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One Hundred Years After Scopes, It's "Scopes-in-Reverse"

David Klinghoffer

July 10, 2025, 1:24 PM

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Casey Luskin writes at *The Daily Wire*:

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This month, America commemorates the 100th anniversary of a landmark cultural event that taught us about the dangers of censorship. July 1925 witnessed the “Scopes Monkey Trial,” where a Dayton, Tennessee, public school teacher was put on trial for violating a state law that prohibited teaching human evolution.

The teaching of scientific ideas should never be banned, much less criminalized. We like to think of censorship as something from the dark ages of the past, before our modern enlightened era vanquished intellectual intolerance. But 100 years after Scopes, we have what the late Supreme Court Justice Scalia once called “Scopes-in-reverse,” where scientists and scholars face reprisals if they challenge neo-Darwinian evolution.

Indeed so. Dr. Luskin gives a sampling of cases from the past two decades where scientists met with harsh consequences for failing to support the orthodox evolutionary Narrative. I might have added what happened to evolutionary biologist Richard Sternberg at the Smithsonian after he dared to edit a peer-reviewed journal article in a technical biology journal. The article by Stephen Meyer presented evidence for intelligent design in the Cambrian explosion. For this offense — merely editing a pro-ID article — Dr. Sternberg was hounded out of his position. The story forms part of the background of my new book about Sternberg's thinking, *Plato's Revenge: The New Science of the Immaterial Genome*.

No Stranger to Censorship

Luskin gives another remarkable illustration, from just this month:

“

Perhaps the most ironic recent example of evolutionary censorship will take place this month at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, not far down the road from Dayton, as it celebrates a “Scopes ‘Monkey’ Trial Centennial Symposium.” Co-organized by Vanderbilt’s Evolutionary Studies Institute and the National Center for Science Education, the symposium includes many credible speakers from science, philosophy, and law. Intelligent design is on the schedule, and there is an entire session devoted to the Kitzmiller v. Dover case. Yet exactly zero pro-ID scientists or scholars are slated for the symposium.

Luskin tried to contact the folks at Vanderbilt (the campus is pictured at the top) about the lock-out, but no one even bothered to get back to him.

Vanderbilt is no stranger to censorship on evolution. In his excellent book on the Scopes Trial, *Summer for the Gods*, Edward J. Larson tells about a consequential case in 1878, when Vanderbilt was still newly founded, and the university “terminated the part-time lecturing position of the famed geologist Alexander Winchell for suggesting that humans lived on earth before the biblical Adam.” The incident “soon became a cause célèbre in the perceived warfare between science and religion.”

As Casey Luskin observes, the censoring spirit lives on but now, as Justice Scalia recognized, it's all in the opposite direction. Does that make it acceptable? I would say not. Read the rest at *The Daily Wire*.

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David Klinghoffer is a Senior Fellow with Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture. He is the author of seven books including *Plato's Revenge: The New Science of the Immaterial Genome* and *The Lord Will Gather Me In: My Journey to Jewish Orthodoxy*. A former senior editor at *National Review*, he has contributed to the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and other publications. He received an A.B. magna cum laude from Brown University in 1987. Born in Santa Monica, CA, he lives on Mercer Island, WA.

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