment, he was not a gang member himself, although he grew up in, in the environment and the culture and he had a lot of gang member associates and friends for that matter. And these suspects in this particular crime sat in jail for at least a month prior to a preliminary hearing, and the case was eventually dismissed because Ray did not show up to testify against them, so they were released. But I have this from a good source that the reason he didn't show up was because members of the gang and their families came up with approximately \$10,000 and he would and he was given that money so he could recoup his equipment, and as a result, he did not testify against them. You have no you have no victim, you have no case, the case was dismissed. But I can only, and this is just the suspicion on my part, and I think my partner would agree with this. I don't think those gang members who sat in jail for a month and the fact that their family and friends had to pony up thousands of dollars to discourage Ray from testifying, were very happy about that after they got out of jail.

Steve Gregory

We're talking with Detectives McCarthy and Tomlin about the disappearance of Ray Collins. Detective Tomlin, then based on what your partner here just said, do you suppose that plays a big role in his disappearance?

Detective Tomlin

Obviously, you have to look at that as a strong possibility, especially when you consider where his car was, Ray's car was eventually found.

Steve Gregory

And let's go back to that, because you said earlier that the In & Out surveillance footage did not show Ray's car, but the client claims that they were there. So, was there a car or not a car? And then what happened to Ray's car.

Detective McCarthy

There was a car. It was Ray's parents car, and it was eventually located four days later, in an area controlled by the ATF Crips. Now, that in itself is not evidence that ATF is responsible for this crime. As we've discussed, the client that he met that day was

from a rival gang Nutty Block. It's also possible and logical that they're responsible for his disappearance and they planted the car in ATF's area to give law enforcement the impression that it was the ATF's who did it. So we have to look at not only those two possibilities, that Nutty Block is responsible for his disappearance and discard the vehicle in a rival gangs area who had assaulted Ray in the past. But we also have to look at the ATF's as, because of the prior arrest, they were not happy that he contacted law enforcement. And this was their revenge against him, because his vehicle was found in their area. So it's, it's as likely that Nutty Block was responsible for his disappearance, as it is likely that ATF is responsible for his disappearance. And there's a third possibility, it was somebody else, that we have no idea and we have no leads to point us in that direction. Ray, because of his profession, dealt with a lot of hardcore street gang members from various gangs and rival gangs in the Compton area. And they're as likely to be responsible for his death, or his disappearance as ATF or Nutty Block. But we have to focus on what we have, and what we have is he met a client that day from Nutty Block, who wasn't totally truthful with the original investigators, and then we have Ray being assaulted a year prior in ATF's area, a rival of Nutty Block, where members of that gang were arrested for that crime. And Ray was, was a victim who was expected to testify against them and then didn't because of the reasons we spoke about.

Steve Gregory

We'll talk more about the disappearance of Ray Collins. But first this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI AM 640, time now for a news update.

Steve Gregory

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Welcome back, we're talking with detectives, Shaun McCarthy and Rich Tomlin, both with the LA County Sheriff's Department's Homicide Bureau. We've been discussing the disappearance of Ray Collins, who was last seen February 15 2015 at 10pm. We have figured out that Ray went to go with a client and that client has gang affiliation and he was last seen that night. And his car appeared four days later in a rival gangs territory. So trying to piece this together with the two detectives. As we wrap up this case, guys, I got to ask, what are next steps, you know, you know, when you always approach a cold case like this? Well, let me back up and ask, have either of you talked to any of the players any of the principals in this case yet?

Detective McCarthy

No.

Steve Gregory

You've not talked to any of them Is that a plan?

Detective Tomlin

Yes.

Detective McCarthy

And it's been a plan for the last two years. And I don't want to get too deep into our investigation, but there was a hope on our part, well, that we could talk to these persons of interest. And I want to make it clear because they're a person of interest, doesn't mean they can't become a helpful witness at some point later on, and we're hoping that's going to be the case. It can't be both ATF and Nutty Block as the suspects and because we call them persons of interest, and we're very careful not to say suspects, it's possible down the road somewhere that, let's say this client is not involved in his disappearance, that he could actually help us in leading us in the right direction. So because I call him a person of interest, or because at the time when they asked him to do a polygraph examination, he became somewhat hostile and refused to talk to him anymore. That doesn't mean that at some point, he couldn't be an ally to law enforcement in solving this case, if he's not responsible.

Steve Gregory

Do you know where this guy is?

Detective McCarthy

Yes.

Steve Gregory

So it's all speculation, but I'll just throw it out there. Do you believe you know who's responsible for this? Not the gang, but the individuals?

Detective McCarthy

At this point, No.

Steve Gregory

No.

Detective McCarthy

We have we have, we have leads that point in different directions, but there's a connection with both of those leads that would lead someone to believe that it's highly possible that were looking in the right direction. But it's also possible that this incident, or these ATF members, who were arrested for robbing Ray, have nothing to do with his parent disappearance. And it's also just as likely that the client that he met that day, although there's some things that are suspicious about his actions, that he has absolutely nothing to do with this case, as as we said at the beginning of this interview, is he was cooperative at the beginning of this investigation. And it's, it's it's also possible because of cooperativeness, that he has nothing to do with this case. It's our job to determine that but when you're dealing with street gang members, it's not as simple as is going to him inviting them to the station and talking to them and expect them to be over cooperate, overly cooperative with you. There are there are there are situations and we've been looking at those possibilities for the last two years to get to get them in an environment where they feel more comfortable talking about the incident with us that can help us in the investigation.

Steve Gregory

Yeah, I can understand that gang culture though they're not really willing to, even if they knew they probably wouldn't tell you anyway. Detective Tomlin. I suppose at this point, the family has got to be just beside themselves looking for closure, especially. It's one thing when you've got the murder of a person and you've at least been able to retrieve the body and you can have some closure that way, but this is a disappearance on top of a presumed death.

Detective Tomlin

And we're going to talk about the family. But first I want to talk about why it's also important that we, at this point, you have to assume that nothing good that he's, a strong possibility that he is dead, correct? So now it's very important because to locate him just as far as any investigation, how did he die? That's, that's very important. If we find the remains, we find the bodies, if he's been shot, there's still ways you can determine the cause of death because that in itself is a big clue.

Steve Gregory

It may give you some forensic information.

Detective Tomlin

Absolutely. But the biggest thing is, as you mentioned, Steve, bringing closure to the family. I can't imagine having a loved one, just vanish one day, and not knowing for certain what has happened. And if and when we do find Ray, at least that part, they'll have closure on that part. You'll never have complete closure, you'll never be willing to accept what has happened, but at least that part, they can safely know their son is what happened to him, and is with them. And that is our big push, that is our big hope. That someone that's listening to this show has enough compassion, and provides information. Even if we don't care how ridiculous the theory, give us a theory. But at least it gives us a direction, and maybe something will come of that. So we can give the family at least that part of peace.

Detective McCarthy

Steve, in every investigation. The ultimate goal is to identify an offender, to arrest that offender or offenders, and to prosecute that offender. But sometimes we fall short and we have to accept smaller victories. Identifying a suspect, if you identify them at

least at least in the future, evidence may come forward that will help you prosecute that person. Sometimes you can only arrest them, and you take the case of the district attorney and he feels there's not enough evidence to proceed because you only get one shot. If he gets acquitted, you never get to try him again, okay. And then ultimate, the ultimate success of an investigation is to prosecute somebody. But we're at a point in this case, and in the family has expressed this, is the number one goal right now is to find Ray and not only get the family some closure, but it will potentially lead us to evidence that will give us those other things, identity, identity of offenders, arrest of offenders and prosecution of offenders.

Steve Gregory

We're running a little out of time here. An open question to either of you. Do you believe that this crime was committed spontaneously or was this a calculated crime?

Detective McCarthy

That's a good question. It could be either. I think we've expressed the reasons why it could be calculated. Especially on the one end when when he was robbed, but a lot of gang crime is spontaneous. Hey, there he is at the corner there, he's slipping and remember what what he did to us? That's spontaneous. I guess you could argue it's calculated to, but it could be either or. And to be honest with you, Steve, at this point, we don't care. It's well, you know, you don't, and this is very primitive. But the old saying is, you don't need a motive to prosecute somebody for a crime, but it's it's so nice to have that motive because jurors like to know why did that person kill that person. But you don't need motive to prosecute somebody if you have enough evidence, I've had multiple cases, he's had multiple cases where you don't have a motive and you don't present a motive in trial. But you have so much overwhelming evidence that it's him, the jury gets it. But there are other cases where the evidence isn't as strong and a juror wants to know why, what reason does he have to kill him? And when you can present a motive, it certainly helps your case. But in the game world, there's a built in motive. The built in motive is that's my enemy. That's my enemy.

Steve Gregory

Gentlemen, Detective Shaun McCarthy, Rich Tomlin. Thank you for your time tonight. Good luck on the case.

Detective McCarthy

Thank you.

Detective Tomlin

Thank you.

Steve Gregory

Coming up, my conversation with the parents of Ray Collins. But first this is Unsolved with Steve Gregory on KFI AM 640, time now for a news update.

Steve Gregory

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In the last hour, we spoke to the detectives in charge of the disappearance of Ray Collins, a music video producer from Chino, who was last seen February 15, 2015. In fact, here's Collins on the set of a PSA about domestic violence.

Audio of Ray Collins

<Audio of Ray Collins directing video>

Steve Gregory

Collins' parents, Ray Sr and Annie still live in their home in Chino. I asked them to go back to the day Ray disappeared.

Annie

Well, this was on a Sunday was the last day that we saw him. We had just came in from church, he was here he was talking on the phone with one of the producers for music. And he was getting ready to go out that afternoon and as he do some time he told us, well he told me, that he was going to be busy that week, like picking up a producer from the airport and filming some videos and everything. And sometimes when he would go up LA/Compton area and he was working like that he would stay the night, come in the next morning or the next couple of days or what have you and it was like a hit and miss. This is what we thought was going on. At one point my husband thought I was being in contact with him, but I wasn't. And we just thought he was coming in when we was going out working and you know, vice versa. And they went on and that was a Sunday. And that went on up until that Friday. And I came home from work, my husband was here, and he said, 'You know I can't get Ray. I've been trying to call him' and I said 'well, he doesn't have voicemail set up on his phone', you know da da da. And so you just left it at that. I went on my way to go to church that's in Compton, I was riding along the freeway and then I was like, let me try to call his phone one more time. So you know, when we would call the phone will go to voicemail, but like I said it wasn't set up, and something just led me to call the phone company. And I call the phone company to just see was there anything wrong with the phone, it was a new phone. So and when he was busy in the studios and stuff, he didn't want to be bothered, and we were just glad that he was working, you know, because he didn't have a regular job, this is what he was doing. And so they checked for me, and when the lady came back and told me what she said, I was stunned because she said there had not been any activity on that phone since Sunday, and this is now Friday. And if anyone knows Ray, the phone will be glued to his ear, he was always on the phone, thow he was, you know, running his business to get his clients and everything for these videos and stuff and and I asked her I said 'Well, can you get a ping on the phone?' And she went back to try to do that and couldn't get a ping on the phone she said it was just like the phone was dead. And my mind sort of went to where earlier that week they had an accident on the 60 freeway. And at that time I was driving a Toyota Camry and he we use it and the person that that person died in an accident. It was a male but it was it was not recognizable. So immediately my mind went to that thinking, could that have been Ray you know, and, I just just going back and forth. I didn't call my husband that time because I'm just trying to find out myself what was going on and I call my daughter to ask her. But I couldn't get her, my oldest daughter, to see had she talked to her brother. Anyway, I just made my way on to the church and once I got there, because I knew she was gonna be there, we was going to choir rehearsal, and when I saw her I asked her 'I'd say 'when the last time we talked to you brother?' She said 'oh Mama I talked to him Monday.' I said 'you talked to him Monday?' She said, yes, she said, 'Oh, no, not Monday, Sunday,' because at that time she was living in Long Beach. And she said, 'why?' I said, 'well, we haven't heard from him and he hasn't been home.' And I said, and I told her about the phone thing and everything, and she was beginning to like cry, and I said no, we can't cry, we got to figure out, see what's going on what happened to your brother. So she knew some of the people that he dealt with, as far as the music and stuff. And she said, 'let me try to hit up social media to see him and his friends heard from him, the people that, you know, the music that he does with the rap and all this and that', and she was doing it. And she got a couple of people back and they were saying, Well, you know, 'we haven't heard from him, we've been trying to hear from him and call him we can't get him.' And like, those people that he dealt with, they didn't know us. So they don't know our numbers, they will just be in contact with him. And so what she was getting was like, they will stunned too that, you know, they hadn't heard anything. But like I said, we didn't know and they didn't know about us, so it was like it was just like a hit and miss thing. So I said I gotta call my husband. So I end up calling him to let him know that, you know, something has happened to Ray. We don't know what it is but we get from everybody that they've been trying to contact him and nobody can get him. And he said, 'Okay, so I'm gonna come to the church, I'm gonna go to work tonight, and I'm gonna come to the church.' And we ended up telling my pastors and everybody was coming together. And I was like, I think we are going to have to file a missing persons report. And by the time my husband got there, I don't know if I had already did it, I think I had already called and I talked to the Compton police and I told him the situation. We lived in Compton for almost 20 years before we moved out here. And I asked him, I say, 'should I file a report in Chino, where we live now or Compton' and they said, 'Where was he last headed? Or do you know,' I said, 'he was headed to Compton area, Los Angeles.' And he said, 'well file it here.' So that's what we began to do but of course, this was like maybe six or seven o'clock at night, and they didn't get there to 12 about 12 that night, you know, to the church to take the report. So we stayed there and everything was going so fast, then it was like it really didn't give us time to really stop to think that the worst could have happened to him. Everybody was just coming together, like what can we do? What can I do? And you know, because the church family was there and some was like, what we need to call them morgue, we need to call the police, need to call the hospital. It was just, this is what we was doing. This is what we was doing. We all just got together doing this. And it was just like, we didn't have time to really stop and think that really the worst could have happened to him.

Steve Gregory

Ray, so I want to go back a little bit historically. How long was your son involved in the music producing business?

Ray Sr.

Oh, wow....let me see.

Annie

This was 2015 when this happened.

Ray Sr.

So prior to that he had started going to LA Film School. And he said as you know 'dad this is what I want to do.' And I said 'well, okay.' I can at that time we didn't have but one vehicle and I had my work van, I said we'll make some sacrifices. So yeah, so you can take the car, go to school and I said 'if you're going to go to school and you're serious about it, I'm going to be here to help you. But if you're just gonna get out there, and stay in the streets and not do what you wanted, you know, need to do. I mean, there's no sense in me helping.' But I agreed, we agreed for him to do that. And he was doing a pretty good, he was going to school taking care of his business and stuff like that and, you know, he was doing okay. And, um, after that, I don't know what happened with his tuition, whatever. But for some reason, he said he had to come out. And I never didn't know exactly what the reason was, but he told me it had something to do with tuition, because he had got a student loan to go to school. And I can understand what he had to, you know, get out, did he withdraw himself or he just got, you know, so overwhelmed with it, that he just needs to step away. Well, whatever it was, he left school for a while. Then after that, that's when he started doing videos for some of their local guys that he knew and, you know, and when the word kind of got around that he was filming videos, everybody wanted him to shoot his videos. And I used to tell them all the time, because he was showing me some of his videos. I mean, nice work, looked good.

Steve Gregory

How long had he been in school?

Ray Sr.

He had been in school, I will say at least about a year.

Steve Gregory

Oh. Ok.

Ray Sr.

Maybe a little longer.

Annie

Yeah, about a year and a half.

Ray Sr.

Because he loved you know what he was doing he said this is what he wanted to do and I said 'well I'm gonna support it this what you want to do and you're serious about it.'

Steve Gregory

So word got around?

Ray Sr.

Word got around...

Steve Gregory

More with the parents of Ray Collins but first this is Unsolved on KFI AM 640, time now for a news update.

Steve Gregory

The KFI AM 640 heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory, and this is Unsolved. If you're listening on the app, you can send us a tip about a case, a story idea, or a comment about the show, just tap the red microphone on the app and record your message.

I've been speaking with Ray Collins Sr. and his wife, Annie about their missing son Ray Jr. Collins tells me he was impressed with the quality of the videos his son produced, but there was always an uneasy feeling about it.

Ray Sr.

And I used to sit here and look at some of his videos. He said 'dad I did this the other day.' I said, 'who are those guys there?' 'Oh, there are some of the guys, you know, up there in Compton.' I said 'are some of them gang members, that's that is what they look like, because what they are rapping about. I don't particularly like it.' I said 'you be careful with those guys because you know how they are, they're some, you know, they'll bite you.' 'Yeah no daddy, you know, I just be up there filming.' And I say 'yeah, you up there making money and making a living. But they don't think like that. I say these people don't have no respect for their lives and your life either. So you be careful who you filming and getting involved with,' because, you know, he wasn't born out here, but he was raised out here. And you know, we're from the south and kind of conservative on some things. And I didn't particularly like it, but I had to let him live his life. Coming out to Compton in the early 90s, at the height of the gang atmosphere...

Steve Gregory

Must have been a culture shock.

Ray Sr.

Absolutely, and I was trying to keep him from all that stuff. But I couldn't be with him 24 hours a day, and he has grown into a young man, and I would try to teach him by examples. I would like to, you know, get him in the house at a certain time, when it started getting dark. He didn't particularly like that, so he kind of rebelled. And he didn't like it at all, but I was doing it for you know, he's good. But you know, out of all that we still ended up here. You know, and that can you know, that's what really got me about this whole deal. Because he wasn't raised in that kind of stuff. His mom and I've been together, what, 40 some years, and for this to happen to him like this. I'm still blown away. I mean, it's, I am still like, did this really happen to us? Him not coming home, not seeing him, not hearing his voice, holidays, birthdays, it really tears you up. And you know, you look on news, look at the news and see it happen to somebody else, and ant think 'it'll never happen to me.' Don't never think that, because it could happen to you, it happend to us. I'm telling because we, I thought that my wife, we did what we supposed to do in raising this kid. He was raised right. But when he got in those streets and started being round some of his little friends who was involved in that stuff. And like I said, which I tried to tell him, but once they get grown, they don't, they don't listen to well, they rather go through it then listen to it. And here we are right here. And the same thing I was telling him, this is what happened. And I used to tell him all the time, watch who you call your friends, watch who you call your friend. You know what type of business you're in. Those guys, those little gang members and stuff, they idolize this rap music, all this stuff like this. They don't have no respect for people, so they don't have respect for life, your life and nobody else. And like I say, we are here now because of that kind of stuff. And I was hoping that he stepped back and kind of just like take inventory of his life, and said 'well, maybe daddy was right,' you know, and he did tell me he told me one time he said 'daddy you is right, but I don't have no friends' but it was kind of like too late then, you know, he got so deep in this stuff. And then I don't know if it was a year or two before that.

Annie

Two.

Ray Sr.

About two years before this happened, he drove the car home. I got up that morning somebody had bust all the windows out of the car, I'm like what's going on here? Now I can understand maybe a rock in the windshield, but you can tell somebody hit and bust the windows intentionally. And I asked my wife, what happened? Ray said somebody did this? I'm like, is that right? I said nah ,there's something else going on? I mean, the signs was there, I said there's something else going on ain't nobody gonna do that, I mean, a scorned woman probably gotten mad with him or whatever. But they bust all the windows out in my wife's car. And I told her I said he ain't telling it all. He ain't telling it all and it comes to find out, somebody had found out where he lived

that they came by and they bust all the windows out in that car.

Steve Gregory

Is this a case Ray where where, you know that's a very it can be a very glamorous business, the music video business and and then he's you know if you say he's running with these gang guys, do you think he got so and when you say got into the into all of that there's no doubt he was not involved in the gang activity.

Ray Sr. and Annie

No

Steve Gregory

He was just doing work for...

Ray Sr.

Absolutely.

Steve Gregory

So how do you think they pulled him in? And how do you think it to the point where they're coming out hitting windows? Why would they what was the motive?

Ray Sr.

I think it was all about this you know, you got the with the Crips and you got the Bloods. The Crips don't want him making videos for the Bloods, and the Bloods don't want him making videos for the Crips. And they got this attitude like you're gonna have to choose which side you're gonna be on. So has, you know, is that stupid? Absolutely it's stupid. He was out there just making money. But see, they don't they can't distinguish what's what. Because, you know, like I said, they don't have no respect about life. They don't, you know, this is me. I want to be the next Tupac or whatever, you know, Snoop Dogg or whatever, you know, but used to tell him all the time 'you see those guys, most of them gone. Tupac dead, Biggie dead, and I said you can't get involved in this kind of stuff. And that's what it led to where you ain't shoot my, because he did tell me, he said 'Dad, can you guys get the windows tinted?' And I said 'why you want the windows tinted?' and he said 'somebody that's trying to get me.' I said 'what's going on?' "Oh Dad, I just got to be careful now.' He knew that somebody on the street somebody had put the word on the street, they probably was gonna do something, but he never would tell me who or what was going on? He never did. And like I said, after he told me that's it. And you know, with all this happen, you know, kind of look back, you know, you listen to that kind of stuff now, like he got in trouble.

Steve Gregory

There were signals.

Ray Sr.

Absolutely. It was there. And he didn't discuss it. And I used to tell him all the time, and I told his mama too I know he was in his 20s, but like I say, every time he leaves out of his house I said 'Ray, please tell us where you're going.' At least if something happened we can say, 'well, he was going over here.' We can kind of know what his thought he thought I was trying to control him.

Steve Gregory

So, you think obviously you were being parents, but so do you think he was being defiant or was he naive?

Ray Sr.

Oh, you know, that's a that's a hard question to answer because I want to say he may have been naive but Ray had been in the street a lot.

Steve Gregory

Okay,

Ray Sr.

So he might have knew what was happening.

Steve Gregory

He had some street smarts.

Ray Sr.

Absolutely.

Steve Gregory

Okay, so..

Ray Sr.

..and that's what another thing I'm so surprised he got his self cut up like that. And that's why I moved from Compton out here because I wanted to get him from that type of life. And I used to tell him to Steve, I said, 'Ray, don't go to Compton no more, you don't have no reason to go to Compton. And I said if you do go by one of your friends that you grew up with, and you know him and you know that way they can have your back. 'Oh dad, I don't go to Compton but he was lying to me he was still going up there.'

Steve Gregory

Was he making good money?

Ray Sr.

He was making pretty good money because he had just started out he was getting his name out there, getting his foot in the door.

Annie

His had his LLC.

Ray Sr.

...and he was getting ready to really have some success he was and then like I say after the word on the street that he's filming videos and stuff like that somebody probably start you know getting jealous, a lot of envy out there, and you know, if I can't make it you know, you're not gonna make it and you know, I'm gonna do something to you know how they think and that's what happened. And when he went up there that night that late and they probably saw him and you know, hey, wait, this is our opportunity to do something to him.

Steve Gregory

More with the parents of Ray Collins. But first, this is Unsolved on KFI AM 640, time now for a news update.

Steve Gregory

KFI AM 640 heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory and this is Unsolved. To learn more about this case and others on the program, head over to our website at [KFI AM 640.com](http://KFIAM640.com) keyword Unsolved. And to reach the Unsolved team, just leave a message by pressing #250 on your cell phone and saying the keyword Unsolved.

I've been speaking with the parents of Ray Collins Jr. at their home in Chino. I asked Ray's mother, Annie, if in the last seven years, there have been any tips leads? Anything?

Annie

So glad you asked that question. Because I have to tell you in the beginning, when we went to file a missing person report, we did not get the help that we was looking for.

Steve Gregory

From the Compton PD?

Annie

From the Compton PD.

Ray Sr.

Or the Sheriff's Department

Steve Gregory

Or the Sheriff's Department

Annie

Yeah. Because one thing 29-years-old, a black male, I have to say it like it is. So this was a case of where maybe he's out on a drug binge, or were there any problems at home to where you make him run away, or this and that. And my thing was to them, we were filing a police report about a missing child. So I know those are some of the things you may have to answer, but we're here filing reports, so we expect you to do your job. But Steve, it didn't happen like that. This was February the 15th was the last day of 2015 that we saw our son. And as I told you earlier, it was that Friday, when we realized something had happened. That was, what, four or five days later. So and that was on a Friday, and that Friday night, we filed the report, that Saturday morning, we was back in Compton back at the Sheriff's Department to follow up, and they gave us a number they gave us a sergeant that was going to be over our case, and for about two weeks, we was trying to get in contact with them playing tag to give them information to gather information to see what they was doing and nothing was being done. So a lot of it we was handling on our own. That was February. That following week, we were the one passing out flyers. We were the ones that was trying to get in contact with all the news stations and come to find out it was nothing could be done because the detective, the sergeant that was handling our case, wasn't corresponding with them. We didn't know how this worked, because this had never happened to us before.

Steve Gregory

Sure, sure.

Annie

So this went on for a month. And at this time that this happened with our son, I can tell you the names of all the ones that were missing, the young lady that went missing Valentine night, in 2015, the next day, she was on the news. This was on the news about her. But it took a whole month before this got on the news about our son.

Steve Gregory

And why do you think?

Annie

Because they did not do anything. I don't know if they didn't take us serious or what happened. They didn't do anything. We ended up having to get a lawyer. We had to get a lawyer for her to check into this for us. She did it. She went all the way to the top and when she went all the way to the top. That's when...

Ray Sr.

...the ball started rolling.

Annie

...the ball started rolling, which was a month later, all the reporters that I would do in everything but a month later. Why a month later, when you see this even to now you still see when somebody just went missing the night before it's on the news but it took us a whole month. A whole month. The sergeant that we had he didn't do anything for us. I'm not calling names, but he didn't. And once the ball started rolling when we got to talk to the higher ups and they called me. And once they found that we had got a lawyer because of what she did. Now everybody's calling, now everybody wants to know our story. That was very hurtful. That was very painful. And it still is. It's still a sore spot about that.

Ray Sr.

Let me go back to this, Steve, you asked why. I think the reason why, because he was a young black kid and they thought he was a gang member. And nobody, you know, who think a gang member, you know, life probably don't have no value, so who cares? They killed each other anyway so we don't care. And that's my personal thing.

Annie

And in our minds that even if he was, yeah, even if he was, but we you still, he's my child and we're filing our report, we're doing the right thing. He was raised they were raised right in the heart of Compton between the Bloods and Crips, we lived on a beauty school. And it would be nights that all you could hear was gunfire, they will come right on the corner where we lived, and would shoot back and forth, back and forth. He was two when we came here. When we moved to California, he was two years old from Mississippi. And when we moved out here he was 21. So all of that time that he was in Compton, I'm not going to telling you he never got in trouble. But we kept our foot on him as far as gangs and other things. Now, of course, when he got older, he got older, he yells things, he got into things that we did not like. But from that time we you know, he was kept.

Steve Gregory

He sounds like he never veered that far off the path?

Annie

No, absolutely not, you know, in that sense, but for the, to come to this age of 29. And then this happened, as far as we know, back in the city that you grew up in, from a child up until that age, Ray is the type of person that you can go now. And for the ones that was a baby at that time, they know him, they know Ray Ray, that's what we called him as a kid. And as he got into this business, it was Ray Rich. That's what he called himself. So everybody knew him on some interviews that the people did you know, during this time when we found the car, and this one man said, this is not the man that got out that car he saw who got out that car that night, and he said this is not the man that's on this picture that's missing. But yet still we have nothing.

Steve Gregory

More with the parents of Ray Collins, but first this is Unsolved on KFI AM 640, time now for a news update.

Steve Gregory

KFI AM 640 heard everywhere live on the iHeartRadio app. I'm Steve Gregory. And this is Unsolved. If you're listening on the app and have a tip, story, idea or comment, just press the red microphone button and leave your message. In the last segment, the parents of Ray Collins said after they filed a missing persons report seven years ago, they were not given the attention they deserved from law enforcement. So I asked them if there was ever a reward offered.

Ray Sr.

The only thing the city of Compton did, they called us up there, we have to go to one of the meetings and they offered a \$10,000 reward.

Annie

And then they had us, and that was a trip too, that has got to be for another day. But we fought for that because as word got out about people that knew somebody that knew somebody, yeah, they got us into one of the council meetings. And it was a detective at that time, Detective Brown. Yeah, Detective Brown, and Martinez, you know, something they didn't tell us about. But anyway, once we found out about it, and when I would go to, I would ask them, 'could we do this, can we?' 'Well, it probably

is not gonna profit you anything, because..' I say, 'you always say that, but what are we doing? You know, this is our son, we are trying to get answers.' You know, and every time we would go to them, okay, well, can we go to the media? Can we do this? Okay, can we ask Compton for reward? Because I heard that we could, but they would always say no, I don't think it's gonna work. But we did it anyway. And then once we did it, it was like, they took the, what you call it? Like it was something that they did, or it was like, took the credit for it yeah and everything. But we fought for all of that, we fought for all of that. And even after doing all that we still seven years later here, we still don't have any answers.

Steve Gregory

Okay, so, wow, not one tip or one lead.

Ray Sr.

Nothing.

Steve Gregory

Ray, what do you think happened to your son?

Ray Sr.

Like I said, I think he got mixed up in some stuff that he wasn't telling nobody about. And I'm still gonna say it was gang activity. I think there was a lot of envy there, a lot of jealousy. And they want to control him to the point, you do what I say you do, you film my videos, not their videos, all this kind of stuff. And I thought maybe he refused. And if he did that, and you know how the gang mentality is, okay, if you don't do we'll take you out. And I think they watched him. Because like I say he would go to Compton most all the time, which I didn't agree with, but he did anyway. And he was grown, what could I do, I can only advise him. And they caught him up there early one night, and when they kind of up there, they saw him because they knew what type of car he drove, he drove his mother's car. And that was another thing I was so scared of, and I was telling him. I said, 'whatever you're doing out there. I say, you know your mother that a car a lot. They might mistake your mother for you. You can get your mother killed.' You know, and I was so scared of that, I used to tell her that all the time. And thank God that didn't happen. But still anyway, they knew the type of car he was driving, they knew he was going. And they probably, that night he went out, they was waiting on him, and I don't know if they enticed him in some other kind of way. But I think that's what happened, they took him somewhere and they took his life.

Steve Gregory

You think he got ambushed?

Ray Sr.

I think so. Absolutely. If he didn't get ambushed, he was set up.

Steve Gregory

What about you, Annie?

Annie

I think I do kind of agree with my husband, and I do think it was a setup because, knowing Ray, and two years before this happened, he was jumped. And it was dealing with similarities of what happened to him as far as what we know happened to him seven years ago. Two years before this person called him to do a video, it was in Compton. He went and when he went, they jumped him, because they didn't want him to do videos for this other group of people. This is what we found out later.

Steve Gregory

Detective McCarthy gave me the rundown on that.

Annie

Yes.

Steve Gregory

The one where they actually made an arrest?

Ray Sr.

Absolutely.

Annie

Yes, they made an arrest. But anyway, so. So what I think happened was whomever as far as we know, the person he was supposedly last seen with, when he dropped that person off at home, I believe that that's when whatever happened to him happened. That I believe was someone that he knew because if it wasn't someone that he knew and got along with so to speak, they couldn't of got Ray. I believe he would have towed that car to get home, he would have dealt with his dad and me later about that, but he would have got away. But whoever this was, this is somebody that he knew.

Ray Sr.

I agree with that.

Annie

And kind of trusted to the point where, you know, because...

Steve Gregory

He was comfortable.

Ray Sr.

Absolutely.

Annie

Because what happened? That phone was not in the car. The phone was on him. The charger was in the car, but the phone was on him. So we never found the phone. You understand what I'm saying. That's Ray.

Steve Gregory

Someone got close.

Annie

Yeah.

Ray Sr.

Exactly.

Annie

That's what happened.

Ray Sr.

Because when we found the car, the car was immaculate, everything was in order, in place. So it has to be somebody, like you said, he was comfortable with or he knew that was in that car with him. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Steve Gregory

Finally. Do you think you'll ever find him?

Ray Sr.

Well, we plan and hope that we do, well, they do, because we need closure. And we need to know what happened to our son. We have that right. So I don't know if God would allow us to be here when that happens, but we want to know, we definitely want to know, because I don't think nobody had a right to do him like that. This man got a family. He got people who love him who's concerned about him, still concerned. I hear people right now ask me, 'whatever happened to your son, did they ever find anything?' Some of my friends, some of my customers, some of the people in church, or some of the people at work where I work, they ask me the same thing and I say we never heard nothing, it just seems like he disappeared. But Steve, there's somebody out there that knows something, you know that. And you know the streets, they talk, but they are not talking. And I'll say this, and I'm gonna say it again. Whenever we find those peoples that did this and the people that know they did this, and they are accessories to this. I want all of them prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. And if they have to go to the gas chamber or whatever they do, if they won't pull the trigger, I will because they didn't have to do my son like that. They didn't have to do him like that at all. He was 29 years old. Grown. He didn't miss birthdays, he didn't miss holidays. We didn't miss them. So why don't you take his life like that? Why don't you take his life? And I know like you said we're not exempt from death, people's getting killed, it happens every day. But just let us know. Why don't you take his life? Was he trying to kill you? Was he doing anything to you to cause you to take his life like that? I just don't understand certain things about how people don't respect life. Especially my black people, and I'm gonna say this. You complain when a cop kill a black kid, you march you walk and all this, but while we kill each other? Nobody say a word. Nobody cared no more after that incident or whatever, everybody go back to their normal life. But like you said, that's about a child and somebody's nephew. That's somebody's son, we still left with the pain. Everybody else went on with their life. Like I see some of his friends. They got married, some moved, but our child is gone and like I said, that's okay, we'll handle that burden, because you see God is gonna still cover us, don't matter what. We still are gonna be okay. But we do have the right to know what happened to our son. That's all we want to know, we can't bring him back? Absolutely not. Because like I said, God got him in heaven and we're gonna see him again because our faith is gonna take us there. And we going to lean on it, we're gonna live on it and we are going to be okay. But we have a right to know who did this to our son and why did you do it, and like I say, if you did it, you got something to do with it, you will be prosecuted to the full extent. That's my life's mission, so we want to know we got a right.

Steve Gregory

Ray, Annie, I'm sorry for your loss. And I appreciate you reliving this for me. I certainly hope and pray that you get your closure.

Ray Sr.

Absolutely. We appreciate you.

Steve Gregory

Thank you for your time.

Annie

Thank you so much, Steve.

Steve Gregory

And that's going to do it. Unsolved is a production of the KFI News Department for iHeartMedia Los Angeles Robin Bertolucci program director, Chris Little news director. The program is produced by Steve Gregory and Jacob Gonzalez, the digital producer is Andro Mammo, the field engineer is Tony Sorrentino and the technical director is David Callaway. Coming up, it's Coast to Coast but first, this is KFI AM 640, time now for a news update.