How Images Work Against You

Often, images are the first source of information that leads us to more information. That happens because of multiple things: first, images contain metadata that describes the image by providing information on the camera that took the picture, the date and time when the image was taken (that's how galleries in phones or other devices discern the exact sequence of images), the location of the image, and other information that allows your device to better describe the image to you. Second, images are often posted on social media where one can link pieces of information together to obtain a broader picture.

This means that to find the location where an image was taken, we can either elect to use software that provides us with the coordinates of the image or link pieces of information (social media, Google Maps, etc.) together to find the exact source and location of the information that is presented. For that, we can use websites that extract metadata from images and obtain some information in the process, but this method oftentimes can be inaccurate because not all images hold a lot of metadata (data about them) inside of themselves, so often we have to resort to another way of finding information. Let's do that together.

Let's say we have an image that depicts the following (the image can be found at https://x.com/trbrtc/status/1484027956326543362):
1. Cars driving to/from a tunnel through something that looks like a highway in the U.S.
2. A black Chevrolet car sporting the letters "T B T A" on its hood in the distance.
3. A piece of text on a metal bar that reads:
   Hear what is presented. Process and visualize the information presented.
   Be aware of your work place environment prior to starting your work tour and stepping off to the plaza.
   Be aware of work surroundings, conditions, and dangers such as working in live traffic, weather conditions, crossing the plaza, and establishing eye contact with drivers of vehicles, approaching vehicles with caution and having hands free, complacency, danger of road rage / DWI.

To find the exact place this photo was taken, we will start with a general overview of the picture. The text is as follows (formatting removed):

"Hear what is presented. Process and visualize the information presented. Be aware of your work place environment prior to starting your work tour and stepping off to the plaza. Be aware of the work surroundings, conditions and dangers such as working in live traffic, weather conditions, crossing the plaza and establishing eye contact with drivers of vehicles, approaching vehicles with caution and having hands free. Complacency. Danger of road rage / DWI."

From this text alone, we can discern that this image was made either in Canada or the U.S. because of the spelling of the word "visualize." Next, the word "DWI" refers to Driving While Intoxicated. Googling "DWI" informs us that DWI is a crime in New York. So, this image was likely made in the U.S., perhaps in New York.

There's a Chevrolet car to the side of the sign, too, and the car appears to have four letters "T B T A" ingrained on the front of it. If we search for "TBTA", we can quickly find that it refers to two different things, namely either a chemical substance or the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel

Authority in New York. It is clear from the outset that this image cannot be related to chemical substances, and instead, we're looking at an authority in New York. So, as New York comes up twice already, the location can be somewhere in New York. It looks like there's a ton of traffic, and the cars seem to be entering and/or leaving something akin to a tunnel. That only reinforces the point.

If we turn to the tunnels covered by the TBTA, from Wikipedia, we can see that TBTA covers two of them: the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel between Manhattan and Brooklyn, and the Queens-Midtown Tunnel between Manhattan and Queens. Two entrances and two exit points for both of the two tunnels mean that the location where this image was taken was in one of four locations.

Next, we will search for the tunnels using Google Maps and Street View. Before doing that, I'd like you to come back to the image and see if there are any distinctive features of it. I see a couple:
1. An exit or an entrance from or towards a tunnel.
2. A building far away with something akin to a needle on top of it.
3. The sign and the yellow object (trash can?) next to it.
4. We can see both lines of traffic from where the photo was taken.

With the approximate location (either the entrance to/from one of the tunnels) and exclusive features (see above) we turn to Google Maps Street View. We first check the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel, and it doesn't take long to discern the exact location – Google Maps also provides us with where we're standing at the present moment, so we know the exact address, too.

The exact location of where this photo was taken is 166 Hamilton Ave, Brooklyn, New York, United States. Wasn't that hard, was it?