

Weekend at Jefferson's

by Anna Berkes - July 23, 2009

There was a little mini-explosion of chatter over the last week on What Jefferson Thought About Intelligent Design. I wasn't aware that Jefferson thought about intelligent design, but as we all know, if you use Thomas Jefferson's name in your argument, you automatically win. Double points for including a relevant quotation. It's a bit of a mess at this point, but I believe the fury was unleashed by [this op-ed](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2009/07/15/jeffersons_support_for_in) (http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2009/07/15/jeffersons_support_for_in) in the Boston Globe on July 15th. This was [countered almost immediately](http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn17471-jefferson-would-not-have-supported-intelligent-design.html) (<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn17471-jefferson-would-not-have-supported-intelligent-design.html>) by some guy in the New Scientist. Then the [Grumpy Lion got involved](http://grumpylion.wordpress.com/2009/07/15/idists-pushing-idism-through-thomas-jefferson-but-its-still-not-intelligent-or-design/) (<http://grumpylion.wordpress.com/2009/07/15/idists-pushing-idism-through-thomas-jefferson-but-its-still-not-intelligent-or-design/>). And all the while the Discovery Institute is [blogging about the bloggers blogging](http://www.evolutionnews.org/2009/07/jerry_coyne_and_new_scientists.html) (http://www.evolutionnews.org/2009/07/jerry_coyne_and_new_scientists.html) about their guy's op-ed piece. Meanwhile, the debate has caught fire in other realms; here's a self-described "Australian high school student with a bone to pick with creationists and intelligent-design proponents" on his hilariously-named blog, "Homologous Legs: Evidence for a Common Ancestor between Tables and Chairs." Wow. They should have this kid moderate the debate. Anyway, then [some outraged citizens chimed in again at the Boston Globe](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/letters/articles/2009/07/20/invoking_jefferson_on_i_of_them) (http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/letters/articles/2009/07/20/invoking_jefferson_on_i_of_them) (http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/letters/articles/2009/07/20/creationism_piece_no_v other than [Steven Pinker](https://stevenpinker.com/) (<https://stevenpinker.com/>)). The dust now seems to have settled and bloggers are just recounting the whole thing blow-by-blow - er, like me - although the [Sensuous Curmudgeon](http://sensuouscurmudgeon.wordpress.com/2009/07/20/thomas-jefferson-joins-the-discovery-institute/) (<http://sensuouscurmudgeon.wordpress.com/2009/07/20/thomas-jefferson-joins-the-discovery-institute/>) has done a more comprehensive job of it if you are interested. So where is our Jefferson in all this? Um, he's still dead. I couldn't help but think of the movie Weekend at Bernie's during this whole intellectual scuffle. Poor dead Jefferson, being hauled around and dressed up in other people's clothing, propped up and his arms rigged to move the way other people want them to. All the while, he's totally unaware of all the carrying-on around him. Well, I'm sure these people all know, intellectually, that Jefferson is dead. But it doesn't matter a whit to them. Now that's immortality!

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April 25, 2024

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