

Litterbugs, beware: DNA tests used to shame public offenders

Toss a soda can on the street in Hong Kong, and you could find a DNA-generated picture of your face on the side of a bus shelter.

Recently, composite portraits of litterers generated from DNA taken from tossed cigarettes, coffee cups and condoms were posted in public places around Hong Kong. The portraits were part of an ad campaign called “The Face of Litter,” created in honor of Earth Day. The campaign was meant to raise awareness about the city’s litter problem, and hopefully frighten a few would-be litterbugs in the process.

The company that produced the DNA portraits, Virginia-based [Parabon NanoLabs](#), calls its DNA portrait technology “Snapshot.” It’s mostly aimed at law enforcement looking to solve [cases](#) where there is a DNA sample but no suspects or DNA database hits. With as little as 50 picograms of DNA—the average human cell contains about 6 picograms of DNA—Snapshot can create a composite profile of a person, including likely skin, eye and hair color, face shape and ethnic ancestry.

While the Face of Litter campaign may have been more about shaming litterers than law enforcement, DNA is increasingly being used to catch and prosecute minor criminals and civic nuisance-makers. In the United States, DNA was used to identify a culprit responsible for [vandalizing businesses in Oregon](#), and, in one case in Iowa, scratching “derogatory words” into a Volkswagen Beetle with a knife.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full original post: [DNA Testing Could Identify Litterbugs and Dog Poop Miscreants](#)