

Abstract for an Invited Paper  
for the MAR06 Meeting of  
The American Physical Society

**Science and Society Under Attack: The Need for Political As Well As Scientific Responses**

MARSHALL BERMAN, Sandia National Laboratory, retired, and past Vice-President of the New Mexico State Board of Education

Today science and scientists are under attack. This is not new in human history. Copernicus delayed publishing for fear of possible persecution. Bruno was burned at the stake. Galileo was forced to recant. Darwin worked for 20 years without publishing his ideas, perhaps out of fear of possible consequences. In the US today, fundamentalist evangelicals have launched an attack on science, from intelligent design creationism, to stem cell research, global warming, vaccines to prevent cervical cancer, even museums that show exhibits on evolution. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this medieval mentality must be strenuously resisted. Rational thought can co-exist with religious faith, unless extremism becomes the norm. Scientists have often ignored politics in their pursuit of new knowledge. But they must understand that public opinion is strongly influenced by non-scientific elements of society, from the pulpit, from politicians and bureaucrats, from a scientifically illiterate public, and from a media that frequently treats all points of view as equal, when they are most certainly not. Will science eventually be required to pass muster for religious fundamentalists in the near future?