

## Can a DNA test prove you are black? This man is suing the government to find out

In 2014, Ralph Taylor applied to have his insurance company in Washington State certified as a “disadvantaged business enterprise.” The [DBE program](#) at the U.S. Department of Transportation was originally designed to help minority- and woman-owned businesses win government contracts. So as proof of his minority status, Taylor submitted the results of a DNA test, estimating his ancestry to be 90 percent European, 6 percent indigenous American, and 4 percent sub-Saharan African.

Government officials reviewing Taylor’s application were not convinced. They saw that he looked white. They noted that he was unable to directly document any nonwhite ancestors. They doubted the underlying validity of the DNA test. And, most relevant to the purpose of the program, they found “little to no persuasive evidence that Mr. Taylor has personally suffered social and economic disadvantage by virtue of being a Black American.”

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So Taylor decided to sue—out of principle, he says, because other business owners who look white have won DBE certification.

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Genetic variation is real, but the boundaries of racial categories are socially determined and have constantly shifted over the course of American history. “You cannot rely on DNA evidence alone to decide what is really a socially constructed concept,” says [professor] [Sheryll Cashin](#).

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The latest disparity study, from 2017, concluded that minority and female business owners continue to face stereotypes, discriminatory attitudes, negative perceptions of competence, and exclusion.

**Read full, original post:** [A Man Says His DNA Test Proves He’s Black, and He’s Suing](#)