

DNA Evidence and Crime-solving

“DNA Ties Ex-Con to Girl Rape,” Daily News, New York, September 28, 2004.

A convicted rapist has been charged in last year’s brutal rape of a 9-year-old Harlem girl after detectives discovered his DNA matched evidence taken in the attack. Investigators found that the DNA of the former convict, who was being held in connection with the rape of another woman, matched the evidence found on the little girl.

“DNA Tests Identify Bomber,” Herald Sun, Melbourne, Australia, September 29, 2004.

Police in Indonesia say that they have identified the suicide bomber in this months Australian Embassy attack after finding DNA that matched samples taken from his mother.

“Man convicted in ’86 slaying of Chula Vista girl,” The San Diego Union-Tribune, September 29, 2004.

A repeat sex offender has been found guilty of kidnapping, raping and murdering a 14-year-old Chula Vista girl who disappeared from her home in 1986. Williams, 49, was linked to the crime in 2003, when his DNA was matched through the California Department of Justice computer system to the genetic material found on the girl’s body.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“Rape case won’t end crime lab criticism; Man who faces sentencing today was convicted on tainted evidence, lawyers says,” The Indianapolis Star, September 29, 2004.

A Marion County Judge will sentence serial rapist Charles Hill amid criticism that his conviction was tainted by scandal at a local crime lab. “They had no case without the DNA,” said the defense attorney Kevin McShane, “when that is all you got, it better be perfect. It really fell short in this case.” A discredited analyst processed the DNA evidence that was used in the case to link Hill to the rapes of four women and a 13-year-old girl. “Nobody should be convicted on science that is questionable,” McShane said.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“Clear the DNA Backlog,” Chicago Tribune Company, September 25, 2004.

A long-stalled, bipartisan bill was finally approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee after long debate. The bill will earmark \$1.3 billion over five years to expand the use of DNA testing, particularly in death-penalty cases to clear up the backlog of DNA cases.

“Counties Receive Grants for DNA Processing,” Sun-Sentinel Company, September 25, 2004.

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Prepared by Rebecca Mitcheson

Miami Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties are among the statewide recipients of almost \$9 million in Department of Justice DNA grants, meant to improve the DNA processing abilities of police laboratories and to clear backlogs at those departments.

“BCA Grant Prompts another Official Visit,” Star Tribune, Minneapolis, MN, September 30, 2004.

A top U.S. Justice Department Official, Sarah Hart, was at a news conference in St. Paul to announce a \$1.1 million grant to help the state’s Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) catch up on its backlog of DNA casework.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“Mom Still Asks ‘Why’; Michael Mandel Says Girl’s 1984 Murder Still haunts Kin,” The Toronto Sun, September 26, 2004.

Twenty years ago Christine Jessop, aged 9, was abducted, raped and murdered, yet the vicious rapist still remains free unexposed and unpunished. The only suspect in the case was exonerated after his DNA evidence did not match that on the girl’s clothes. The DNA from the murder scene now lies in the National DNA Data Bank waiting for a match from known offenders. However, the law states that criminals do not have to submit their DNA to the databank if they were convicted before 2000 unless they were found guilty of a series of murders or sexual assaults; it is therefore conceivable that the murderer has been convicted in the past but does not have to share his DNA.