



WEDNESDAY, JULY 20, 2005

NYT Science Section: Another Botched Story

by Michael in New York on [7/20/2005 07:00:00 PM](#)

Recently, the New York Times Science section -- which I read religiously -- trumpeted a study claiming bisexuality in men really doesn't exist. All those guys who say they're bi? Liars. What the story didn't tell you was that the study's senior author had lost his prestigious university position as head of department on ethics charges, been investigated for a year and a half and was identified by the esteemed Southern Poverty Law Center as being linked to hate groups. He also saw no ethical dilemma if parents aborted babies they believed were going to be gay. In other words, eugenics. Gee, think that might have colored our opinion of his study? No letters objecting to this article on that basis were run and no clarification about his suspect past ever appeared, to my knowledge.

Now they've done it again.

I was reading a fine article about [the search for planets that could support life as we know it](#) -- some say the conditions for earth are rare, but not that rare; others say it might be exceptionally unique and so on. Then I read this:

This would merely be an interesting academic argument except for a film that is going around, and which I recently viewed, called "The Privileged Planet," which suggests that the Earth's nice qualities are no accident.

The film, produced by Illustra Media in California, is based on a book of the same name by Guillermo Gonzalez, an astronomer at Iowa State, and Jay W. Richards, a philosopher and vice president of the Discovery Institute in Seattle.

It argues that Earth is so special and unlikely that it must be the work of an intelligent designer. "What if it's not a cosmic lottery?" Dr. Richards asks in the film.

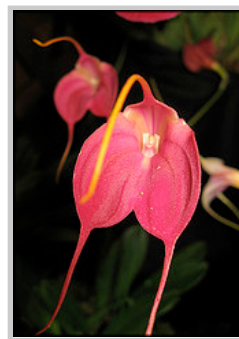
The Discovery Institute advocates "intelligent design," a notion that posits the intervention by a designer, whether divine or not, in the origin and history of life, as an alternative to standard evolutionary biology. Illustra Media has produced a series of videos in support of this idea.

The showing of the film at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History last month exacerbated the worries of many astronomers that the Big Bang would be next on the hit list of creationists.

I was astonished. Why would the Smithsonian show such a film? Why would they give a platform to anti-science nuts like that? Were they debunking it? Were they duped and didn't realize the nature of the film or the creationists who backed it? What was going on?

Two seconds of googling and **I had my answer**: the **creationists reportedly had simply tried to rent out an auditorium for \$16,000** and shown their film to themselves. In fact, when the Smithsonian found out they were pretending it had been shown by them, it was deeply

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