

Transcript: The Abrams Report MSNBC, 6:00 PM EST  
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**ABRAMS:** We`re back. Ask almost all biologists and scientists, for that matter, and they will agree Darwin`s theory of evolution is as tried and true as the grass is green. It explains how we became we. But some would say well we are asking the wrong people. They point to gaps in the theory and want to make sure public schools question the answers. Among them, the Dover Pennsylvania School District now in court because of a mandate passed last year that says -- quote -- "students will be made aware of gaps, problems in Darwin`s theory and of other theories of evolution including but not limited to intelligent design."

NBC`s Robert Bazell has the story.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

**ROBERT BAZELL, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT (voice-over):** The students at this one high school in the small town of Dover, Pennsylvania are the focus of the latest court battle over the theory of evolution.

(on camera): The local school board passed a requirement that a theory called intelligent design be offered as an alternative explanation for the diversity of life on earth.

**UNIDENTIFIED MALE:** Morning. Good morning.

**BAZELL (voice-over):** But several parents sued in federal court, saying that intelligent design is nothing but religion in disguise and that teaching it deprives their children of a proper education. It is a view many scientists share.

**ALAN LESHNER, AMER. ASSOC. FOR ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE:** The scientific community is very concerned that we not compromise the integrity of the science education we are providing to young people.

**BAZELL:** This is an argument that goes back 80 years to the Scopes trial that challenged a Tennessee law banning the teaching of evolution and many see no end to it.

**EDWARD LARSON, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, ATHENS:** We`re a deeply religious nation, we were religious in 1920, we`re religious now, and part of that concern centers on the religious implications of evolution.

**BAZELL:** The trial is expected to last five weeks and Judge John Jones` decision will almost certainly be appealed to the Supreme Court.

Robert Bazell, NBC News, Dover, Pennsylvania.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

**ABRAMS:** All right, "My Take" -- I have two fundamental problems with intelligent design. Number one, I think it is somewhat dishonest. It is another name for creationism. Who else is the intelligent designer? I have the utmost respect for those

who believe and admit they believe that God created life. But the intelligent design movement refuses to come clean about that.

Number two, intelligent designers have provided no new evidence to show why evolution should not continue to be the science taught in schools. They offer no other scientific theories. Remember, a scientific theory is not just a hunch, it's in this case the conclusion of the scientific community based on evidence, fossils, pure reviewed studies, et cetera.

Why don't the intelligent designers question the theory of relativity or gravity? Both of those theories have unanswered questions as well. Maybe it's because those theories don't upset those who want religion taught in schools.

Joining me now is Stephen Meyer, director and senior fellow of the Center for Science and Culture at the Discovery Institute. He co-authored the book "Darwinism, Design, and Public Education" and backs the teaching of intelligent design. And Eugene Scott is an anthropologist, executive director of the National Center for Science Education and a strong supporter of teaching evolution.

All right, Mr. Meyer, let me deal with that question first. Why just -- if the problem is that you think that the schools need to teach other possibilities, why not go after the theory of gravity and the theory of relativity as well?

**STEPHEN MEYER, DISCOVER INSTITUTE:** Well, we are a group of scientists who are interested in the question of biological origins. And the theory of Darwinian evolution, which is the standard textbook theory is now being questioned by an increasing number of scientists, contrary to the lead-in piece that you had. Over 425 scientists have signed a statement of dissent questioning the power of natural selection to explain the complexity of life. and many scientists are pointing to evidence just in exactly the way you said we should be to support the design hypothesis (ph)...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** Which major scientific groups have supported intelligent design?

**MEYER:** There are scientists at the university...

**ABRAMS:** No, not scientists...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** I asked which major scientific groups...

**MEYER:** You've got your mind made up already...

**ABRAMS:** I do. No, I do.

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** Yes, I'm admitting it.

**MEYER:** ... why don't you let me respond to the two points that you made at the top of the hour.

**ABRAMS:** Go ahead.

**MEYER:** You said there was no scientific evidence supporting intelligent design. Oh contraire. The cell is now known to be chock full of miniature machines, nanotechnology and digital code that was unknown in Darwin's time.

**ABRAMS:** Yes.

**MEYER:** And there are peer-reviewed articles and books that have made very eloquent and sophisticated cases for the idea of intelligent design based on these new discoveries.

(CROSSTALK)

**MEYER:** It is a science-based argument. And in fact, I have a book right here if you will permit me...

(CROSSTALK)

**MEYER:** This is from Cambridge University Press...

**ABRAMS:** Right...

**MEYER:** ... called Debating Design...

**ABRAMS:** Just because there is a book doesn't tell me anything...

**MEYER:** Well, there are also articles.

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** All right. All right, look...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** ... Scott, my understanding is that there is not a single peer-reviewed article out there that supports intelligent design. Am I wrong?

**EUGENIE SCOTT, NAT'L CENTER FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION:** You are not wrong. You are correct.

**ABRAMS:** So what is Mr. Meyers...

**SCOTT:** The thing about...

**MEYER:** I have published a peer-reviewed article in Eugenia Scott's organization, and The National Center for Science Education, led the charge to discredit not only the article, but the editor who allowed it to go through peer review. Since that time...

(CROSSTALK)

**SCOTT:** ... eight or 10 additional...

**SCOTT:** ... Steve...

**MEYER:** ... articles have been published and there are...

**SCOTT:** ... Steve...

**MEYER:** ... peer-reviewed books advocating intelligent design...

**SCOTT:** ... Steve...

**ABRAMS:** I think the peers may be the other people involved...

**SCOTT:** ... Steve...

**ABRAMS:** ... in this organization, but...

**MEYER:** No...

(CROSSTALK)

**MEYER:** ... this was published at the Smithsonian Technical...

**ABRAMS:** All right...

**MEYER:** ... Biology Journal by...

**SCOTT:** That`s right Steve.

**MEYER:** ... an editor with two...

**ABRAMS:** Eugenia Scott...

**MEYER:** ... not one but two...

**ABRAMS:** Let me let her respond. Let me let her respond. Go ahead.

**MEYER:** Well you`re asserting false things...

**SCOTT:** Thank you.

**ABRAMS:** Go ahead. Eugenia Scott...

**SCOTT:** Steve, your article doesn`t mention intelligent design. Your article...

**MEYER:** Of course it does.

**SCOTT:** ... is an attack on evolution. No...

**MEYER:** No, the last...

**SCOTT:** As far as I`m concerned...

**MEYER:** ... the last part of the article...

**SCOTT:** ... intelligent design...

**MEYER:** ... is an article about intelligent design. It`s a case for it...

**SCOTT:** Steve...

(CROSSTALK)

**MEYER:** Get on our Web site...

**SCOTT:** Steve...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** Hang on, Steve. Hang on.

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** Let her respond. Let her respond.

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** Hang on.

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** Steve Meyer, hang on a second...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** When you and I are going at it, I`ll let you interrupt me, but let me let you -- let her respond...

**MEYER:** She can`t tell me what was in my own article...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** She can be more honest maybe about what`s in the article though. Go ahead. What`s -- go ahead. Finish your thought.

**SCOTT:** Intelligent design makes the claim that there are things out there in nature that are just categorically unexplainable by natural cause, therefore they were created, designed by an intelligent agent and nobody is fooled, the intelligent agent is God. Now, how can you call that a science when your basic organizing principle is we can`t explain this through natural cause. What science does is explain things through natural cause. And the whole idea of intelligent design just completely flies in the face of that. You can talk about refereed articles, you can talk about books, you can talk about everything else, but...

**MEYER:** You`ve just shifted your ground, Eugenie.

**SCOTT:** The bottom line is...

**MEYER:** You said there were none.

**SCOTT:** ... is anybody...

**MEYER:** Yes.

**SCOTT:** Excuse me sir.

**ABRAMS:** Let me ask you about that, Steve.

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** The point that she is making -- let me ask this question.

**SCOTT:** Steve...

**ABRAMS:** ... the follow-up exactly what you just said...

**SCOTT:** ... will you please let me finish my thought...

**ABRAMS:** Hang on Eugenie. It`s Dan Abrams...

**SCOTT:** I`m sorry. You`re being very rude.

**ABRAMS:** Eugenie, it`s Dan Abrams...

**SCOTT:** All right.

**ABRAMS:** I just want to follow up on the thought that you just offered and ask Stephen Meyer...

**SCOTT:** Excuse me, I haven`t finished the thought.

**ABRAMS:** All right, but just let me follow up.

**SCOTT:** All right.

**ABRAMS:** Is intelligent design God, Stephen Meyer?

**MEYER:** The...

**ABRAMS:** What is intelligent design...

**MEYER:** ... the theory by saying that we are arguing from...

**ABRAMS:** I`m asking you what is intelligent design?

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** Who is the intelligent...

**MEYER:** I`ll tell you what intelligent design is.

**ABRAMS:** Who is the intelligent designer? Who is the intelligent designer?

**MEYER:** The intelligent -- what the theory of intelligent design says is there are certain features of living systems that are best explained by an intelligence...

**ABRAMS:** And what does that mean...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** Wait. Wait. Wait, that`s the most circular thing I`ve ever heard.

**MEYER:** No...

**ABRAMS:** What -- who is the intelligent designer?

**MEYER:** We do not identify...

**ABRAMS:** I know you don`t. That`s why I`m calling you on it...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** I want to know who it is.

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** Just admit it. It`s religion...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** You just can`t -- it`s religion.

**MEYER:** You`re asserting without letting me answer your question.

**ABRAMS:** So respond. You are not responding to my question.

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** Is it religion or not?

**MEYER:** I`d be happy to respond.

**ABRAMS:** Is it religion or not?

**MEYER:** No, it is a scientific theory based on scientific evidence and that`s why we can`t identify the designer. We see signatures of intelligence that can be analyzed with established methods of design detection.

**ABRAMS:** I don`t know what any of that means.

**MEYER:** OK, let me explain...

(CROSSTALK)

**MEYER:** ... information...

(CROSSTALK)

**MEYER:** ... (UNINTELLIGIBLE) Mr. Abrams.

**ABRAMS:** Yes.

**MEYER:** ... digital code. If you found information, a software code in any other realm of experience, you would infer that intelligence had play a role. You might not be able to tell...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** No, no, that assumes...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** Wait a sec. That assumes evolution doesn't exist. That's the problem with your argument...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** You assume -- to accept your argument is to assume, first of all, that evolution can't be the explanation...

**MEYER:** No...

(CROSSTALK)

**MEYER:** We have included that undirected natural processes...

**ABRAMS:** All right...

**MEYER:** ... are insufficient to explain that information.

**ABRAMS:** Eugenie Scott, I get the feeling that the game that's being played here is a lot of circular talk.

**MEYER:** That's a lovely baited question there, Dan...

**ABRAMS:** Yes, it was...

**MEYER:** That's not an objective question.

**ABRAMS:** Look, have I claimed to be objective? Did I not come out at the beginning and tell people...

**MEYER:** Yes you did...

**ABRAMS:** ... exactly what my position is?

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** OK. I`m totally owning up to it. I will never on this program disguise or hide because I want my viewers to know I`m being straight with them. Go ahead Eugenie.

**SCOTT:** Intelligent design has descended with very little modification from creation science. And the reason why they`re so coy about the identity of the designer is why we are here in Dover. The Supreme Court and other courts have ruled that religious advocacy such as creationism violates the First Amendment establishment clause. So the intelligent design proponents from the very beginning tried to whitewash religion out as much as they could. Now to say well we`re not claiming who the designer is, is just a sham. Either the designer is God or somebody with the same skill set and there`s no point...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** And as I said at the outset...

(CROSSTALK)

**MEYER:** Let me respond to that, Dan...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** I`ll let you...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** I`ll give you the final word...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** I`ll give you the final...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** I will give you the final word...

**MEYER:** OK.

**ABRAMS:** I will give you the final word, but I respect the people who come out and say you know what, I think that God created life, and I have the utmost respect for those people. What we`re talking about here are people who are not admitting what we`re talking about and are talking in a lot of codes and circular arguments, et cetera. Mr. Stephen Meyer, you get the final word.

**MEYER:** I personally do think that God created the world. But the reason that as a design theorist, we are careful not to say more than we can detect intelligence is not

because we are trying to pull a sham or the wool over anyone`s eyes, we`re trying to be careful about what the evidence can establish and what it can`t.

(CROSSTALK)

**MEYER:** The argument for design is based on evidence and the evidence establishes an intelligent cause, but it can`t establish the identity of the intelligence...

**ABRAMS:** Yes...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** And the bottom line is when you get any major scientific organization on your side I will then apologize. Until then, I will continue...

**MEYER:** That`s a procedural argument...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** All right.

**MEYER:** We want people to examine the evidence.

**ABRAMS:** Yes...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** The problem...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** ... scientific organizations...

(CROSSTALK)

**ABRAMS:** ... that`s all they do.

**MEYER:** ... the National Center for Science Education...

**ABRAMS:** Yes, all they do is examine the evidence, and reject again and again...

**MEYER:** You explain digital code and cells...

**ABRAMS:** OK. All right. Yes, all right.

Coming up -- thank you both. Appreciate it, by the way. Stephen Meyer, you`re a good sport.