

**press release**

*DNA*, A GROUNDBREAKING PBS SERIES FROM THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK, PREMIERING JANUARY 2004, OFFERS A DEFINITIVE ACCOUNT OF THE GENETIC REVOLUTION AND ITS POTENTIAL TO TRANSFORM LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

Nobel Prize Winner Dr. James D. Watson Provides A Candid, Insider's Perspective On The Scientific Breakthroughs And The Human Dramas Behind What Is Being Called The Most Important Discovery Of All Time

*"DNA has moved from being an esoteric molecule only of interest to a handful of specialists to being the heart of a technology that is transforming many aspects of the way we all live. With that transformation has come a host of difficult questions about its impact – practical, social, and ethical."*

**-- Dr. James D. Watson**

Fifty years ago "the secret of life" was revealed by two unknown scientists – Dr. James D. Watson and Dr. Francis Crick – with their discovery of the double helix structure of DNA. That scientific breakthrough has been called the single most important discovery of all time. Its current applications – in modern medicine and food production, for example – have already changed the way we live now. Its future potential, specifically the controversial idea of "genetic enhancement" in the womb, could radically alter life as we know it.

Now, for the first time on television, a groundbreaking five-part PBS series from Thirteen/WNET New York charts the comprehensive history of DNA science – from the discovery of the double helix structure to the mapping of the human genome to the latest research – and examines its current, sometimes controversial applications and implications for the future. Narrated by Jeff Goldblum, *DNA* premieres consecutive Sundays, January 4 - February 1, 2004 at 10 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings).

"The history of DNA science is complicated, but this series makes it accessible to all audiences, whether or not they have a working knowledge of the subject," said Thirteen's executive producer Beth Hoppe. "Clear, concise interviews with the experts combined with state-of-the-art computer animations take viewers inside the processes being described. The



series also tells the fascinating, very human stories behind the scientific experiments and discoveries, introducing viewers to the brilliant, passionate, fiercely competitive, sometimes quirky individuals on the front lines.”

Since his discovery of DNA’s double helix structure, covered in part one of the series, *The Secret of Life*, Watson has remained on the front lines. He appears throughout the series, sharing his compelling stories and offering insightful commentary on the continuing drama of subsequent scientific breakthroughs. This is an epic tale with a lively cast of Nobel Prize winners and other talented scientists such as Dr. Rosalind Franklin, whose contributions to the double helix discovery are not widely recognized and were never officially honored. For some of them, it is an opportunity to reveal the real stories behind their achievements – the frustrations, the rivalry and the excitement as they raced one another to understand the essential mysteries of life.

Part two, *Playing God*, introduces the pioneers who carried out the first genetic engineering experiments, triggering a wave of controversy over the dangers of genetic manipulation, and generating a multi-billion dollar industry. The program looks back on the race to produce genetically engineered insulin, which today saves millions of lives the world over, and shows how the genetic modification of plants heralded the greatest revolution in agriculture since the industrialization of farming.

Part three, *The Human Race*, examines the race among scientists to catalogue all the genes in the human genome, essentially creating an “instruction manual” for human beings that could be used to trouble-shoot diseases and disabilities. The rivalry became so bitter that presidents and prime ministers had to intervene. In an exclusive interview for this program, President Clinton recalls his involvement in the Human Genome Project.

Part four of the series, *Curing Cancer*, reveals how the application of DNA science is changing – and saving lives. It tells the stories of scientists who are offering hope to terminally ill people by unravelling the mysteries of cancer. The key, they say, is tracing the many different types of cancer back to their DNA. The program recounts the inspiring story of one man whose life was saved by the first of a new generation of highly sophisticated cancer drugs that work because of the revolution in DNA science that began 50 years ago.

In part five, *Pandora’s Box*, Watson explains why he believes DNA science should be used to change the human race itself. His views are provocative, extraordinary and extremely controversial. He argues for a new kind of eugenics that allows parents to choose the DNA of their children – to make them healthier, more intelligent, even better looking. In the program, the parents of a child with Down’s Syndrome and a woman who suffers from manic depression make a case for the value of differences among people in society. Watson even talks about his own son, something he rarely does publicly, who is mentally ill – a “genetic injustice” as he calls

it. He says, "I think it's irresponsible not to try and direct the evolution to produce a human being who will be an asset to the world."

**DNA Online**, the companion Web site to the *DNA* series, will launch December 17, 2003 at [www.pbs.org/dna](http://www.pbs.org/dna). It will take users on an interactive tour through the history and the milestones of DNA science, further exploring the major discoveries and the behind-the-scenes rivalries. The site will also feature an animated model of the double helix, giving users the ability to rotate, zoom and obtain information about its chemical components. For each of the series' five episodes, the site's "Close Ups" section will provide an episode synopsis, video and audio clips, and a feature or essay.

Funding for *DNA* is provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

*DNA* is a Windfall Films production for Thirteen/WNET New York in association with Channel Four. David Dugan is the series producer. David Glover is the producer and director for *The Secret of Life* and *Pandora's Box*. Carlo Massarella is the producer and director for *Playing God* and *The Human Race*, and the director for *Curing Cancer*. Thomas Alkin is the producer for *Curing Cancer*. At Thirteen, Beth C. Hoppe is executive producer and William R. Grant is executive in charge. The DNA Web site is a production of Thirteen Online of Thirteen/WNET New York. It is produced by Brian Brunius and John Uhl. Anthony Chapman is director of Thirteen Online.

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Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Stage on Screen*, *EGG the arts show*, and *Cyberchase* – as well as the work of Bill Moyers – to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as The Ethnic Heritage Specials, The New York Walking Tours, *New York Voices*, *Reel New York*, and its MetroArts/Thirteen cable arts programming. With educational and community outreach projects that extend the impact of its television productions, Thirteen takes television "out of the box." And as broadcast and digital media converge, Thirteen is blazing trails in the creation of Web sites, enhanced television, CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs, educational software, and other cutting-edge media products. More information about Thirteen can be found at: [www.thirteen.org](http://www.thirteen.org).

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