

Forensic DNA News
Week of June 18 – June 24, 2006
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DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“Aborted fetus used to catch a rapist; Clinic hands over evidence for DNA” *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, Ohio) June 21, 2006

In Cleveland, Ohio, police executed a search warrant at an abortion clinic to obtain an aborted fetus from a 14-year-old rape victim in order to run a DNA analysis on the fetus in an attempt to identify the rapist.

“HPD makes arrest in iconic DNA case: New suspect's DNA match in '98 rape further clears name of wrongly convicted man” *The Houston Chronicle* June 22, 2006

Police arrested Donnie Lamon Young, 24, after a state database of DNA samples matched his profile to evidence from the rape of a Houston woman who was taken at gunpoint from her apartment complex, raped by two men and dumped in a field. An innocent teenager had served over four years in prison for the same crime. He was exonerated after DNA tests discredited analyses performed by the Houston Police Department crime lab that helped convict him.

“2nd trial to start in child killings; 2 accused of slashing throats of 3 young relatives; first proceeding ended in a hung jury” *The Baltimore Sun* June 22, 2006

Policarpio Espinoza, 24, and Adan Canela, 19 are accused of slashing the throats of three young relatives with no clear motive. The first trial for the two Mexican immigrants ended in a hung jury. Two pairs of blue jeans stained with the children's blood, one containing skin cells consistent with Espinoza and one with skin cells consistent with Canela, were found at the defendants' home.

“3rd Durr brother accused of rape” *Chicago Tribune* June 21, 2006

Eric Durr, 36, was arrested after his DNA matched evidence taken from the scene of a 1997 sexual assault. Durr was serving a prison sentence for robbery last year. State law required him to provide a DNA sample, which was entered into the Illinois DNA databank and matched to the evidence from the 1997 rape. Durr's brothers, 37 and 38, are both currently serving prison sentences for over twelve rapes committed between the two men.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“Local News Briefs: Convicts' DNA samples a must, sheriff says” *Buffalo News* (New York) June 18, 2006

Sheriff Gary T. Mana of Genesee County called upon New York legislators to pass a law requiring the submission of a DNA sample upon a person’s conviction, regardless of the crime committed. Under present law, Mana argues, people convicted of a crime are required to provide fingerprints, but few must submit DNA, even though DNA is valuable in both proving guilt as well as exonerating the wrongly convicted.

“Albany votes to KO limits on pursuing rape cases” *Daily News* (New York) June 21, 2006

In Albany, lawmakers agreed to wipe out the statute of limitations in rape cases and require more criminals to provide DNA samples. Under current law, the statute of limitations allows five years for a rapist to be convicted. After that time, the case is abandoned.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“Deadline for requesting DNA testing eliminated” *St. Petersburg Times* (Florida) June 24, 2006

Florida Governor Jeb Bush signed a bill into law that protects inmates’ access to DNA testing while expressing concern about its potential effects on an already overburdened criminal justice system. Florida’s current law expires July 1 and the new law removes any deadline and affords DNA testing to people who plead guilty prior to July 1, not just those convicted by a jury.

DNA Evidence and Sentencing

“Death row inmate pleads guilty of Granite City rape” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (Missouri) June 23, 2006 Friday



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Douglas Belt, a 44 year-old death-row inmate, pled guilty to a 1992 rape of a then 21-year-old woman in her mobile home while her two children were sleeping. DNA was found at the scene of the crime and matched to Belt through the FBI DNA database. He was sentenced to an additional 20 years in prison.

“Fla. man convicted of killing San Diego woman in 1988” *The San Diego Union-Tribune* June 20, 2006

Mark Francis Elder, 48, was convicted of murdering a 27-year-old San Diego woman in her apartment 18 years ago. He faces a sentence of 26 years to life in prison for the first-degree murder conviction. Fluid and blood found at the scene were entered into the national DNA databank with no match. Later, DNA collected at a rape scene was also entered into the databank and was a match for the samples collected at the San Diego crime scene. A sample of Elder’s DNA was taken from a marijuana cigarette that was confiscated from his car when Elder was pulled over for driving with an expired license. His DNA was entered into the database and was a positive match for both cases.

“Guard gets six years' jail, 12 strokes for rape” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia) June 22, 2006

Arif Ahmad, 25, a security guard, was sentenced to six years in jail and 12 strokes of the rotan for having sex with a 15-year-old girl who he had impregnated. DNA tests later confirmed that the child that the girl gave birth to was the son of Arif.