

Son found dead in 2003, but city mixup causes B'klyn dad to suffer ...

8 YEARS OF AGONY

A BROOKLYN DAD'S eight-year search for his missing son ended in tragedy when he learned the boy had been buried in an unmarked pauper's grave after a medical examiner's mix-up.

"Goodbye, Babos," were the last words Sahil Cansev heard from his 16-year-old son, Cemal, as he left their Brighton Beach home June 27, 2003, on his way to Lincoln High School to pick up his report card.

EXCLUSIVE
BY JANON FISHER
DAILY NEWS WRITER

Two days later, when police filed a missing person's report, they warned the father that his son might be a runaway.

A photo of the teen showed he had shaved the end of his left eyebrow — an identifying mark of the Crips street gang, police theorized.

Cansev said detectives in the missing person's squad told him that if they had any news, they'd let him know.

"They never called," said Cansev, who insisted his son was a good kid — a homebody who was never in trouble and not involved in gangs.

So the distraught dad, who immigrated with his family from Turkey to the U.S. after winning the green card lottery, made finding Cemal his crusade.

Cansev, 54, scoured the city, papering subway stations, public housing projects and streets with missing persons posters asking for information about his son.

He traveled to California, Ohio, Colorado, Maine and Washington, chasing leads from people who claimed to have spotted his son.

Two years after Cemal disappeared, a woman called to complain that the boy had mugged her in Central Park, but nothing came of the sighting. Another time Cansev drove to Atlantic City on a tip his son was in a hospital there, but it wasn't him. Cansev even refused to move homes in case his son ever returned.

"I always thought that Cemal was alive because of all these sightings," he said, wiping tears from his eyes.

But when police knocked on his door in February, his hopes collapsed. They told him Cemal had drowned in the water off of the 69th St. Pier in Bay Ridge on July 7, 2003, a little over a week after he went missing.

"I was shocked," Cansev said.



Body of missing teen was found in 2003, but not ID'd as Cemal Cansev until earlier this year.

The medical examiner's office said that they had originally misidentified the boy as a 25-year-old Asian man because of damage to his body from being in the water for so long. Spokeswoman Ellen Borakove said a federal grant recently allowed the office to recheck all John and Jane Doe cases with DNA testing.

In November, the family submitted DNA swabs, and coroners made a definitive match in January. Borakove said before the DNA link, the office never tried to match fingerprints — which were available from Cemal's passport application — or dental records because it's the NYPD's job. Police said that they were looking

into the case and did not comment on the case.

The family filed a notice to sue the city last week.

"The city of New York handled the death of Cemal Cansev ineptly, conducting an incomplete and substandard investigation," said the family's lawyer, James Greenberg.

"City employees failed to access available public records that would have enabled proper identification of the body. As a result of the city's negligence, this family was tortured for eight years instead of eight days."

The ordeal has left Cansev broken. "I don't want any other family to suffer the way that I have," he said. "This is a scandal."