The Coldons were mystified when they learned where their daughter’s car was abandoned. There was no reason — that they knew of — why Phoenix would have been in such an unsavory part of the city. But as they would soon find out, there was a lot they didn’t know about their talented, loving, God-fearing daughter.

Lawrence and Goldia Coldon said that law enforcement immediately branded their daughter a runaway and that neither police nor the media treated Phoenix’s disappearance with enough urgency because she was black.

Phoenix grew up in a strict family and it seems that at some point, she decided it was time to carve out a path of her own. But she did her carving in secret, knowing her family wouldn’t approve of some of her actions.