

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES PODCAST AMBUSH IN INGLEWOOD

S1E40 Transcript

KEVIN HARRIS SR: There's no Grim Reaper that just comes out in the middle of the night, Headless Horseman, and just shoots your son, your innocent son ain't never done nothing to nobody in his life. No. Two different handguns, and you're shooting seven to 10, possibly more, multiple times. That was personal. It will take one person that has not said anything yet, that has been thinking about saying something, that knows exactly what has happened here, to have a conscience. God is waiting for you. He's waiting for you to do the right thing.

NARRATION: IT'S EARLY ON A SUNDAY EVENING IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA. 21-YEAR-OLD KEVIN HARRIS ENJOYS SOME OF HIS FAVORITE BARBECUE, COOKED BY HIS AUNT KAREN. HE HAS NO IDEA IT WILL BE HIS LAST MEAL. KEVIN'S BIGGEST PASSION IN LIFE IS CREATING MUSIC, SO WHEN DINNER IS OVER, HE HEADS TO A MUSIC STUDIO IN INGLEWOOD TO WORK ON SOME NEW BEATS. AT 8PM, HE PULLS UP IN FRONT OF THE STUDIO, WHEN SUDDENLY ANOTHER VEHICLE SLIDES UP NEXT TO HIM. HE LOWERS THE WINDOW, AND WITHIN MOMENTS, THE AIR IS FILLED WITH A RAPID-FIRE VOLLEY OF BULLETS, FOLLOWED BY A PIERCING SCREECH OF TIRES, AND AN EMPTY SILENCE.

I'M STEVE FRENCH, AND THIS IS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES: "AMBUSH IN INGLEWOOD."

KEVIN HARRIS SR: Kevin was slender. Most people that encountered him, whether female or male, they would say he was easy on the eyes. So, he was very handsome young man, very special spirit.

NARRATION: KEVIN HARRIS SR. AND HIS NOW EX-WIFE KATHERYN CHERISH FOND MEMORIES OF THEIR ONLY SON, KEVIN. THE ADORING PARENTS ALWAYS MADE SURE THAT HE WAS RAISED ON THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW.

KEVIN HARRIS SR: Kevin was very shy, introverted, but very competitive. He loved basketball. He was a good baseball player as well, but basketball was his forte, and very loving. Baptized Catholic, give you the shirt off his back and very respectful to his elders. Never been in a fight in his life, loved to play, very serious as well, especially with his music material, and was on his way in the music industry. His dreams were sky high until this happened.

NARRATION: WHILE STILL IN HIS TEENS, KEVIN DISCOVERED HE HAD A PASSION AND TALENT FOR CREATING RAP AND HIP HOP MUSIC TRACKS. BY 2009, WHEN HE TURNED 21, KEVIN HAD SOLD ONE OF HIS SONGS TO ICE CUBE, AND OTHER MUSIC LEGENDS LIKE RIHANNA AND SNOOP DOGG WERE BEGINNING TO TAKE NOTICE OF THIS PROMISING NEW MUSIC PRODUCER.

JIMMIQUE PARSONS: I got to see, like, his interest and, and his talent towards music just gradually grow over time.

NARRATION: JIMMIQUE PARSONS IS KEVIN'S CLOSE HIGH SCHOOL FRIEND.

JIMMIQUE PARSONS: We pretty much shared the same friends. We were just, like, regular, like, goofy kids. We laughed at the silliest of things. And as we went through high school, he started becoming more known for like, "Oh, he makes beats," so he would connect with other peers that would be into music or rapping and, you know, the upperclassmen. He would hang out with them in terms of, uh, music, but in terms of his core friends, we were just a bunch of goofy kids just going through high school.

NARRATION: LIKE A LOT OF RAP AND HIP HOP ARTISTS, KEVIN CAME UP WITH HIS OWN STAGE NAME, AND HE WAS KNOWN IN THE INDUSTRY AS TRACK BULLY.

JIMMIQUE PARSONS: Kevin's nickname Track Bully. He just picked it up. I didn't really, like, ask him, like, "Oh, like why?" I think it was just more so of a thing, like, in terms of him, like, just dominating the beat. Personality wise, he was a sweetheart at heart. He was very innocent. Like, we, we looked at him as, like, the little brother in the group. The best word to describe Kevin was pure. I never really saw him in conflict with anybody. He was just, like, a bright light. He was just very, very innocent.

NARRATION: IN THE FALL OF 2009, KEVIN'S INNOCENCE WOULD BE SHATTERED IN THE MOST BRAZEN AND SENSELESS OF VIOLENT ACTS.

SEAN STERLE: On September 20th, 2009, it was a Sunday, and Kevin was heading to a recording studio located on 118th Place in Inglewood, just west of Crenshaw.

NARRATION: SPECIAL AGENT SEAN STERLE WORKS IN THE LOS ANGELES OFFICE OF THE FBI.

SEAN STERLE: When he arrived at the studio a little bit after 8pm that night, before he could even get his car out of reverse and get it parked on the curb, a dark colored sedan, possibly a Honda or Toyota, pulled up next to him. Approximately five seconds passed and there might have been words exchanged between the two. Our witness couldn't hear it, anything. It was far enough down the street where could not hear that, but then saw and heard a volley of gunshots into Kevin's vehicle. And then, the dark colored sedan sped off westbound down 118th place and out of sight.

NARRATION: KEVIN AND KATHERYN HARRIS SOON GET THE PHONE CALL EVERY PARENT DREAMS.

KEVIN HARRIS SR: Sitting on my couch in front of our big screen TV, and then I get a phone call at 9:20 asking me, "Kevin, are you at the hospital?" And I said, "No. Why? What happened?" "Kevin's been shot." I said, "Is he alive?" "I think so." He tells me Centinela Hospital in Inglewood. We jumped in the car. We ran every light, and we go into the emergency room, wanting to know where our son is. And the surgeon comes out and says that he has expired. And we hit the ground. We hit the ground. We hit the floor. They wouldn't let us see him because his body is evidence. Did I want to see our baby shot up like that? No.

NARRATION: KEVIN SR. REMEMBERS THE LAST MOMENT HE SAW HIS SON ALIVE.

KEVIN HARRIS SR: I didn't speak to him. I just opened the door before I went to work. And he was laying in the bed in a fetal position. That's the last time I saw him, other than at the mortuary. I didn't get to say goodbye. I didn't get to say anything. They ripped our heart apart. I didn't even want to live anymore. I wanted to be right where he was. I didn't want to go on.

NARRATION: THE TRAGIC NEWS ALSO REACHES KEVIN'S FRIEND, JIMMIQUE.

JIMMIQUE PARSONS: It was a Sunday night and I got a call from one of our friends-slash-classmates. And I could hear his voice trembling, like he was crying, and he just said, "Kev's gone." And I was, you know, you hear it and you kind of, like, it didn't register. So, I was like, "Wait, what? What are you saying?" And he said, "Kevin's gone." My mind was just split into, like, a million pieces. It was just like, like, how could it happen?

KEVIN HARRIS SR: Then we straight to the site, to the studio, to the street. Car towed away. Glass swept up. No blood, no nothing. So unfortunately, all kinds of thoughts go through your mind. Like why was this cleaned up so quick? Were the police involved? Who did this? His mother's there picking up glass and putting it in her purse. That's how much shock she was in. The street that this happened on, very nice homes. Nice lawns. Very nice neighborhood. The studio was in the garage, but state of the art studio. Literally he'd sleep there sometimes but I would know where he was.

NARRATION: A DRIVE-BY SHOOTING IN INGLEWOOD, CALIFORNIA IMMEDIATELY SUGGESTS A GANG-RELATED HIT. BUT ACCORDING TO EVERYONE WHO KNEW HIM, KEVIN HAD NO GANG TIES.

SEAN STERLE: Through 50, 60 interviews of people that knew him, from his parents, his closest friends, on to people that didn't know him very well, it was amazing. The things we found out about what a good person Kevin was. No gang affiliations, no, no violence, no enemies, any of that stuff. His parents did a phenomenal job of raising him.

NARRATION: SINCE KEVIN WAS AN UNLIKELY SUSPECT FOR SUCH A BRAZEN ATTACK, A THEORY QUICKLY EMERGES THAT THIS COULD HAVE BEEN A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

SEAN STERLE: The area where the studio was, even though, you know, in that neighborhood right around there is actually a very nice area, it's still considered part of the Imperial Village Crips territory, which, there was an Imperial Village Crip gang member with a green Camaro very, very similar to Kevin's. And that was a thought, is that the, you know, rival Blood gang had thought that Kevin was this Crip member in his green Camaro, and that's what led to his death. From running down all the leads we had on that, talking to that gang member, and members of the rival gang. You know, I think we're really confident that that was not the reason that Kevin was shot. It was not a mistaken identity.

NARRATION: KEVIN'S GREEN CAMARO IS PROCESSED FOR EVIDENCE. THEY FIND HIS LAPTOP, CONTAINING THE MUSIC WORK HE WAS SO PASSIONATE ABOUT, BUT IT DOESN'T LEAD TO ANY CLUES. THE CAR IS RELEASED TO KEVIN'S PARENTS.

KEVIN HARRIS SR: Kevin's mom kept that Camaro in front of the house, and in the back for a while, with the window shot out. Eventually, she got the windows fixed, and was driving that car as well. She was fearless. She dared whoever did that to her son to come roll up on her. Her loyalty to Kevin, she kept that car even when it wasn't running. She wouldn't let go of it.

NARRATION: IN THE SEARCH FOR LEADS, POLICE CHECK A SECURITY CAMERA AT THE LOCATION OF THE SHOOTING, BUT IT'S A DEAD END. POLICE ALSO UNDERTAKE A MASSIVE NEIGHBORHOOD CANVASS. IT WAS STILL EARLY IN THE EVENING WHEN HE WAS SHOT, SO SOMEONE HAD TO HAVE SEEN OR HEARD SOMETHING THAT COULD BE HELPFUL.

SEAN STERLE: There were a number of people who heard the shots, and then heard a car speed off westbound down 118th Place, but only the one person happened to be outside, and was able to see the shooting. The witness was not close enough to hear anything as far as conversation wise, but the witness believed that there might have been, you know, just from the amount of time they were next to each other, might have been some talk, you know. Kevin's driver's side window was down. It was probably because he, in his friend's opinion, that he would have known who pulled up next to him, you know, to talk to him. The witness was able to say that there was definitely at least two people in the car that pulled up next to Kevin, not sure if it was two or three, but believed there was a driver and then the front passenger seat, and then possibly also the back passenger side might have had someone. So at least two in the car, maybe three. There were two different weapons used in the shooting, so, two different guns. We could tell that from the shell casings that were recovered at the scene. The car pulled up so close to him, our witness said maybe 12 inches away, you know, from passenger side door to Kevin's driver side door, maybe even closer. And it was so close that there were shell casings from the shooter's gun that ended up inside Kevin's car.

NARRATION: THE WITNESS TESTIMONY AND FORENSIC EVIDENCE BOTH SUPPORT THE CONCLUSION THAT THIS WAS NOT A GANG HIT. THE KILLERS LIKELY KNEW KEVIN AND WERE CONFIDENT HE'D BE UNARMED AND DEFENSELESS WHEN THEY UNLEASHED THEIR HAIL OF BULLETS.

SEAN STERLE: In my opinion, it was definitely a planned assassination, if you will, for lack of a better word, on him that night. Usually in a gang shooting, if it's going to be a car-to-car gang shooting, gang's going to pull up, they're going to think it's another gangster who might have a gun. So, they're going to shoot- get off a few shots and then take off, where this was not the case. With the number of shots that were shot at him and the fact that the car pulled up and it was there for let's say five seconds like door, you know, passenger door to driver door before any shots were fired. He was probably targeted that night.

KEVIN HARRIS SR: Someone would have had to know what time and where he was going. Period. He never goes on a Sunday. He's only talking to certain people. Whoever they say he was talking to that night, whoever the last person they said he was talking to, someone knows, and knew what time he was going to be there and was waiting for him. And yes, that's an ambush with two different handguns, a nine-millimeter and another weapon, and you're shooting 7 to 10, possibly more, multiple times. You overkilled my child. How many times did you have to shoot him? How many times?

NARRATION: AS INVESTIGATORS DELVE DEEPER INTO KEVIN'S LIFE, THEY FOCUS ON THE POSSIBILITY THAT KEVIN'S DEATH COULD BE CONNECTED TO HIS WORK IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY.

SEAN STERLE: When he kind of got into the hip hop, rap world and he started making music for some unsavory characters to say, I would say. So, he was just a little naive, and, you know, wasn't prepared to deal with some of the people that he was dealing with as a very talented music producer, he was trying to find his way and find success there. But with that, being this naive kid who, you know, wore, uh, polo shirts and things like that, it just didn't fit in.

KEVIN HARRIS SR: There is a strong possibility that jealousy may have occurred with possibly someone that claimed to be close to him about the music. Possibly. There were occasions where he mentioned about, "Do you think I should get bulletproof windows?" And I said, of course, resoundingly loud, "Why? Is somebody messing with you, Kevin?" "Nah, Dad. I'm all right." Not I'm, not like, "I'm alright." Not, "No, Dad I'm alright." I said, "Kevin, all you have to do is speak on it, and just let Dad know." "I know." So, of course, when I mentioned that to people, and that's been mentioned these, people say, "Wow, what was that about?"

NARRATION: THE INVESTIGATION TURNS UP ANOTHER INTRIGUING LEAD WHEN ONE OF KEVIN'S FRIENDS REVEALS A CONVERSATION HE'D HAD WITH THE VICTIM PRIOR TO THE SHOOTING.

SEAN STERLE: A couple of weeks before he was killed, he told his friend, he said, "Hey, I'm, I'm getting blamed for something that I didn't do, and I'm, and I'm scared of what might happen." His friend, you know, kind of pushed like, "Well, what's going on?" He's like, "Yeah, you don't even want to know. I don't even want to tell you." That was something that was corresponding with about the time I think he was talking about getting bulletproof windows. So obviously, there was something. That's the big \$10,000 question that we're trying to figure out. What exactly was it that he was getting blamed for that he was scared about that, a couple weeks later, he ended up being shot to death over? That's the bottom line of what's going to solve this case.

NARRATION: THERE'S ONE PIECE OF EVIDENCE THAT SEEMS TO SUGGEST THAT KEVIN FELT THREATENED AND MAY HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR AN ESCAPE. HE'D RECENTLY LOOKED INTO JOINING THE NAVY.

KEVIN HARRIS SR: I did hear where he was thinking about the Navy. But all I needed to know, if there was an issue with someone. He would always say, "Nothing, Dad. Everything's okay." "Is everything okay, Kevin?" "Yeah, I'm okay." I don't know if it was because he was trying to handle himself, or he was protecting his family.

NARRATION: BUT IF KEVIN FELT THREATENED BY ANYONE, HIS CLOSE FRIEND JIMMIQUE DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT IT.

JIMMIQUE PARSONS: At least to me, he never verbalized it, in terms of him being afraid of anything or indicating that he had any enemies. There's nothing that stands out to where it's like, "Oh, well, you

know, maybe this one altercation.” Again, Kevin wasn't the type of person that looked for confrontations with anyone. I can't even fathom him having an enemy.

NARRATION: KEVIN SR. CONTINUES TO SEE SIGNS AND CLUES LOOKING BACK ON THE DAYS AND WEEKS LEADING UP TO HIS SON'S MURDER THAT SOMETHING WAS AMISS.

KEVIN HARRIS SR: We had a gentleman neighbor that passed away the Labor Day before he passed away. When me and Kevin embraced after we talked about it, Kevin's embraced didn't release. And he hugged me longer. And I asked him, "What's wrong?" He said, "Nothing. I just love you. I appreciate everything you, Mom, you know, always do and did." What that was all about, did I look into it any further than that? No. The next time I see my child was in a casket. Should have been avoided. It shouldn't have happened, but I'm not giving up. Because someone, everyone is going to be held accountable.

NEWS REPORT: A young man murdered. More than eight years later, his killer is still on the loose and his parents won't let this case go. Thanks to their persistence, the FBI is now involved.

NARRATION: IN 2015, SIX YEARS AFTER KEVIN'S MURDER, THE FBI IS ENLISTED TO HELP POLICE WITH THE INVESTIGATION. THEY REINTERVIEW WITNESSES AND KEVIN'S FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND CO-WORKERS, HOPING TO TRIGGER A NEW LEAD.

SEAN STERLE: The things that tend to solve cold case murders are one, changes in relationship, and two, changes in technology. With the increased technological advances on as far as the cell phone goes, we were able to get more texts, and with those texts, and increased phone log of the calls from the five or six weeks prior to his murder, we were able to tell who he was talking to in the days and especially in the hours, if not the hour, before he was killed. There were text messages between him and some people. Those people were aware of where he was going to go, and what time he was going to get there.

NARRATION: AGENT SEAN STERLE BELIEVES HE IS CLOSE TO BREAKING THE CASE, BUT NEEDS ONE LAST PIECE OF THE PUZZLE.

SEAN STERLE: Who could have been that mad at him? And, you know, and what happened? So that's what we're looking for, for the public. For somebody that might have been in the mix and known these guys and known what happened or know who was really offended by him. And hopefully, you know, that person will come forward. The FBI, for the past several years has been offering up to \$25,000 to anyone who comes forward with information or tips that leads to the arrest of the individuals involved in the Kevin Harris murder. In my 23 years in the FBI working different cases, I have never worked a case this long and this hard that I haven't gotten one really good break. And it's been mind boggling. Sometimes you just have evidence falling out of the sky, you know, you walk out of your house in the morning, you're going to get hit with evidence, right? You can't help put the case together. This one has been the exact opposite. Just digging, scratching, digging, scratching and our big break has not come. So, we're due. This is the most personal I've ever taken a case ever in my 23 years. You meet with the parents and, you know, the heartbreak over losing their only son is, is just so palpable, and is

so, you know, just gut wrenching, that it motivates you to, you know, when you think you don't have another lead to follow you, you keep digging, because you, you don't want to let them down. And they're two great people. It definitely keeps me motivated to keep scratching for evidence and try to solve their son's murder so they can get a little bit of justice.

NEWS REPORT 2: For the Harris family, there is a pain worse than losing a child. It's the heartache that deepens by time, and no answers. Eight and a half years after their son Kevin Robert Harris was murdered, and still no arrests.

NARRATION: TODAY, KEVIN'S FAMILY IS LEFT WITH VIVID MEMORIES, ESPECIALLY OF THEIR SON'S FUNERAL, WHICH WAS A POWERFUL TESTAMENT TO THE LOVE AND RESPECT HE EARNED FROM ALL THOSE AROUND HIM.

KEVIN HARRIS SR: The service was held at Harrison Ross Mortuary. We gave the eulogies there. The last thing I said was, "the butterfly has left the cocoon," and I went over there and, uh, kissed him. And I wasn't rushing closing the casket on my son. I took my time. That was the hardest thing I ever had to do in my life was to close him in there.

JIMMIQUE PARSONS: The thing that, that stands out the most to me, and it still gives me chills to this day, is just the last moment like when you walk out of the funeral home and knowing that I would never see him again and it finally, like, registering, like, this is the last time that you get to see him. That's the thing that stands out to me to this day. It also gives me, sadly enough, it gives me the thought of cherishing life, because you never know the last time you see somebody, so I always keep that in the back of my mind. But that's the one thing that stands out the most, just knowing like I'd never see my brother again.

KEVIN HARRIS SR: We just need one person that's on the fence on giving information to help us with that one piece of information, the smoking gun, to corroborate what we have already, and what we know already. That's all we need is just one person. We've suffered long enough. This young man needs to be laid to rest the right way, with justice. We're already going to make a silver lining with his music. We're going to make sure that we're going to be able to share his vision of music along with the tragedy of this and hopefully a teaching moment for all.

JIMMIQUE PARSONS: Kevin was a bright light and I just think that it would bring a lot of people peace to just finally conclude and know what transpired on that night.

NARRATION: KEVIN HARRIS WAS SHOT TO DEATH ON SEPTEMBER 20TH 2009, IN INGLEWOOD, CALIFORNIA. IF YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS CASE, PLEASE CONTACT THE FBI AT 310-477-6565 OR [TIPS.FBI.GOV](https://tips.fbi.gov), OR GO TO [UNSOLVED.COM](https://unsolved.com).

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NARRATION: Unsolved Mysteries is a production of Cosgrove Meurer Productions and Cadence 13. It is executive produced by Terry Dunn Meurer and Chris Corcoran. Produced by Lloyd Lochridge, Christine

Lenig, Courtney Ennis, Paige Hymson and Paul Yates. The Story Producer for this episode was Ann Toler, and it was edited by Paul Yates.

From Cadence 13, editing, mixing and mastering by Chris Basil, Andy Jaskiewicz and Bill Schultz. Production support by Sean Cherry and Ian Mandt. Artwork and design is by Curt Courtenay. Publicity by Josefina Francis and Hillary Schupf.

The original theme music was composed by Gary Malkin and Michael Boyd.

THANKS FOR LISTENING TO EPISODE 40 OF UNSOLVED MYSTERIES.