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Opinion

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Barbara F. Hollingsworth: America's new blacklist

By: Barbara F. Hollingsworth

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Numerous articles and films have depicted the mid-1950s as some of the darkest days in American history. That's when scores of [Hollywood](#) entertainers were blacklisted — denied employment based on accusations by [Wisconsin Sen. Joseph McCarthy](#) and the [House Un-American Activities Committee](#) that they were communist sympathizers. What's really un-American, we've been told countless times since, is persecuting people for their beliefs.

But the blacklist is back. No, not in Tinseltown, where engaging in un-American activities will actually boost your career. At colleges and universities across the country, skeptics of global warming, Darwinism and other entrenched liberal doctrines are being ostracized, denied tenure and even fired for not buying into the prevailing campus orthodoxy. Asking questions is now likely to cost you your job.

A new documentary-style film, "Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed," starring [Ben Stein](#), scheduled for release in early April, examines the blacklisting now happening on today's college campuses.

For example, astronomer [Guillermo Gonzalez](#) was denied tenure at [Iowa State University](#) last month because of his views on intelligent design (ID) — which posits that the design of the universe is the result of some sort of higher intelligence, not random evolution — even though this academic superstar discovered several planets and published 68 highly cited scientific papers. Meanwhile, the ISU religion professor and outspoken atheist who started the petition demanding Gonzalez's ouster was promoted to full professor.

Closer to home, [Carol Ann Crocker](#) talks about losing her job at [George Mason University](#) for merely mentioning ID in her cellular biology class, as does [Richard von Sternberg](#), who lost his [Smithsonian](#) research position for including an article on ID in a peer-reviewed technical journal.

One can understand, if not condone, persecution of academics who bring up ID on secular campuses. But even though ID would seem to mesh well with Christian colleges' religious world-view, they are no haven for expelled academics. Baylor mathematics professor [Robert Marx](#) explains in the film how he was ordered by his dean to take down an ID-related Web site.

Research institutions vying for \$50 billion in federal funds do not dare allow faculty members to even mention ID, [Mark Mathis](#), the film's executive producer, told me. A former TV anchorman, Mathis is appalled at the level of "extreme intolerance" exhibited toward anybody who questions what he calls

"massive holes" in the prevailing neo-Darwinist orthodoxy. "We just want to talk about the science," Mathis says. "People who accuse ID advocates of being religion-driven are the ones who can't stop talking about religion."

"Expelled" does an excellent job of exposing the new blacklisting at tax-supported institutions of higher learning, where academic freedom is supposed to be the guiding principle and professors are supposed to be able to follow the evidence wherever it leads.

But when Stein goes to [England](#) to interview Oxford-educated evolutionary biologist [Richard Dawkins](#), the film is absolutely brilliant.

After asking the famous author of "The God Delusion" a number of questions about the origins of life, a deadpan Stein finally gets Dawkins to admit that he has "no idea how the universe started" and, even more amazingly, to speculate that life as we know it may have begun when "aliens" flew down from outer space and "seeded the Earth."

If there's room in elite academic circles for people like Dawkins, surely a small corner can be found for scientists who look at the same universe and instead of imagining UFOs, see the handiwork of a Master Designer instead.

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