

Home Surveillance Tech: Ethical Concerns



Ring - Background/History

Founded in **2012** as Doorbot - a WiFi-enabled doorbell that allows you to see video of and talk to people as they arrive at your front door

In **2013** rejected on episode of Shark Tank, re-branded as Ring offering a suite of connective home security products

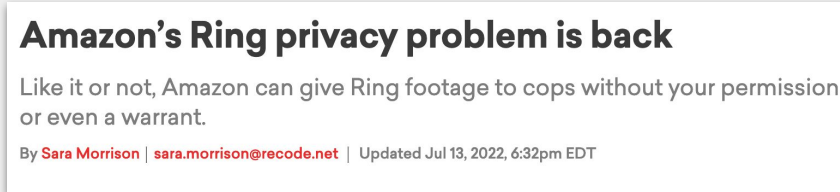
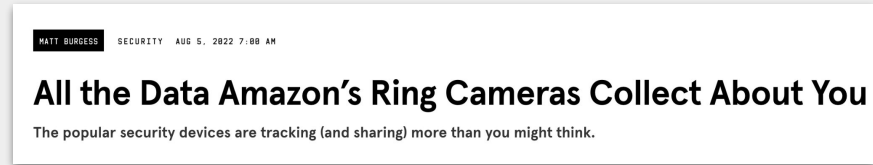
Acquired by Amazon in **2018**

By **2022** collaboration between Ring and the NYPD



Ring Ethical Concerns - Video Data Ownership/Security

2019 – Reports of Ring offices having access to all recorded videos start surfacing. Questions regarding encryption and video security begin arising as well.



2022 - Amazon admitted to sending footage to police without a court order

Ring - Video pipeline to Police Departments

"The ability to interact online with New Yorkers – often in real time – adds to the comprehensive crime-fighting strategies already employed by the NYPD in its relentless efforts to keep our city and everyone in it safe," said **Police Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell**. "True public safety is a shared responsibility, and this tool stands to further advance the collective work of our police and all the people we serve toward reaching that worthy ideal."

There were [405 police departments](#) in the program in August 2019. There are now [2,161](#).



Ring - Video pipeline to Police Departments

The NYPD's Gang Database: A New Age of Stop and Frisk

RESEARCH · JULY 23, 2019

The New York City Police Department maintains an expansive and growing database of New Yorkers it claims are “gang-affiliated.” The expansion of this gang database follows the 2014 decision that severely curtailed New York City Police Department’s discriminatory “Stop and Frisk” policy.^[1] Since that time, the gang database has been as large as 42,000 people; ninety-nine percent of whom are black and Latinx^[2] and none of whom can challenge their inclusion in the database.

Ring – Vigilantism and the new Neighborhood Watch

“When police are relying on private devices like Ring devices, it creates a democratic deficit, because now police can greatly expand their surveillance capabilities,” Max Isaacs, a staff attorney with the Policing Project. Citizen-on-citizen surveillance, which Isaacs calls “lateral surveillance,” lacks scrutiny. “They can have thousands of cameras in a jurisdiction ... without any legislative oversight.”



Apps even drive user engagement by inviting bystanders join in on the crime-oriented conversation: as on Facebook, users can comment, “like” and otherwise interact with posts with the click of a button.

Ring - Reinforcing Racial Profiling, a virtual gated community

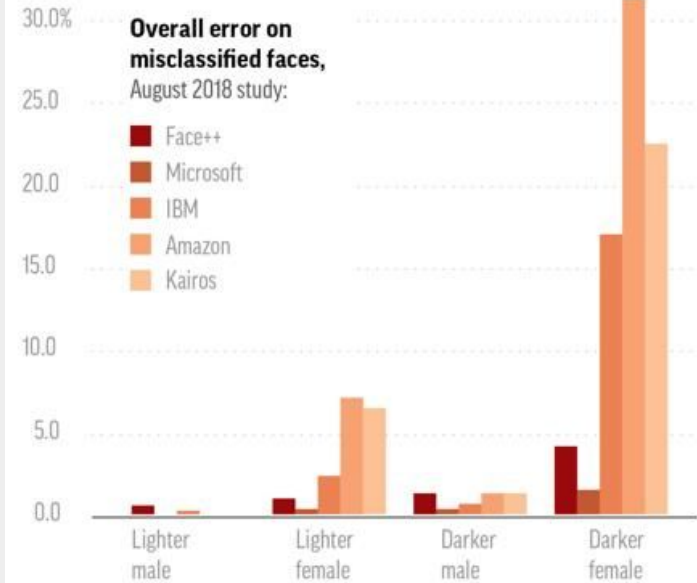
“We also may use the personal information we collect about you in other ways for which we provide specific notice at the time of collection and obtain your consent if required by applicable law.” ***Thanks for the ambiguous promise!***

Ring is pursuing facial recognition technology and marketing that technology to Police Departments. Facial recognition technology has been shown to disproportionately misidentify people of color.

Civilian “Spies” Expand Police Power and Boost Big Tech Profits - petty crimes are policed heavily, and racism is common.

Bias in facial recognition technology

A graduate student's research project has revealed problems in facial recognition systems used by various companies. The study has shown a larger percentage of error in detecting female faces, especially in women with darker skin tones.



Source: Joy Buolamwini, MIT; Inioluwa Deborah Raji, University of Toronto

AP

Citizen App

Dark roots – Peter Thiel

One of Citizen's first investors was Thiel's Founders Fund. Thiel also helped co-found Palantir Technologies, the controversial data-mining company that has faced criticism in recent years over privacy concerns and the vast amounts of data it collects and synthesizes for corporate and government clients. Palantir has worked with U.S. military and law enforcement. ICE has used Palantir's analytical software to find and arrest the parents of children who have crossed the U.S. border

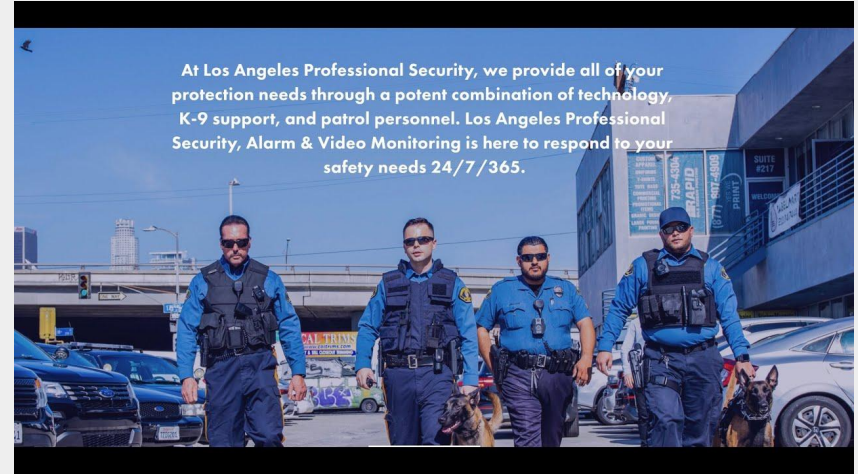


Citizen App - Vigilantism

Subscription Law Enforcement?

The app first appeared with a distinctly less chill name: **Vigilante**.

But does Citizen really keep us safe? Or does it just scare the hypervigilant shit out of us?



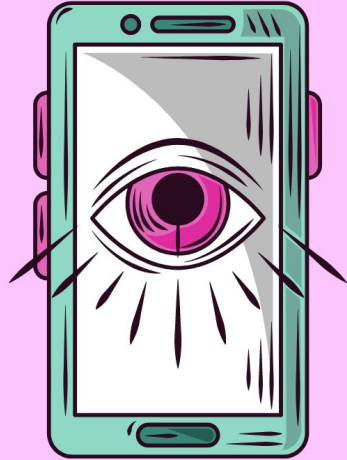
How Citizen sparked a \$30,000 manhunt for the wrong guy

The public safety app's new feature accidentally harked back to its Vigilante roots.

By **Sara Morrison** | sara.morrison@recode.net | May 18, 2021, 4:35pm EDT

All Home Surveillance Tech = eroding civil liberties

Perpetuating fear of other and normalizing the use of video surveillance, pitting neighbors against each other does not create safer communities



Neighborhood surveillance apps erode our sense of safety and social trust, promoting racial profiling, vigilantism, and neighbor-on-neighbor spying.