

# [***1 year later, families of 5 women found dead are still looking for an arrest***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BVY-J861-JBSS-S010-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

April 23, 2024 Tuesday 2:18 PM GMT

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**Length:** 734 words

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**Dateline:** (KPTV)

**Body**

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PORTLAND, Oregon ([*KPTV*](https://www.kptv.com/2024/04/23/1-year-later-families-5-women-found-dead-are-still-looking-an-arrest/)) -- It was in the spring of 2023 that law enforcement from different jurisdictions around the metro area announced that they had found the bodies of Kristin Smith, Charity Perry, JoAnna Speaks, Bridget Webster, and Ashley Real.

All were initially reported missing by their family members. One year later, FOX 12 sat down with members of the victim's families. They described a year of intense emotions as they waited for someone to be charged with their loved one's murders.

"It's an emotional roller coaster," said Melissa Smith, Kristin's mother. "Even though we haven't said anything to anybody, it doesn't mean that we haven't been digging and searching and investigating ourselves together and whatever we can come up with trying to help."

Over the last year, there have been some public developments in their cases. In summer 2023, the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office announced a person of interest in the deaths of four of the women. It wasn't until that fall that Portland Police confirmed that Speaks' case was transferred to their bureau from Southwest Washington.

The families said detectives have reassured them their cases are still very much active. Diana Allen, Charity's mother, said the first anniversary brings back the emotions of the day her daughter was found.

"I feel like I can speak for myself and not for these three, but for Ashley and Bridget's family too," she said. This is still extremely traumatizing. This is still very there and unfortunately, with the year anniversary, it's a reminder of how broken we were in the beginning."

The first anniversary also falls around the primary election in Oregon, and a heated race for the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office. In the voter's guide for the election, Nathan Vasquez, who is running to unseat Mike Schmidt, references the investigation into the person of interest.

"Under my opponent's watch, a violent criminal who was arrested for kidnapping and assaulting a police officer was released from prison. Once free, he murdered four women," Vasquez claims in the pamphlet. The families of the women said they were not told by Vasquez's campaign about the statement.

"I'm devastated about whether or not this is going to affect our cases, and at the same time emotionally angry to think that it's possible our loved ones would be used as political pawns," said Allen.

"I am hurt you have not reached out to us," Smith said. "I feel like you have zero empathy for us families and the traffic nightmare we're going through."

The families said their frustration is on both sides of the ticket, not just one candidate. They're hoping ***politics*** doesn't get in the way of finding answers.

"They've told us nothing," said Ariel Hamby, step-sister of Joanna . "I know we keep saying that but a year in and we're just picking at anything we can. It's almost like we will be getting answers without them telling us if something were to happen around an election," she said. "That's what makes me think our cases are being used as a political ploy and that makes me very unhappy."

Vasquez's campaign sent FOX 12 a statement in response to the statement in the voter's pamphlet:

"My heart goes out to the families who are dealing with such a horrible tragedy. I have spent my entire career fighting for justice for victims and their families. I am committed to doing the same for the families involved with the tragic loss of these women. It is critically important for the District Attorney to work every day on behalf of crime victims. We cannot have a repeat of Mike's failure to review commutations. I am frustrated and saddened by the fact that these families are still waiting for justice and look forward to working with them."

FOX 12 also reached out to the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office to see if there were any updates with a potential indictment, but didn't hear back. But within the next year, the families said they want to see an indictment and justice.

"We need the closure, we need to be able to breathe," Smith said. "We need a conviction. We deserve that."

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By Connor McCarthy

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**Load-Date:** April 23, 2024

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