

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“Suspect held in '86 homicide,” The Atlanta Journal-Constitution December 8, 2004.

After 18 years, the murder of an Atlanta television station receptionist has been solved. Richard Hambrick, 49, was arrested after DNA evidence collected from the crime 18 years ago was linked to his through the state DNA Databank.

“Jacko Swabbed, and it's a Bitter Pill,” Daily News (New York) December 6, 2004.

Investigators took a sample of Michael Jackson's DNA, a day after they raided his Neverland Ranch in preparation for his upcoming child molestation trial.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“Retesting of Crime Lab Work in Question; Outside analyst consulted HPD, prosecutors before drafting his report,” The Houston Chronicle December 6, 2004.

Questions regarding the independence of the retests of work from Houston's Crime Lab were raised after a DNA analyst from a private lab testified that he consulted with prosecutors and police before drafting a report about evidence in a capital murder case.

“National Briefing West: California: Challenge to DNA Collection Law,” The New York Times December 8, 2004.

Civil liberties groups have filed a lawsuit in federal court to try to overturn a state law approved by voters in November which requires DNA samples from anyone arrested on a felony. The civil liberties groups opposed the passage of the law, Proposition 69, saying that it is unconstitutional and amounts to “unreasonable searches and seizures.”

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“Wrongly imprisoned man to get \$25,000; State officials say Avery deserves more in damages,” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Wisconsin) December 3, 2004.

Steven Avery will receive \$25,000 to start, in his compensation for 18 years in prison for a sexual assault that DNA evidence now says he did not commit. Avery has filed a damage claim to the state for \$1 million.

“Man gets life in prison in driveway slaying; Arguments that police lab tests were faulty failed to convince jury,” The Houston Chronicle December 9, 2004.

Despite arguments that the Houston Police Department Laboratory affected DNA evidence in the capital murder case of Sheldon Thompson, Thompson has been convicted and sentenced to life in prison.

“DNA Test Confirms Conviction; Man was Guilty of 1973 Murder,” Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL) December 7, 2004.

After a judge granted a defense request to test DNA evidence from the convicted murderer Learie Leo Alford's and his victim, the results have confirmed Alford's guilt.

DNA Science and Technology

“Britain Turns to Law to Stifle Soggy Insults,” The Seattle Times December 3, 2004.

Train commuters in London will no longer be able to get away with venting their frustration at conductors for travel delays by spitting on them. Employees of the country's transportation system are being armed with DNA kits so that the spit can be swabbed, tested and identified in the country's DNA Databank. The culprits will face criminal charges with fines ranging from \$100-\$1,000.

“Genetic Evidence Seen as Suspect; Forensics: As the Authorities Increasingly turn to DNA Samples in Crime Fighting, Critics say that the Process is Susceptible to Error,” The Baltimore Sun, December 5, 2004.

In an article to be published in the journal Nature Genetics, bioethicists Mildred Cho and Pamela Sanker argue that racial and ethnic typing from genetic markers in DNA samples is on its way to acceptance in forensic testing and in the courts. However, they argue, this racial and ethnic typing is of questionable reliability, raises significant privacy concerns, and may not meet the criteria for probable cause.