

The New York Times

Editorials/Op-Ed

DNA Database

To The Editor:

“Mr. Spitzer’s DNA Proposal” (editorial, May 28) expressed some reservations about Gov. Eliot Spitzer’s plan to establish a database to include samples from everyone found guilty of a felony or a misdemeanor.

In addition to those concerns you express, we, too, have grave reservations because of the implicit but subtle racial impact of this plan.

Sweeps and subsequent arrests happen only in selected neighborhoods. Drug arrests and convictions in New York State are overwhelmingly black and Latino, hardly reflecting the total picture of drug use or sales in our state. When you gather the DNA of an individual, the entire family’s line is then subjected to scrutiny.

Because of the racially selective methods of arrests and convictions in New York State, the DNA proposal would have vast implications for the privacy of entire African-American and Hispanic families.

We applaud the opportunity to use DNA information to clear innocent prisoners, but the extension of DNA to those convicted of misdemeanors has a racial impact that is unacceptable.

The governor should go back to the drawing board on this one.

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Fortune Society
New York, May 29, 2007