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Decades of Pain: Family Seeks Justice for Father and Brother's Unsolved Murders

Shamoi Elmes speaks out about his family's long struggle for answers after his father's murder in 1990 and his brother's death in 2020, with little progress from authorities on both cases

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Shamoi Elmes was 11 months old when his father was murdered in November of 1990. His killer was never found. “That is still what you call a cold case. There have been no updates, no leads, no arrest,” he told the Consortium. In September 2020, tragedy struck again – his older brother Secori Elmes [was gunned down](#) near the basketball court of the Oswald Harris Court public housing community, his childhood home. Four years onward, Mr. Elmes fears that his brother's case is following the same trajectory as his father's.?

“I have had challenges in my own life, just trying to navigate the whole idea that you’ll never meet your dad, you never got that opportunity,” he said. While he acknowledges that death, even untimely death, is a part of life, the lack of justice for his father – and perhaps now his brother – is a source of constant concern. “I have already spent my entire life without my dad, without justice, and then now my brother...that’s my big brother, you know what I’m saying? He’s supposed to teach and show and help.”?

Amidst his own personal pain and suffering, Mr. Elmes says he has also had to grapple with increasing frustration over how the authorities have addressed themselves to solving his brother’s murder.?

The case has apparently been languishing somewhere between the police and the Department of Justice.. Although there were several eyewitnesses to his brother’s shooting, people have been reluctant to come forward, Mr. Elmes says. One individual who reportedly spoke to officers several times may not be accepted as a witness because of their age, the grieving man claims he was told by law enforcement officials. His attempts to argue that provisions exist to ensure the safety of minor witnesses and assess the reliability of their testimony have fallen on deaf ears, Mr. Elmes said. Further attempts to press authorities to access the phone records of one person identified as a suspect have also proven futile thus far.

In the midst of his grief, Mr. Elmes continued trying to press for some movement on the case, however conversations with the detectives assigned to the matter, senior police officers, and Department of Justice officials had all fizzled out by the middle of last year, with all his expressed concerns about the nuances of the case receiving “dead air”.?

Even an attempt to lodge an official complaint was stymied, with Internal Affairs declining to take up the matter and even declining to put their decision on the record, instead delivering the bad news over the phone, Mr. Elmes said. He says his family has been failed twice by authorities — once in his father’s yet-to-be-solved murder, and now with his brother’s matter. “We are disappointed,” he said. “We have been let down, [we’re] just waiting to be picked up and just hear some twist or lead in an investigation. We don’t even get that, it’s just a failure. It feels like we have been failed by the Virgin Islands government,” he lamented.

The family has been struggling since the death of the oldest son. “I’ve just been struggling with finding balance and grieving and acceptance. When he was here, it was balanced,” Mr. Elmes said, his voice cracking with emotion. With no closure and no justice for his brother, “I don’t think we’re able to heal...I don’t even want to speak about my mom...that’s her first,” he disclosed. “It’s just always gonna be hard every year, every birthday, every celebration.”

The Consortium has reached out to the VIPD for comment, which was not forthcoming as of press time.