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Is Rush Limbaugh baiting NCSE? The thought crossed my mind when I heard his remarks in response to the unfortunate killing of Harambe the gorilla at the Cincinnati Zoo. Using the highly-publicized killing of this great ape as a springboard to mock evolution, [Limbaugh exposed](#) [5] his

poor grasp of basic biology. To wit:

A lot of people think that all of us used to be gorillas, and they're looking for the missing link out there. The evolution crowd. They think we were originally apes... If we were the original apes, then how come Harambe is still an ape, and how come he didn't become one of us?

Oh boy.

At the National Center for Science Education, where we have battled to keep creationism out of public schools for nearly thirty years, this kind of question comes up all the time. Those of us in the evolution "crowd" see this kind of thing on handouts given to students by creationist teachers in public schools. We also hear from good science teachers facing questions like this from creationist parents who are angry at the evolution curriculum in public school science classes. We've even witnessed school board members challenge evolution because of the non-existence of transitional "cat-dogs," which would purportedly be all over the place if that darn Darwinism were true. The patriarch of young earth creationism, Henry Morris, once put it this way: evolution can't be true because "[there's no such thing](#) [6] as a dat, or cog, cats are cats and dogs are dogs." (People are people, so why should it be...that creationists and facts get along so poorly?)

Let's unpeel this overripe banana. Some creationists may honestly think that evolution means individual animals change—that in the course of its lifetime a gorilla morphs into a person, or a dog becomes a cat. Many other creationists know this isn't true, but still repeat it because they think it is effective, in the same way that when I'm late I'm likely to bemoan the traffic, rather than admit how tardily I departed.

The truth is, of course, that evolution does not involve an individual organism changing during its lifetime. Evolution's rather more mundane focus is on changes in allele frequencies in populations over time, not so much the exciting and ever-popular "dog becomes snake that sprouts wings and flies away" scenario. Despite Limbaugh's insinuations, Harambe the gorilla was never going to "evolve" into a human being. Though we may mourn his loss, he never was going to reach the pinnacle we seek: spending all day sitting on a couch munching on Cheetos while watching *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*.

This is certainly not the first time Limbaugh has gone after evolution. Back in [2009](#) [7], reports of a newly discovered fossil were described by Limbaugh as a "missing link," a problematic term [no longer used](#) [8] by scientists. Then as he segued into economics, Limbaugh crudely directed the phrase "missing link" toward President Obama, an overtly racist association lost on zero listeners. In [2010](#) [9], Limbaugh said,

Now evolution...I know that evolution is Darwin...I think there are two guys who have probably done more to screw up the human race on balance...I mean, it's probably a tough thing to single out two guys out of all of the people who have been destructive to the human race. We gotta put Hitler up there and so forth. I mean, Hitler's efforts were finite. There's two guys whose work goes on and on and on, that continues to have everything screwed up. one was Darwin, the other was Freud.

Usually creationists delight in trying to blame Darwin for inspiring Hitler. But to compare, side by side,

the enormity of Hitler's "efforts" [sic] with Charles Darwin's copious writings on pigeons and barnacles? Killing tens of millions of people compared to publishing a few books? It's such absurd hyperbole that you would almost think the author of this mischief thought individual apes in zoos could spontaneously turn into people.

And how did Sigmund Freud get dragged into this? If Freud were alive today, he might first ask, "What do you mean I can't buy a Cuban cigar—and what's with all this vaping?" Then in regards to Limbaugh and Harambe the gorilla, Freud would probably say, "Just leave me out of this." And after Freud watched his first Miley Cyrus video, I imagine his response would be, "I rest my case."

Photo by Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, www.pbso.org)

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