

## Podcast: Geneticist Mary-Claire King nearly quit science—then discovered the first breast cancer gene

Biologist Kat Arney sits down for an interview with [Mary-Claire King](#), American Cancer Society professor of genome sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle.

<https://geneticliteracyproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/009-Chimps-Cancer-Genes-and-Missing-Kids-Genetics-Unzipped.mp3>



Pioneering geneticist Mary-Claire King

King has contributed to many areas of genetic science during an impressive career spanning more than four decades, from her early work showing that human and chimpanzee genes are 99% identical to finding BRCA1, the first 'breast cancer gene.'

Since the 1980s, King has also used her expertise to investigate human rights abuses and war crimes all over the world, starting with her work to [reunite children kidnapped](#) by Argentina's former military dictatorship with their families.

In a wide-ranging discussion, Mary-Claire King discusses her early days of working out baseball problems with her father, why she nearly left science before getting her PhD and how genetics can be used to combat deadly diseases.

[Listen to Mary-Claire on The Moth podcast telling the story of the bittersweet week in 1981 that launched her hunt for the BRCA1 breast cancer gene.](#)

[Full transcript and show notes here.](#)

**[Genetics Unzipped](#)** is presented by award-winning science communicator **[Dr Kat Arney](#)** and produced by **[First Create the Media](#)** for the UK **[Genetics Society](#)**. Follow Kat on Twitter **[@Kat\\_Arney](#)** and Genetics Unzipped **[@geneticsunzip](#)**

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