

Using DNA to crack cold cases: Should police lie to collect evidence from innocent people?

On an October morning in 2018, Eleanor Holmes and her husband left home to run an errand and found two men inside their front gate. They introduced themselves as detectives from Orlando, Florida, and said they needed the couple's help.

Standing in the driveway, the casually dressed detectives said they were trying to identify someone who'd been found dead many years earlier, the Holmeses recalled. ... Friendly and businesslike, they said they'd already got DNA samples from Eleanor Holmes' sister and an aunt. And now they wanted hers.

...

She thought nothing of it until a few days later, when she got a frantic phone call from the girlfriend of one of her sons, Benjamin Holmes Jr. Orlando police had just arrested him for allegedly fatally shooting a college student, Christine Franke, in her Florida home in 2001. They'd used DNA and genealogical records to tie him to the crime.

...

"When they arrested him, I knew they were lying," Holmes said. "They lied to us."

...

Asking innocent people to voluntarily provide their DNA — known as "target testing" — is an unseen but essential, and thorny, component of investigative genetic genealogy. ...

While American courts have ruled that police are allowed to mislead people to obtain evidence, there's a debate within law enforcement over how honest police should be in seeking DNA from people who aren't suspected of a crime.

[Read the original post](#)