

DNA structure co-discoverer James Watson to sell Nobel Prize amid backlash against racial remarks

James Watson, the famed molecular biologist and co-discoverer of DNA, is putting his Nobel Prize up for auction. This [sad final chapter](#) to his career traces back to racist remarks he made in 2007, which led to his fall from scientific grace.

Watson is best known for his work deciphering the DNA double helix alongside Francis Crick in 1953. The discovery revolutionized biochemistry and earned the pair and their colleague, molecular biologist Maurice Wilkins, the 1962 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. But in 2007 Watson made an incendiary remark regarding the intelligence of black people that lost him the admiration of the scientific community.

That year, [The Sunday Times](#) quoted Watson as saying that he felt “inherently gloomy about the prospect of Africa” because “all our social policies are based on the fact that their intelligence is the same as ours—whereas all the testing says not really.” He [added](#) that although some think that all humans are born equally intelligent, “people who have to deal with black employees find this not true.”

Watson’s remarks ignited an uproar. He [had to retire](#) from his position as chancellor of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. Sold-out gatherings in his honor were cancelled. Academic centers uninvited him for lectures. His peers condemned him: “He has failed us in the worst possible way. It is a sad and revolting way to end a remarkable career,” [said Henry Kelly](#), president of the Federation of American Scientists. His competitors debunked him: “Skin color as a surrogate for race is a social concept not a scientific one,” Craig Venter, the scientist who raced Watson to sequencing the human genome, said to the [BBC in 2007](#). “There is no basis in scientific fact or in the human genetic code for the notion that skin color will be predictive of intelligence.”

Read full, original article: [Why the Scientist Who Discovered DNA Is Selling His Nobel Prize](#)