

This episode is super-sized, because the topic is that important: racism in genealogy and the new AncestryDNA policy that will eliminate all matches below 8cM for all users. I mention the multiple hacks and security breaches on genealogy and DNA websites within the past week, too. But more than anything, this episode allows my cousin, Brian Sheffey, to discuss his experience with multi-ethnic DNA matches and finding evidence of the identities of white ancestors among free black and enslaved ancestors in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. This is why I am upset about Ancestry's tone-deaf policy - it will wreak havoc on research among a population that already suffers from a comparative dearth of records or limited access to the documentary record. It also has the potential to affect those researching remote foundlings, adoptees and other unknown parentage cases. I believe that the decision Ancestry has made is evidence of the lack of diversity among their management and leadership, something that Ancestry's CEO promised to change when he voiced support for Black Lives Matter on June 3rd. Listen, learn, and make up your mind about the subjects we discuss.



Hello, and welcome to episode 308 of From Paper To People. I'm your hostess with the mostest, Carolynn ni Lochlainn, and I want to open by thanking my latest [Patreon](#) supporters: Anonymous, for a generous gift of \$50 support; Stephanie Nedrebo, my latest Vine at \$7.50/month; Allison Peacock, creator of [FamilyScrybe.com](#) and a new Root at \$5/month; Laura Daniel, a new Root at \$5/mo AND a new, regular volunteer for [The Reparational Genealogy Project](#); and back in April, I think I missed a thank-you to Abbie McDonough, a seedling at \$2/month. Every bit matters, so I thank you all VERY MUCH. Things are getting more and more busy around here, so the financial support really helps. To join them, hit up [patreon.com/ancestorsalive](#). To volunteer for The Reparational Genealogy Project, message me on my website, through Patreon, on Instagram or through my [Facebook page](#).

This episode is an interview with my cousin, Brian Sheffey. We spoke on July 15th, and we are

both pretty unhappy about AncestryDNA's new policy of deleting all matches below 8cM, a policy that will go into effect in August of 2020. He's here to explain it, and to have a chin-wag with me about actions we can take to preserve what we have before Ancestry's deadline.

There are two things you need to know before we begin: first, the author of the Cruwys blog I quote belongs to Debbie Kennett. You can and should follow it at [cruwys.blogspot.com](http://cruwys.blogspot.com), and while you're at it, follow her on Twitter [@DebbieKennett](https://twitter.com/DebbieKennett), two N's and two T's.

Second, freakishly enough, just a few days after we recorded this episode, GEDMatch blew it again. On July 19th, 2020, Verogen, the owner of GEDMatch, updated their software, which resulted in a temporary breach of their informed consent policy. All kits, for a short time, were rendered fully public because a user logged in and hacked the site, which means that those who opted out of participation in Law Enforcement research were "opted-in." There is no telling whether this window was sufficient time for anyone's privacy to be breached for a specific case, but for those, like me, who opted out, this is yet another in a string of disappointments regarding GEDmatch. Having just uploaded my DNA again a few weeks ago, I have removed my DNA from their database for the last time. There is another DNA database devoted exclusively to DNA matching for crimes, at [DNAsolves.com](http://DNAsolves.com). If you wish to participate in solving missing persons, unidentified victims and other criminal cases, upload your case there and at GEDmatch. Your opportunities to assist in criminal work are virtually unlimited. If you are concerned about YET ANOTHER privacy breach on GEDmatch, however brief, you may want to remain private by removing your kit from GEDmatch altogether. Unfortunately, this will hamstring genealogical researchers working with adoption, fostering, foundling and enslavement-related challenges. Maybe, sometime, someone with greater skills and vision than I have will create a similar site that is impermeable to law enforcement access. And I hope that those who opt in will not shame those who do not opt in. We all have our reasons for making our own choices, and our agency to do just that.

This breach, in turn, enabled another: apparently, the GEDmatch hacker gathered emails and

used them to wreak a little havoc with Family Tree Maker, a stand-alone program that links with Ancestry. And then, just when I thought I was done writing opening notes for this episode, [MyHeritage had a security breach!](#) I will hunt down links to articles about these various privacy and data safety issues and leave them in the show notes – check over the next few days for updates to those links. Listen to the end of the episode for further updates from AncestryDNA on their changing policy.

Here now, my interview with Brian Sheffey. We spend the last few moments geeking out about how we met and figured out that we were cousins. I hope you enjoy it.

(insert transcript here)

And there you go.

As of July 23, Ancestry stated the following to genealogist [Emily Doolin Aulicino](#), of Writing Your Memories, about dropping matches below 8cM:

“Based on customer feedback, we are delaying this change until late August so you have time to review and determine if you want to save any very distant matches by adding them to a group, starring them, adding a note, or sending them a message.

“We hope this helps.”

Well it does, and thank you Emily for posting that publicly on your Facebook page! We need to work together to stay informed because Ancestry is NOT putting its best foot forward, neither with updates about the policy nor with the policy itself.

As I said, please listen to [Episode 201](#), about joining Twitter and using it for genealogy. It’s the quickest way to stay informed on the latest developments in genealogical research, and it’s truly a well-developed, healthy community for help and support.

Thanks so much for listening. Keep researching, demand thoughtful policy from the powers that be, and above all, Expect Surprises!

LINKS RE: HACKING & SECURITY

[buzzfeednews.com/amhtml/peteraldhous/hackers-gedmatch-dna-privacy](https://buzzfeednews.com/amhtml/peteraldhous/hackers-gedmatch-dna-privacy)

[threatpost.com/leak-exposes-private-data-of-genealogy-service-users/157612/](https://threatpost.com/leak-exposes-private-data-of-genealogy-service-users/157612/)

[inputmag.com/culture/a-dna-testing-and-genealogy-service-was-hacked-and-the-cops-might-have-your-dna-gedmatch](https://inputmag.com/culture/a-dna-testing-and-genealogy-service-was-hacked-and-the-cops-might-have-your-dna-gedmatch)



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