

## Baptist professors featured in new film

Written by Jerry Pierce | Managing Editor

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DALLAS—Two professors with ties to Baptist higher education are featured in an upcoming big-screen documentary that aims to expose the scientific establishment's scorn toward academics who question Darwinian evolution.

"Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed" is scheduled for theaters in April and stars comedic actor and conservative activist Ben Stein as he travels the world interviewing intelligent design (ID) proponents whose careers have been threatened, as well as prominent neo-Darwinists who hold ID in contempt, including Richard Dawkins, author of the best-selling book "The God Delusion."

A rough cut of the film, screened Jan. 10 in Dallas, featured interviews with William Dembski, a research professor of philosophy at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a leading ID proponent whose books include "The Design Inference" and "No Free Lunch," and Robert Marks, who holds the title of "distinguished professor of engineering" at Baylor University.

Marks is a co-laborer of Dembski's whose ID research raised the ire of Baylor's administration last year.

Dembski's trials at Baylor from 1999-2005 are not documented in the film—among other things, he drew the wrath of the science, philosophy and religion departments early in his tenure there when it was learned that he was heading up an ID think tank on campus—but Dembski appears several times on screen as an ID apologist.

Dembski told the Southern Baptist TEXAN that those who most need to see the movie are "parents of children in high school or college, as well as those children themselves, who may think that the biological sciences are a dispassionate search for truth about life but many of whose practitioners see biology, especially evolutionary biology, as an ideological weapon to destroy faith in God."

Marks appears in the film as one of the "expelled" academics. Although he remains at Baylor as a tenured professor, Baylor officials last year forced Marks to return grant money it received related to ID research and forced his ID research website to an off-campus server.

Marks appears in the movie with Stein near the Brazos River in Waco. Stein interviewed Marks' engineering dean, Ben Kelley, on film, but attempts to interview Baylor President John Lilley and other administration officials failed.

Marks said of the film: "I sat there and I laughed. I laughed because I have seen this atheistic, big-science mafia squad come out and kill the careers of many of my friends. Guillermo Gonzalez, who I knew at the University of Washington. Richard von Sternberg, who I recently met. And to see their motivation and goals so clearly exposed in a Ben Stein sort of dry humor was incredible. I really, really enjoyed the movie. I think it is going to have an enormous impact. I hope it does."

Logan Craft, co-executive producer of the film and chairman of the film's production company, Premise Media, told the TEXAN that though most of the expelled academics in the film are affiliated with secular institutions, he is not surprised that ID is controversial at schools with religious roots.

"To me, the long history of religiously founded universities and colleges in the United States is typically one of the ultimate capturing of the colleges and universities by the progressive secularists. I think you see that at Baylor partly. You see that at SMU almost entirely." Craft commented.

"What we see here is a struggle for a religiously founded university to maintain its credibility to the larger academic world and frequently that has come by simply being co-opted by whatever the zeitgeist of the day is, in this case, this commitment to scientific materialism," Craft said.

One of the first interviews in the film is with Richard von Sternberg, a research associate at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington. With two Ph.D.s in biology, von Sternberg's academic credentials were unquestioned until he allowed the publication of a peer-reviewed article questioning neo-Darwinism to appear in a Smithsonian-related biology journal he edited.

An investigation into von Sternberg's treatment at the Smithsonian after the article appeared by the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) found that he was subjected to a "hostile" work environment, even to the point of Smithsonian officials peering into his religious and political affiliations and scouring his library records for infractions.

But Craft said perhaps the most egregious example of persecution against an ID proponent is that of Guillermo Gonzalez, a highly lauded astronomer who is also featured in "Expelled."

Even though Gonzalez has been credited with discovering two planets and making other notable contributions in his field, Iowa State University denied him tenure last year after months of controversy surrounding his co-writing of the book "The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos Is Designed for Discovery." After the book's publication, 120 Iowa State University professors signed a statement published in the ISU student-run newspaper denouncing intelligent design.

Craft said he believes the modern icons Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud have been rightly relegated to non-iconic status, with Charles Darwin trailing closely behind as the last standing icon of modernity. "And nobody has a credible theory, scientifically, of how life originated. No one. The Darwinists admit it on the phone."

At one point in the film, Stein nudges Dawkins, the well-known Oxford evolutionary biologist, into offering a guess that perhaps some unknown intelligence planted the first seeds of life in our galaxy, but Dawkins quickly insisted that such intelligence would necessarily have needed to arise from Darwinian processes.

Stein, an economist, actor and conservative commentator whose previous work ranges from a memorable role in the 1980s hit movie "Ferris Bueller's Day Off" to speechwriter for presidents Nixon and Ford, was recruited to the film after Premise Media created a template for its lead character: "a person, first of all, who wasn't easily identified as overtly Christian or overtly religious and also someone who had a comic element to their personality or their repertoire, but also an intellectual," Craft explained.

"That kind of limits the field," Craft remarked. "There aren't that many of those folks out there."

"Once Ben became acquainted with what we were doing, he got excited because he began to see a connection between our exploration and sanctity of life issues. He's a very, very strong pro-life advocate. He has a high view of human dignity and human sanctity. And he saw a connection between what we were exploring, and sanctity of life issues and the historical elements of the eugenics movement, and especially as a Jewish person, the eugenics movement as it morphed into the Nazi racial cleansing laws."

Craft added, "I think the public, once they understand more and more what Darwinian evolution represents, I think they will reject that and move against it."

"Expelled" has received endorsements from evangelical Christian leaders such as J.I. Packer, Chuck Colson and James Dobson. Craft said Premise Media would be screening the film for some Southern Baptists leaders in Houston and Louisville, Ky., soon. A trailer of the movie is accessible online at [expelledthemovie.com](http://expelledthemovie.com).

To read transcripts of the TEXAN's interviews with Logan Craft of Premise Media and Robert Marks, one of the professors interviewed in the film, visit [sbtexas.com](http://sbtexas.com) or [texanonline.net](http://texanonline.net). Baptist Press reported on Marks' case in an article last fall, accessible online at [bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=26372](http://bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=26372).

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