Thomas Jefferson Dreams of Sally Hemings is a controversial new novel. By all accounts, Jefferson’s sexual relationship with Hemings spanned several decades, beginning when Hemings was a teenager and Jefferson was in his 40s. It was not, in any sense of the word, consensual: Hemings was a child, and Jefferson literally owned her; she was not in any position to give or withhold consent. What Jefferson did to Hemings was rape. The Washington Post, which acknowledges that the book’s treatment of Hemings leads to its “most troubled and troubling chapters,” concludes that “O'Connor's deeply humane treatment of Sally, whose actual thoughts will never be known to us, is the novel's most haunting accomplishment.” My new book, IN DEFENSE OF THOMAS JEFFERSON (Thomas Dunne Books, 2009), definitively destroys this myth, separating revisionist ideology from accuracy. It is historical hygiene by pen, an attempt to marshal facts, rationally dissect the evidence and prove beyond reasonable doubt that Jefferson is completely innocent of this sordid charge: the virulent rumor was first started by the scandal-mongering journalist James Callender, who burned for political revenge against Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson has been on trial in the court of public opinion since 1802 regarding his alleged affair with Sally Hemings. In a democratic society, the defendant does not have to prove innocence.

Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy by Annette Gordon-Reed Paperback $16.74. In Stock. This provocative, ill-organized defense brief tries to exculpate Thomas Jefferson from growing evidence that he fathered at least one child with his slave Sally Hemings. An attorney, Hyland (also a member of the board of the Thomas Jefferson Heritage Society) marshals all the available evidence, weak as well as strong, to argue that others were more likely than the squire of Monticello to have fathered Hemings's children. Thankfully, Hyland's book once and for all—in a convincingly unemotional fashion—clearly establishes that not Thomas Jefferson, but rather his brother Randolph or one of Randolph's sons, was the father of Sally Hemings's children. The sexual slavery Jefferson practiced in Paris later triggered the first Presidential sex scandal and birthed a fundamental principal of free speech. No man can replace him. At least one result of the Jefferson-Hemings scandal was positive, helping to establish and enshrine our First Amendment right to freedom of speech. As Governor of Virginia, Jefferson is rightly hailed as the author of the Virginia Bill of Religious Freedom, which helped to inspire the Federal Bill of Rights.