

EDITORIAL

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OUR OPINION

Two giants shape world

That Charles Darwin and Abraham Lincoln were born on the same day is, of course, a coincidence. But it is not *mere* coincidence. It is hard to imagine any two people with a common birth date having so profound an impact in their own time and so far into the future.

Equally striking is the vast disparity in circumstances that greeted the new baby boys on Feb. 12, 1809. Darwin was born into an affluent English family that owned the Wedgwood china franchise, and received a first-class education commensurate with his family's station. Lincoln was born in the then-wilderness of Kentucky, to a family of subsistence farmers and laborers. His father was illiterate, and Lincoln himself received scant formal education.

Each went on to shake the world.

Darwin was not alone in his observations about how organisms come to thrive in particular surroundings. Many naturalists before him, and during his time, had similar ideas. Alfred Russell Wallace, another British naturalist, had proposed his own theory of natural selection, inspiring much of Darwin's work.

But Darwin's publication of "On the Origin of Species" in 1859 forever changed human understanding of life on earth. Although his work continues to be controversial among some religious fundamentalists, evolution is the foundation of biology. And while Darwin proved many of his conclusions through direct observations, the proof of evolution and natural selection has increased exponentially in the age of genetics and microbiology.

Lincoln never met Darwin but throughout his political career, he mocked the widely held notion that blacks naturally were inferior to whites—a view in keeping with Darwin's assertions about descent from common ancestors. There is lovely symmetry, 150 years later, that genetic research has since proved his view.

Lincoln's impact is as indelible as Darwin's. He did nothing less than establish freedom as the natural human condition, and the only acceptable one. The United States would not be the nation it is today and its Constitution would not be the paradigm for every free nation, but for his dogged determination to, first, save the union, and then, to give living meaning to the founders' assertion in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal."

Barack Obama's rise to the presidency lends fresh poignancy to the Lincoln anniversary. No one pretends that the work of establishing social equality is complete, but there is indeed hope.

The twin anniversaries offer hope in these difficult times, as well, that humanity is capable of producing true greatness to expand its knowledge and solve its problems.

Squeeze plays

Fans gradually are coming to understand the breadth of performance-enhancing drug use by baseball players in the late 1990s and the early part of this decade.

The revelations are far to squeeze plays by the media and federal prosecutors, however, rather than any voluntary revelations.

This week SL.com revealed that New York Yankees superstar Alex Rodriguez used performance-enhancing drugs while a member of the Texas Rangers from 2001 through 2003. Mr. Rodriguez subsequently took responsibility.

Then Miguel Tejada of the Houston Astros, the American League most valuable player in 2002 while a member of the Oakland Athletics, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor for lying to congressional staffers about an unnamed former teammate's steroid use.

Last week, federal prosecutors tried to squeeze more information from Greg Anderson, home run king Barry Bonds' trainer. Twenty federal agents raided the home of Mr. Anderson's mother-in-law relative to a tax investigation.

None of the steroid revelations over the past several years have harmed baseball, which has enjoyed several consecutive years of record attendance. But it's time for baseball itself, which finally adopted its own anti-steroid rules after the initial scandals broke, to finally disclose what it knows about substance abuse so that the steroid era truly can be consigned to history rather than current events.

"We're STILL WORKING OUT THE DETAILS ON CANDY FLAVORS."

UNICEF



"IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS."

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YOUR OPINION

Inspiring words for trying times

Editor: On his 200th birthday today, we remember Abraham Lincoln for his special contributions to our nation and democracy.

Born into a poor family, he came to be a champion of minorities and laborers. He was a capitalist who cared for the working man and sought a democracy "of, by and for the people" that gave all men the opportunity and "the right to rise." He was a leader who sought reconciliation, who sought to govern by reason rather than by denouncing his opponents. He saw America as the "last best hope for mankind" because of our moral example and principles rather than for our power. He believed that America had a "special destiny" if we lived up to the sacred sentiments of the Declaration of Independence.

I believe that in his words, principles and deeds, we may find "power to steel our will" to address our modern challenges. We owe it to him and ourselves to ponder his thoughts and words.

"We must think anew and act anew, and then we shall save our country."

"Labor is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and reserves much the higher consideration."

"We must finish the work we are in, to bind up all the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."

"The weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men and all should have an equal chance, and fair chance in the race of life." That is "the sentiment embodied in the Declaration of Independence." Indeed, the proposition that "all men are created equal" guided all his political thinking and was the basis of the Gettysburg Address, whose words moved all future dreamers of democracy.

So this week, let all Americans read the Declaration of Independence that inspired him, let us read his Gettysburg Address and his second inaugural address that asked America to act "with malice toward none, with charity for

all" and which asked us, as someone has said, to "imitate the ways of God" toward one another.

Today, let us address our divisions with "the better angels of our nature." May his life and words live in our hearts and raise our horizons, in this, our testing time.

PATRICK HINTON
SCRANTON

Celebrate Darwin

Editor: Today marks the 200th birthday of Charles Darwin and this year marks the 150th anniversary of the publication of his landmark book, "On the Origin of Species."

The theory of evolution by natural selection, as first articulated by Darwin and subsequently observed, verified and tested by generations of biologists, is the foundation of our understanding of the complexity and diversity of life on earth. It explains how life evolved from single-celled organisms to include all the various forms of life we see around us today, from single-celled bacteria to complex, multicellular, sexually reproducing organisms.

Modern biology, and indeed, modern life, rests on a foundation of evolutionary

theory. Genetics has provided profound evidence of the mechanism underlying natural selection, and further evidence for evolution can be found in antibiotic resistant bacteria (bacterial populations that have evolved to resist the effects of anti-bacterial drugs or antibiotics) and the increasingly complete fossil record.

At the University of Scranton we are celebrating this year with seminars, workshops, and plenty of cake. I encourage you to celebrate Darwin Day 2009 and to participate in the international celebration of the work of one of the great intellectual giants of all time—Charles Darwin.

JANICE VOLTZOW PH.D.
PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON

Significant history

Editor: Please join me in ensuring the rich beneficence to our city by the Scranton State School for the Deaf.

The SSSD is the history of Scranton women. Alexander Graham Bell's student Emma Garrett brought avant-garde instruction of the deaf to Scranton in 1883. The world honored the SSSD at the Paris Exposition of 1889; and America did, too, at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.

The SSSD is the history of Scranton's pioneering forefathers. It embodied a progressive vision of education for all, as Garrett observed in 1883: "Mr. Henry Belin of Scranton...thinks moderate sized oral boarding schools must exist for poor pupils living in remote country districts... The miner's children who are now attending the Oral Day School in Scranton are so poor and dirty that Mrs. Belin supplies food, clothing and soap for most of them. Mr. and Mrs. Belin have no connection with the school beyond the interest they feel in it and the giving of their means to it."

The SSSD is the history of local architecture. Scranton's most respected architect, Edward Herbert Davis, was commissioned to enlarge the school in 1891.

The SSSD is the history of education in Scranton and Pennsylvania. The school pioneered a vision for education that is more than 100 years old.

Achievements by its historic graduates bear closer study and appreciation.

Let us stand by this historic school, its students and faculty. Let us show the meaning of "Scranton Pride." Together we can do this.

JOSEPHINE DUNN
WAVERLY

Charles Darwin

Charles Robert Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection is the unifying theory of the life sciences.

Evolution theory key facts

Development of life from nonlife: Complex creatures evolve from more simplistic ancestors naturally over time

All life is related and has descended from a common ancestor

Humans developed from primates (ape-like ancestors)

Natural selection: Preservation of a functional advantage that enables a species to compete better in the wild

U.S. poll reveals that majority rejects evolution theory

God created humans 51%
Humans evolved, God guided the process 30%
Humans evolved, God did not guide the process 15%
No opinion 4%

Earliest human fossil found: Sahelanthropus tchadensis

CRS poll of 808 adults, Oct. 3-5, 2005. Error of +/- 4 percentage points.

Life milestones

• Born Feb. 12, 1809, in Shrewsbury, England

• 1825 Graduates from University of Edinburgh

• 1828 Christ's College, University of Cambridge

• 1831-1836 "Beagle" voyage, gathers scientific material worldwide

• 1839 Marries Emma Wedgwood

• 1859 "On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection" is published in London (key term: Darwinism)

• 1871 "The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex"

• 1882 Dies April 19, age 73

SOURCE: DARWIN/ONLINE.ORG, MCT PHOTO, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/CELESTATION, WWW.LAMBERTSCIENCE.ORG

(GRAPH: JUTTA SCHREIER, JUNE BROCKHOFF)

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