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Scientist's Remarks on Blacks Cause Furor Watson Suspended After Suggesting Whites Are Smarter

By Robin Shulman Washington Post Staff Writer Saturday, October 20, 2007; A02

NEW YORK, Oct. 19 -- [James Watson](#), who in 1962 shared a Nobel prize for discovering the structure of DNA, on Friday canceled a tour to promote his latest book after suggesting in a published interview that black people are less intelligent than whites.

In an interview in the Sunday [Times of London](#), Watson, 79, was quoted saying that he is "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."

[Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory on Long Island](#), where Watson is chancellor, announced Thursday night that it had suspended Watson from administrative duties at the prestigious facility. Board members were contemplating additional actions, spokesman Jim Bono said Friday. The members "have come to some conclusions" but will not comment further "until a number of issues are resolved," he said.

Watson, who had been touring [England](#) to promote his new book, "Avoid Boring People: Lessons From a Life in Science," returned to [New York](#) on Friday. He could not be reached for comment.

In the Times of London, Watson was quoted as saying that although he hopes that various races have equal intelligence, "people who have to deal with black employees find this is not true." He also was quoted saying that discrimination on the basis of skin color is inadvisable, because "there are many people of color who are very talented."

In a statement to the [Associated Press](#) on Thursday, Watson said: "I cannot understand how I could have said what I am quoted as having said. There is no scientific basis for such a belief."

The Associated Press reported Thursday that a spokesman for the Sunday Times said that the interview with Watson was recorded and that the newspaper stood by its article.

Bruce Stillman, the president of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, said in a statement Wednesday that his faculty members "vehemently disagree" with the published comments and that the lab "does not engage in any research that could even form the basis of the statements attributed to Dr. Watson."

"Scientific prestige is never a substitute for knowledge," said Elias A. Zerhouni, director of the [National](#)

[Institutes of Health](#), in his own statement. "As scientists, we are outraged and saddened when science is used to perpetuate prejudice."

Watson has become known for his caustic and controversial comments. In 2000, he said in a lecture at [Berkeley](#) that heavy black people have better sex lives than skinny white people. He has said that women should be able to abort homosexual fetuses, and that eugenics could be used to "cure" stupidity or make all girls pretty. In 1998, he predicted a cure for cancer within two years.

In 1953, he gained fame and helped launch a scientific revolution when he and [Francis Crick](#) published a one-page paper in the [journal Nature](#) announcing their discovery of the double-helix structure of the DNA molecule.

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