

## This legal squabble is challenging the way we handle DNA ownership

Toronto businessman Harold Peerenboom and Marvel Entertainment chairman Isaac “Ike” Perlmutter were locked in an absurd suburban skirmish, bickering over who should run the tennis center at Sloan’s Curve, the exclusive Palm Beach waterfront.

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Peerenboom began receiving volumes of hate mail, and his neighbors and business associates received letters accusing him of murder and molesting children.

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Peerenboom, seeking to pin Perlmutter as the mastermind behind the hate mail campaign, conspired with his attorney to covertly collect DNA from Perlmutter in order to compare it to DNA extracted from saliva on the hate mail envelopes.

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The Perlmutters were alleging that Peerenboom and his attorney had effectively stolen their DNA. Now, what began as a tete-a-tete about a community tennis center is now poised to potentially reshape how we think about who owns our DNA and the information it encodes.

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To argue that something has been stolen, you first have to make the case that you owned it in the first place. And in the past, courts have generally upheld that samples of your biological material are not something you can own.

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Even if the Perlmutters don’t eventually prevail, the case is significant, said [Jessica Roberts, the director of the University of Houston Health Law and Policy Institute]. “It goes against almost 30 years of what we thought we knew about people’s interest in their genetic data,” she said.

**Read full, original post:** [How a Legal Brawl Between Two Rich Guys Could Change How We Think About DNA](#)