

DNA PROFILING

The year was 1953. Scientists James D. Watson and Francis Crick worked feverishly in their lab in Cambridge, England. Watson was American. Crick was British. They were putting together a model of DNA. That stands for deoxyribonucleic acid.

DNA looks like a twisted ladder. Watson called it a “double *helix*.” He later published a very famous book called *The Double Helix*. It was about discovering the DNA model.



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DNA EVIDENCE

But a DNA test showed he was guilty. It took the jury less than two hours to decide the case. The court sentenced Josiah to 25 years in prison.

Three years later, TV reporters got a tip. It was about problems at the Houston police crime lab. The reporters investigated. They sent reports from the Houston lab to experts at a California university. The experts looked over the reports. They were full of errors. One professor said the reports looked like a bad junior high science project.

Luckily, Josiah's mother Batie watched the news that night. It was the answer to her prayers. She contacted the reporters. Eventually the Houston police crime lab was shut down. Josiah Sutton was released from prison. By then he had already been in jail for more than four years.



Debbie Smith listens during a senate hearing on the Advancing Justice Through DNA Technology Act of 2003. DNA testing identified her attacker.

DNA EVIDENCE

Ideally rape kits should be processed right away. They should be compared to the FBI database. If a match is found, police can charge the rapist. In real life this doesn't always happen. Forensics labs lack money for DNA testing. They don't have enough trained staff. So rape kits collect dust on the shelves. And rape victims wait—and worry.

The Debbie Smith Act is changing all that. This law provides money for forensics labs. They use the money to test DNA. It also helps pay for training new staff.

The act went into effect in 2004. Since then, hundreds of rapists have been found. Their victims finally have peace.

CODIS: The Master Key

The FBI's DNA database is called the Combined DNA Index System, or *CODIS*. It began operating in 1998. CODIS includes