

### Science Community Guilty of Hypocrisy when Criticizing the Teaching of Creationism

by Cevin Soling on May 20, 2015 in Education, News

John Glenn's pronouncement that evolution should be taught in schools overlooks some uncomfortable truths. While defending John Scopes for violating Tennessee's Butler Act by teaching evolution, Clarence Darrow proclaimed: "we have the purpose of preventing bigots and ignoramuses from controlling the education of the United States." Despite Darrow's efforts, bigots and ignoramuses still struggle for ascendancy within America's education system. Although these invectives were levied exclusively towards the defenders of Creationism, an important distinction delineates bigots and ignoramuses. Bigots champion an ignoble agenda - one that is biased and intolerant - while ignoramuses blindly undermine noble agendas. Bigots are easy to recognize. They consist, in part, of the policy-makers in at least 16 states who have acted to impede the teaching of evolution and to, instead, promote Creationism or its variants, such as Intelligent Design, which argues that "certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection."



John Glenn

The ignoramuses stay under the radar. They include, among others, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Center for Science Education, and the US National Academy of Sciences. These entities rightly object to teaching Intelligent Design on the grounds that: A) it is not science; B) the Creationist hypothesis is not supported by research or observation; C) it cannot be tested; and D) it does not allow for a conceivable means of refutation. The dismissal of Creationism is appropriate, but it is also comically absurd given that precious little that takes place in public schools is supported by empirical research. Within this context, their arguments are Pecksniffian. They are akin to indicting the use of Darjeeling when foretelling the future from tea leaves. Such a complaint suggests that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the thought that one can prognosticate from the detritus of beverages. By limiting their focus to one offensive item, these members of the science community implicitly validate the entire compulsory school system.

The problem is that schools are rife with faith-based rituals that do not promote learning. According to education researcher Alfie Kohn, no causal evidence supports the notion that homework, in general, promotes learning, and no study affirms the belief that homework promotes good study habits or builds character. In addition, forcing children to sit still in classrooms violates what peer-reviewed studies have revealed about the necessity of physical activity during the learning process. School hours are structured in direct opposition to a wealth of knowledge accumulated by the National Sleep Foundation on both the sleep habits and sleep requirements of children. Journals on child development support classrooms with students of mixed ages, yet schools persist in implementing age-based grades. Zero Tolerance policies are ubiquitous, but they have been shown by the Indiana Policy Center to have no positive impact on either behavior or safety.

Corporal punishment persists in 19 states even when hitting causes injuries that require hospitalization. The latest annual government census reports that children were physically beaten 223,190 times by school administrators. Extensive evidence from 20 years of studies reveals that corporal punishment does not lead students to display behaviors desired by the institution, nor does it lead to academic improvement. In fact, research shows the opposite effects - the practice leads to aggression, withdrawal, and depression. While groups exist that oppose this practice, the scientific community has failed to speak en masse. Presumably, as long as beatings do not coincide with assertions that humans and apes do not share a common ancestor, they are fair game.

Esteemed physicist Lawrence Krauss insisted that teaching creationism was tantamount to child abuse and then had the audacity to propose a tweak to schooling - "base curriculum more on questions." Here is the problem. The structure of compulsory schooling has never been studied with regards to its efficacy. No research has ever been undertaken to justify the top-down factory model approach to instruction versus no intervention at all. His advice for school teachers has the same validity as if he suggested phrenologists make an adjustment to their procedures instead of condemning the whole pseudoscience of measuring bumps on a skull.

By Krauss's own definition, he is an advocate for cruelty to children by supporting an institution that has no scientific basis and does great harm. Why are "defenders of science" selective about which exercise of faith they choose to condemn? Certainly teachers and administrators are just as deserving of the same spiteful vitriol as the doctrinaires who impose a religious agenda on vulnerable children. The bias exhibited by Krauss and others in the science community tacitly condones all of the non-evidence based content and procedures inherent in compulsory schooling. As Krauss rightly avers, good intentions do not present an adequate defense and that includes his own egregious ignorance in this arena.

In the struggle for control of education policy, it is regrettable that the bigots and ignoramuses are the two dominant parties. The dogmatists who parade fairy tales and superstition as science are, at least, consistent. They have abdicated reliance on empiricism, and therefore compulsory schools are an appropriate forum for their drivel. Those members of the scientific community, whose critique of schools is restricted to one offensive lesson, are the worst kind of charlatans. These vainglorious hypocrites pretend to be the arbiters of scientific practice but are too blinded by their bloated sense of self-righteous conceit to appreciate that they, too, are defenders of faith.

Cevin Soling is the director of the acclaimed documentary 'The War on Kids', winner of the best educational documentary award at the New York Independent Film and Video Festival, receiving accolades from The New York Times, Variety, and The Huffington Post. He was featured as a guest on the Colbert Report, and the film was broadcasted internationally on The Sundance Channel. Soling regularly lectures and writes about the human rights abuses of compulsory education. He has a degree in Education Policy and Management from Harvard University.

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