

Face Recognition Technology  
Hnub Lor  
MSW Candidate, Wayne State University  
May 27, 2020

In late 2019, an analysis of cities with the most surveillance cameras in the world per capita conducted by Comparitech found Detroit to be the 69th world's most heavily surveillance city. It should come as no surprise as flashing Green Lights can be seen on gas stations, apartments buildings, churches, and numerous other buildings throughout Detroit. When Detroit Project Green Lights was launched in 2016, the use of Face Recognition Technology by Detroit Police Department was packaged and presented as a method to reduce crimes by installing cameras, and green lights to warn of the cameras, across the city.

Throughout my research, the use of Face Recognition Technology by law enforcement as a means to reduce crimes was supported by many. Individuals stated that the increase of cameras installed throughout the city would make crime easier to solve and help law enforcement locate missing people, children, and victims of human trafficking. Other individuals favored Face Recognition Technology because they believe removing interactions with police officers would remove the dangers that come with being racially profiled.

However, individuals who support the use of Face Recognition Technology are overlooking the biased data being fed into identifying a "suspect" or the person of interest. People of Color are overwhelmingly listed in police face recognition databases. This result is due to the fact that African Americans are statistically more likely than other demographic groups to be detained by law enforcement for the same crimes, therefore mugshots databases used by law enforcement contain more photos of African Americans. Even though Face Recognition Technology itself is not racist, the biased data being used to identify people of interest reinforces institutional racism. It is evident, then, that facial Recognition Technology is not a magic bullet against crimes or catching criminals and can be abused more readily than being used "correctly."

More so, news articles about Face Recognition Technology are unaware they are focusing on the correctable technological flaws. A quick search on the internet will pull more results stating that Face Recognition Technology suffers from being racial bias or the technology has a racial-bias problem. However, there is a need to address the implications of perfected facial recognition. Once Face Recognition Technology is deemed "perfected" and can distinguish Black and Brown people from one another, the dangers Face Recognition Technology will be far more than it poses now. As of current, Face Recognition Technology does have major flaws but the conversation needs to be shifted to its potential use and threats.