



*The North Texas*

# Skeptic

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## Response to Chuck Gafford

by John Blanton

Chuck Gafford receives our newsletter, and he sometimes provides his comments on something we have published. I invited him to present some of his recent thoughts on Ben Stein's *Expelled* movie from a creationist's view. He was gracious enough to provide the piece that appears elsewhere in this issue (page 3), and I will use a few words to respond to some of his points.

Chuck has seen the movie, apparently, and I have not, so I rely on him that his is an accurate account.

As the title indicates, the movie centers on people who were supposedly expelled because of their support for creationism or Intelligent Design or for their religious beliefs. In his opinion piece Chuck gives scant attention to this theme.

What's more surprising is that he wastes any time at all on the *expelled*, knowing, as he does by now, the story behind Stein's *expelled* claims. Chuck has the advantage of having read last month's newsletter, with a summary and links to a dissection of *Expelled* on the Web site of the National Center for Science Education.<sup>1</sup>

When he mentions "professors [who] were denied tenure or fired and thereby 'expelled' for mentioning the unmentionable in academia's scientific circles – Intelligent Design (ID)," Chuck certainly was not referring to Richard Sternberg. The former editor of *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington*, left this unpaid, voluntary, position six months before the publication of Stephen C. Meyer's much-maligned contribution to modern biological science was published. Chuck was possibly referring to Guillermo Gonzalez, who started on the road to tenure, but then wandered into the wilderness of creationism while his academic production in astronomy languished.

Chuck does not mention any names or attempt to make any points of fact. Maybe he would like to have another go at this argument in the future.

### EVENTS CALENDAR

#### July Program

Saturday 19 July 2008  
2 p.m.  
Center for Nonprofit  
Management  
2900 Live Oak Street in Dallas

Scott Hurst with JREF

#### Social Dinner and Board Meeting

Saturday 26 July 2008  
7 p.m.  
Don Mexico  
12225 Greenville Avenue in  
Dallas

Let us know if you are coming.  
We need to reserve a table.

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Chuck asks “Did Charles Darwin’s influence affect the beliefs of Adolf Hitler along with other dictators...?” Maybe it did, Chuck seems to say. As partial proof he gives the full title of Darwin’s famous book: *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. Chuck writes:

Darwin was a “Christian” in his religious views, but apparently was also a racist based on the title of the book.

This is obvious, as anybody can see. Anybody, that is, except anybody who has read the book.

If one would care to read the book, one would learn:

1. In the preface of *Origins*, Darwin does discuss racial differences and advantages of people. Particularly, he cites a paper by Dr. W. C. Wells that was presented at the Royal Society in 1813. The title was *An Account of a White female, part of whose skin resembled that of a Negro*. The paper apparently gets into the advantage separate human races have over one another in different climates and with respect to some diseases. These topics are still studied in biology and medicine. In this respect Dr. Wells seems to have been ahead of his time.

2. In chapter 1, *Variation Under Domestication*, Darwin talks a lot about race. A search of the text uncovers many instances of “race” and “races.” All these are about domestic livestock, however. None are about the races of man. Apparently Darwin use the term “race” interchangeably with “breed” in relation to domesticated animals. It may be hard to notice this if one hasn’t read the book.

3. In the remainder of the book Darwin continues to use “race” to refer to species of animals. Read the book.

I am sure Hitler would have found Darwin and his writings to be enlightening, if he had read them. If Hitler actually *did* read Darwin, he must have found something there indigestible. There is an interesting Web page on the Internet. It’s called “Lists of Banned Books, 1932-1939,” and a search turns up this small item:

6. Writings of a philosophical and social nature whose content deals with the false scientific enlightenment of primitive Darwinism and Monism (Häckel).<sup>2</sup>

Lumped together with Haeckel! Gag me to the max!

Linking Darwin to the Nazi genocide against European Jews is perhaps the most egregious claim made by Stein and embraced by Chuck Gafford. To anybody who is both literate and observant it is readily apparent Hitler’s anti-Jewish campaign was driven both by political expedience and by his genuine dislike for Jews. To find the source for these views one barely needs to look past the antipathy towards Jews on the part of mainstream Christians in Europe at the time. Hitler was a lifelong Catholic who continued to profess his Christianity all the while he launched wars unprovoked against neighboring countries and

slaughtered his own countrymen. Throughout the entire period Hitler presided over the Holocaust the church never moved to excommunicate him. Darwin's contribution pales by comparison.

Darwin's links to Hitler and other infamous dictators are elusive, at best. Chuck states:

Marx sent a personally signed copy of his book "Das Kapital" in 1873.

That is truly sure, but what is not sure is what this amounts to. Evidence is Darwin didn't read the book, so apparently this love affair was a tad one-sided. A letter from Darwin that was found among the late Marx's papers was apparently not to Marx. It is also hard to imagine Darwin's ideas on evolution had much to do with the formation of Marx's thinking. Marx first published the Communist Manifesto in 1848, about 10 years before Darwin and Wallace published their papers on evolution.

One thing is notable about Chuck Gafford's review and about the movie, itself. Nobody is saying evolution is false. If anybody has reason to believe evolution by natural processes is false, now is the time to speak up and to supply some evidence. Conjuring up links to any social consequences of Darwin and evolution is an idle mind game. Any consequences of a fact have no bearing on its truth. Opponents of evolution would do well to spend some time researching the facts and argue those. That the facts do not support their argument is an unfortunate consequence of the world. I am unable to provide any comfort to creationists here. They made up all their stuff, and now they have to live with it.

We can only wonder how much effort Ben Stein spent researching before he started rolling tape. The errors of omission in *Expelled* are immense, and the credulity of his audience is palpable. Somewhere out there is a sea of faces that will not turn and see the evidence. Research has never before been so accessible as today and maybe never so abused. A few minutes at my computer pulled up pages of references. I have provided a small sample in the sidebar. As James Thurber would say, "You could look it up."



*Thanks go to John A. Thomas and Prasad Golla for help with research for this response.*

## References

- 1 See <http://www.ntskeptics.org/2008/2008june/june2008.htm> and <http://www.expelledexposed.com/>
- 2 <http://www.library.arizona.edu/exhibits/burnedbooks/documents.htm>

## "Expelled" Research Links

- [http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/CA/CA002\\_2.html](http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/CA/CA002_2.html)
- <http://www.megaessays.com/viewpaper/28372.html>
- <http://www.wright.edu/~christopher.oldstone-moore/MarxDarwin.htm>
- <http://www.renewamerica.us/columns/fischer/080307>
- <http://www.idahovaluesalliance.com/news.asp?id=734>
- <http://www.thenagain.info/WebChron/USA/Sanger.html>
- <http://www.armyofgod.com/Racism.html>
- <http://www.nobeliefs.com/hitler-myths.htm>
- [http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/CA/CA006\\_1.html](http://www.talkorigins.org/indexcc/CA/CA006_1.html)
- <http://www.library.arizona.edu/exhibits/burnedbooks/documents.htm>
- [http://www.stormfront.org/books/mein\\_kampf/](http://www.stormfront.org/books/mein_kampf/)
- <http://www.literature.org/authors/darwin-charles/the-origin-of-species/>
- <http://www.econlib.org/LIBRARY/YPDBooks/Marx/mrxCpA.html>

## "Expelled" Review

By Chuck Gafford

*[The following article is printed "as is," with no corrections. The editor had no contact with the author and is unaware of his intentions. -- Editor]*

The recent documentary movie starring Ben Stein seems to be focused on two major premises. The first major premise is that professors were denied tenure or fired and thereby "expelled" for mentioning the unmentionable in academia's scientific circles – Intelligent Design (ID). In "Expelled" Stein draws a strong analogy through comparison in black and white clips between the Berlin Wall and the wall of allowing intelligent discussions of ID as well as banning references to it in scientific papers.

The second premise is illustrated by some graphic scenes with a walk-through of one of the gas chambers of Nazi

Germany and discussion of the Holocaust. These events Stein links to Charles Darwin and evolutionary theory by converting Darwin's theory into areas of economics and sociology.

Interspersed in scenes in the movie is Ben Stein walking around in tennis shoes and with suit, perhaps making an attempt at comic relief in the middle of various interviews. Ben Stein is better known as an economist and host of the game show "Win Ben Stein's Money" rather than a scientist and humorist so these are very serious topics.

During the movie Stein interviews with the various professors who were "expelled," with ID leaders including the head of the Discovery Institute and William Dembski who wrote on the idea of "specified complexity" of organisms. Stein also interviewed evolutionists including Richard Dawkins. The key question that was interesting to me from my ID viewpoint that Stein asked was how, did the first organism come into existence. The answer to this question was sidestepped by evolutionary experts who then spoke about the evolutionary process, including Richard Dawkins who finally admitted to the idea of panspermia from another planet. This leads to the next question – how did "that" organism come into existence if planted from another solar system. Are we now talking about UFOs from outer space?

Coming from the Christian conservative worldview, ID has ties to the idea that a Supreme Being created the universe and used design in its creation. Unfortunately many ID proponents are young-earth, six-literal-day creationists and as discussed in a prior article in more detail the Hebrew word for day means unspecified time period which can be translated as era or eon.

A question then arises after viewing the movie with a key assumption being made by Stein: Did Charles Darwin's influence affect the beliefs of Adolf Hitler along with other dictators who believed that some races were "fit" and others were "unfit," linked to the core ecological principle of "survival of the fittest?"

One little known fact is that the full title of the famous Darwin book including the subtitle is, "The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life." This page along with works of Darwin are available online and with copies from original books on the web site at [darwin-online.org.uk](http://darwin-online.org.uk). Darwin was a "Christian" in his religious views, but apparently was also a racist based on the title of the book. The title equates evolution with the concept of "favoured races". If so, then perhaps it is possible that if Hitler and other diabolical dictators as well as other philosophers studied evolution and "adapted" the ideas of biological evolution with a sociological evolution, then serious ramifications could be possibly derived from the continuation of this logic. The ideas of favored races led to the Aryan race

ideals of Nazism and the ultimate deaths of millions of Jews and other races considered "inferior."

Mentioned early on in this book is Thomas Malthus, who influenced Darwin and who made assumptions that population growth would increase geometrically/exponentially and that food growth would increase arithmetically that would lead to increased poverty. Malthus, who was also a Christian clergyman, had a strong influence on economics leading to a belief still prevalent in some circles today that population control would be beneficial to the welfare of the world based on his calculations.

Getting back to the Hitler link, we know that he was influenced by Joseph Arthur Conte de Gobineau who developed his Aryan master race idea in his book "An Essay of Races" (1853-1855), and who believed that the white race was superior to others. Perhaps de Gobineau had an influence on Darwin. A horrifying quote from Hitler's "Mein Kampf" states plainly, "Hence today I believe that I am acting in the accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the world of the Lord." Hitler used Christianity in a distorted view to defend his belief in trying to kill of the entire Jewish race starting in Germany and throughout Eastern Europe.

The influence of Darwin on Karl Marx is unmistakable as he read the *Origin of Species*, which supported his views in terms of the theory of class struggle. Marx sent a personally signed copy of his book "Das Kapital" in 1873. Perhaps there are more links to be discussed linking Marx class struggle theory that was influenced by Darwinism to socio-economic influences on Hitler that are found in Lenin, Stalin and other Communist dictators where the theory of biological evolution was distorted into economics and socialism where it should not have been redirected. "Expelled" over all is a well-done documentary that draws some controversial conclusions that merit further investigation, including that of the faculty who made their various claims. Other possible influences include those of other Communist dictators that might have followed in the footsteps of Marx. Stein suggests that the founder of Planned Parenthood was influenced by Darwin as well in terms of his views on races. Margaret Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood certainly advances the racist ideal when with the quote that the purpose in promoting birth control was "to create a race of thoroughbreds," *Birth Control Review*, Nov. 1921 (p. 2). □



Chuck Gafford is Pastor of Praise Place Church in Norman, Oklahoma. His Web site is <http://www.praiseplaceministries.org/>



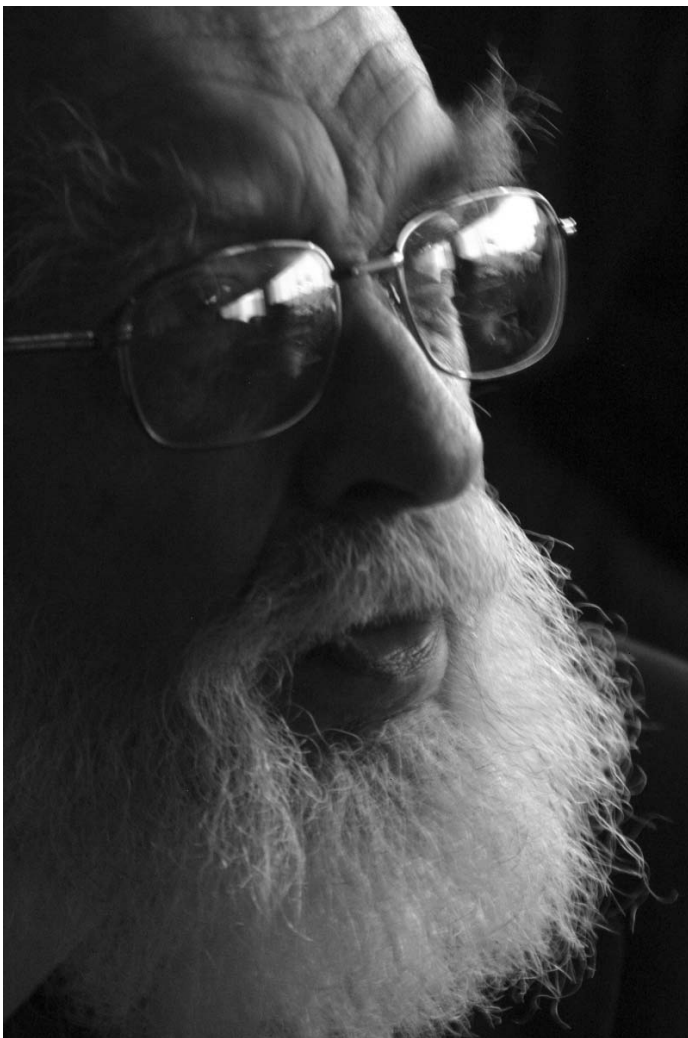
## IIG Awards

by John Blanton

His name is synonymous with “skeptic.” He’s the bane of psychics and spoon benders. His long-standing award for proof of the paranormal long ago set the standard for testing the fools and the fakes. He’s truly amazing.

He’s the Amazing Randi.

On a Monday night in June the Independent Investigative Group inducted James Randi into the Houdini Hall of Honor.



The Amazing James Randi

Photo by John Blanton



Julia Sweeney and Paul Provenza present the IIG awards

Photo by John Blanton

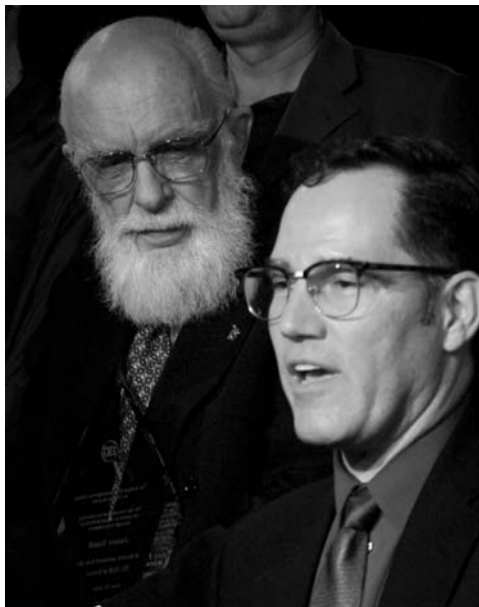
Recognizing his contribution to the world of entertainment and his nearly life-long championship of rational skepticism, a host of Randi’s friends gathered with him in the Steve Allen Theater on Hollywood Blvd., to lift a glass and to relive a life. It was a grand time of reflection and fellowship.

Host James Underdown heads up the Center for Inquiry-West. He has a history of stand-up comedy and now writes skeptical articles and entertains challengers for the IIG’s \$50,000 challenge award. Award presenters this night were Julia Sweeney and Paul Provenza. Both are entertainers in their own right and are bona fide skeptics, as well. 1

Provenza handed out the TTTA (Truly Terrible Television Award) to the truly awful *Ghost Hunters*. In case any skeptics doubted TV could be that bad, we were treated to a short clip. I am hoping what we saw was not a Sweeps Week special. Nobody stepped up to the stage to pick up the award.

Sweeney presented the IIG Award to producers Dwight Smith and Michael Agrabian of *Phenomenon*. It’s a show about competitors for the best mentalist. It’s hosted by Tim Vincent with judging by Uri Geller and Criss Angel. Recently on Larry King Live Angel noted “No one has the ability, that I’m aware of, to do anything supernatural, psychic, talk to the dead. And that was what I said I was going to do with *Phenomenon*. If somebody goes on that show and claims to have supernatural psychic ability, I’m going to bust them live and on television.” 2

Provenza also gave IIG awards to producer French Horowitz and to two of our other favorite skeptics, Penn and Teller.



James Randi and Jim Underdown

Photo by John Blanton

After his short acceptance speech, nobody would let Randi sit down without some magic. Fortunately for all, Randi happened to have a short length of rope in his jacket. I've seen this before, but it's always amazing to watch. Two stout and hardy gentlemen from the audience tied Randi's hands behind him and turned him around. Just as shortly, Randi had one hand out in front, giving directions. Binding his hands to his legs wasn't much more effective. One of the burly started to drape a jacket over Randi's hands, and just as quickly Randi was adjusting the jacket with a free hand.

Previous inductees into the Harry Houdini Hall of Honor have been Carl Sagan and, of course, Harry Houdini. Houdini is likely the godfather of the modern skeptical movement.

Following the death of his mother, Houdini experienced a parade of phony mediums offering to channel the deceased. What came from this was a determined campaign by Houdini to expose these fakes. Before his death, Houdini gave his wife a set of words that any future medium would have to produce as proof of contact with her late husband. After ten fruitless years Bess Houdini ended the quest, reportedly saying "ten years is long enough to wait for any man."

And we would say that over 100 years is too long to put up with quackery. Thanks, Harry, and thanks to you, James Randi.



#### References

- 1 See the IIG Web site at <http://www.iigwest.com/>
- 2 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phenomenon\\_\(TV\\_series\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phenomenon_(TV_series))

## North Texas Skeptics

### Future Meeting Date

**August 16 2008**

**Alison Smith with SAPS**

## The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal

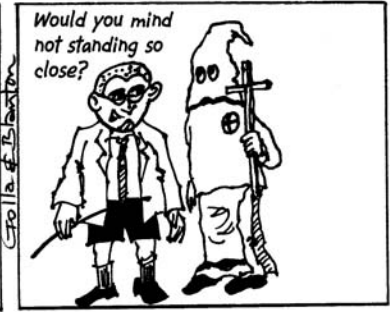
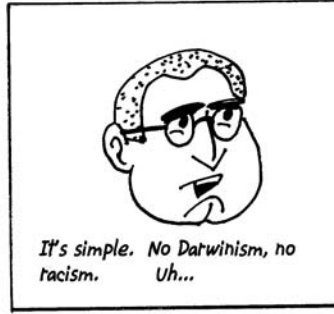
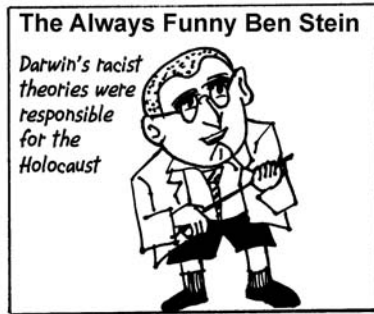
encourages the critical investigation of paranormal and fringe-science claims from a responsible, scientific point of view and disseminates factual information about the results of such inquiries to the scientific community, the media, and the public. It also promotes science and scientific inquiry, critical thinking, science education, and the use of reason in examining important issues.

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# Skeptic Ink

by Prasad Golla and John Blanton.  
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## Americans United Will Monitor Implementation Of New Louisiana Anti-Evolution Law

Friday, June 27, 2008

### National Watchdog Group Says Litigation Will Follow If Measure Is Used To Promote Religion In Public Schools

Americans United for Separation of Church and State today warned Louisiana officials that lawsuits will result if the state's new anti-evolution law is used to introduce religion into public school classrooms.

Gov. Bobby Jindal this week signed the legislation (SB 733), which allows teachers to use "supplemental materials" when discussing evolution. The measure was pushed by the Louisiana Family Forum and the Discovery Institute, two Religious Right groups that advocate creationist concepts, and is widely seen as an effort to water down instruction about evolution.

"I am very disappointed that Gov. Jindal signed this unwise and unnecessary measure," said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director. "Louisiana has a long and unfortunate history of trying to substitute dogma for science in public school classrooms. Let me state clearly and upfront that any attempts to use this law to sneak religion into public schools through the back door will not be tolerated."

Lynn urged Louisiana residents to monitor the situation in their local communities and report any potential violations to Americans United. He noted that the organization has a new chapter in Louisiana and that activists on the ground will be watching developments in the state very closely.

Supporters of the bill, including the Discovery Institute and Sen. Ben Nevers, its primary sponsor, have insisted that the measure is not intended to promote religion. Americans United says it will hold them to that.

"I've heard from plenty of people in Louisiana who are embarrassed by this law and are concerned that it's just another attempt to bring religion into the public schools," said Lynn. "I call on all concerned residents of Louisiana to help us make sure that public schools educate, not indoctrinate." □



*Americans United is a religious liberty watchdog group based in Washington, D.C. Founded in 1947, the organization educates Americans about the importance of church-state separation in safeguarding religious freedom.*

### Skeptical Quotes

All superstition is much the same whether it be that of astrology, dreams, omen, retributive judgment, or the like, in all of which the deluded believers observe events which are fulfilled, but neglect and pass over their failure, though it be much more common.

— Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*

False facts are highly injurious to the progress of science, for they often endure long; but false views, if supported by some evidence, do little harm, for everyone takes a salutary pleasure in proving their falseness; and when this is done, one path toward errors is closed and the road to truth is often at the same time opened.

— Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*

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