

# Make DNA the new fingerprint

**C**arol Dickerson will never forget the nightmare of August 17, 1996, when she was horrifically raped by a stranger. Her unimaginable pain was compounded eight years later when she learned that her still unidentified assailant went on to rape again, attacking a 12-year-old girl.

Authorities knew that Carol's assailant was the same as the girl's because the DNA from both rape kits matched. But amazingly, because they could not match the DNA samples to a specific individual, his identity remained unknown.

In other words, she knew that the two-time rapist could strike again.

The reason DNA could not be linked to an individual was because New York State's overly restrictive law at the time required only a small number of offenders convicted of certain violent crimes to submit DNA samples. This was like asking only offenders convicted of a small number of crimes to be fingerprinted, when we currently fingerprint everyone arrested and booked for a crime, and keep those prints on file when the accused person is convicted.

Carol fought back in one of the best ways possible: She took action, along with a coalition of law enforcement officials and activists, and persuaded the Legislature to expand DNA collection to all felony and some misdemeanor cases, so that others could be spared her pain.

In 2006, then-Gov. George Pataki signed this new law, and in a moment nothing short of poetic justice, the second person arrested under the statute was the very man who had raped Carol and the 12-year-old girl. Just two weeks ago, the Daily News reported that Carol's rapist was sentenced to 75

## BE OUR GUEST

BY RICHARD ABORN

years for his role in the two sexual assaults.

But New York's use of DNA — this powerful, precise tool to convict the guilty and exonerate the innocent — is still nowhere near as advanced as it needs to be. We still fail to collect DNA samples in all misdemeanor cases, which comprise 54% of the individuals convicted of crimes.

This means in more than half the cases, convicted criminals who may go on to commit other crimes, including murder or rape, are slipping through the cracks of possible future detection.

This must be corrected. The evidence is clear that violent criminals commit both multiple crimes and nonviolent crimes. It follows then that the more offenders that are required to give DNA samples, the more crimes we can prevent.

In the 21st century, DNA should be treated in the same way that fingerprints were treated in the 20th century. That is, a DNA sample should be taken for all offenses and kept in a database in cases once a person is convicted.

There's no excuse. Not only is it now less expensive and faster to test DNA, but there are an ever-increasing number of surfaces from which DNA can be lifted, including guns and bullets. Almost anything a criminal touches has some chance of yielding a DNA sample.

With DNA both so present and so potent, we owe it to those that may become victims of violent crimes to do all that we can to prevent such attacks from happening in the first place.

*Aborn is the president of the Citizens Crime Commission of New York City.*

**Indefensibly,  
New York fails  
to collect it  
from more  
than half of all  
convicted  
criminals**

## DAILY NEWS

Chairman & Publisher **Mortimer B. Zuckerman**

Chief Executive Officer **Marc Z. Kramer**

Deputy Publisher & Editor-in-Chief **Martin Dunn**

Senior Executive Editor **Robert Sapio**

Managing Editors: **Stuart Marques/News; Orin Healy/Features;**  
**Thomas Sullivan/Production**

Sports Editor **Leon Carter**, Editorial Page Editor **Arthur Browne**