

COMMENTARY

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Tuesday, February 4, 2002

Editorial

Government must cease obscuring of 'Justice'

The United States Justice Department has something to hide — literally.

Apparently, certain government officials feel uncomfortable or embarrassed being photographed or filmed giving speeches in front of the department's "Spirit of Justice" statue. The embarrassment stems from the fact that the historic female statue wears a toga and exposes one breast.

To solve the problem, the Department of Justice recently spent \$8,000 for curtains to conceal the partially nude sculpture. The curtains will close in front of the statue, concealing it completely from press photographers and cameras during news conferences. The curtain will also conceal "The Majesty of Law," an adjacent male statue, which is clothed from the waist down. The decision to cover up the statues is ridiculous and shows both a stunning bit of misplaced Republican modesty and a lack of art appreciation. The Justice Department claims the curtains were placed in front of the statues for "aesthetic" reasons. But what could be more aesthetic than art? Certainly not a pair of plain curtains. The department stated that U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft wasn't even aware the curtains were being ordered because Ashcroft had "better things to do" than worry about statues.

Maybe it's just a coincidence that the "Spirit of Justice" has been standing in the department's Great Hall for 70 years, but no one noticed the statue's supposed lack of aesthetic value until Ashcroft began appearing in front of it. Or maybe it's not a coincidence.

The bottom line is that we shouldn't have to cover up a valuable piece of art — and waste \$8,000 doing it. If prudish Department of Justice speakers can't get over their blushing, immature reaction to a metal breast, an easier and cheaper alternative would be to simply move the podium.

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CORRECTION

Monday's story about the proposed Men's Center ("Campus to add Men's Center," ODE, Feb. 4), should have said that male suicide attempt rates are highest for men 20-24 years old. The Emerald regrets the error.

Factory 'seconds' could save lives

The new technological revolution has begun yet again. In Massachusetts, scientists at Advanced Cell Technology have cloned a cow's kidney from an embryo. While this could be an amazing feat, what is even more astounding is that the cloned

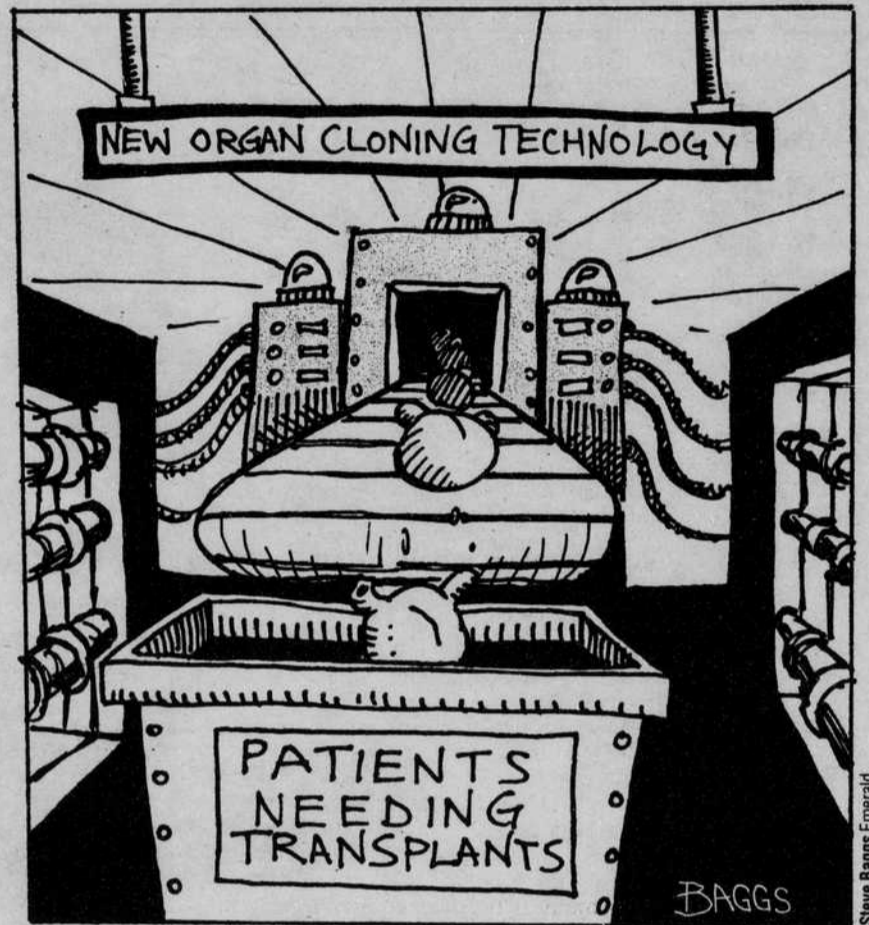


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Columnist

organ actually functioned in most of the ways that an (for lack of a better term) "organic" kidney would and was not rejected by the cow's body. By extracting the stem cells just as they began to specialize into a kidney function and colonizing them in what is known as a "biocompatible scaffolding" — basically a mold of the organ to be created — they were able to "create" a kidney. This new science has intense ramifications on medicine, by divorcing the supply of donor organs from the need to wait for a person to die from a head injury or other fatal accident. More than that, it clears the path for a near-limitless organ supply.

However, there is one thing standing in the way of this advance in medical science. We have a deep-seated mistrust of cloning and cloning technology. Some of this is religious in nature; people have been taught that to clone a human being or any part of a human is little more than "playing God." Others feel that an embryo, no matter how early in its development stage, is a human being and therefore sacrosanct. This discourse in the debate over cloning has been picked up by anti-abortion advocates who feel, through a leap in logic, that cloning is therefore tantamount to abortion.

The second notion in this hurdle is the average American's science-fiction view of the dangers of genetic engineering. For too many years, when people have heard the word "clone," they think of depictions in the popular media, almost universally depicting cloning as a tool of evil or, at best, as a force of nature that is better left untapped. For instance, the book and motion picture "The Boys From Brazil," where escaped Nazi doctor Josef Mengele makes numerous clones of Adolf Hitler. Or "Star Trek II: The Wrath of



Khan," in which Ricardo Montalban played the genetically-engineered supercriminal Khan Noonien Singh, a genocidal tyrant who abused his strength to take over the world.

The upcoming "Star Wars" prequel is also rumored to be set during a "clone war," where clone soldiers are churned out by the bushel to fight for the bad guys. Then there is the real world's own experience in eugenics, where in Nazi Germany, Europe more generally and even for a brief period in this country, there were attempts to "purify" the genetic pool by using brutal methods. With these notions in our collective memory, is it any wonder that we fear any application of cloning?

But we live in an age where the terrors of some unchecked, cloned "superman" on the silver screen is far less horrific than what thousands of families are going through at

this very moment. Organ donations are still nowhere near enough to cover the 76,000 on organ waiting lists in this country. More than 6,000 people die each year in the United States because a donor couldn't be found fast enough to save the life of someone who desperately needed a kidney, heart, liver or a lung. And those family members who donate their own organs (kidneys and parts of the liver) while they're still alive run serious risks, including death. If cloning could save those 6,000 lives, then I say fears be damned. We now hold in our hands the promise of a time in which no person would have to die needlessly because a donor organ could not be found in time.

E-mail columnist Pat Payne at patpayne@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

University must adopt sign language

GUEST COMMENTARY

Jim
Evangelista

The ability to communicate thoughts, dreams and ideas is among the most fundamental needs of any person, and access to language is the key.

The deaf have reinvented and reconnected the tissue that binds us together and created a culturally rich tapestry of traditions, folklore and experience that touch hearing and deaf. To negate their culture and presence in society — by not respecting their means of communication with each other and the larger hearing community — is ignorant. It makes a sham of the suggestion that we are a diverse institution.

Oregon's flagship university — the University of Oregon — must lead the way in making diversity genuine and assuring access to all. Unfortunately, current language policies do a disservice to deaf and hearing when we deny the opportunity to experience this culturally passionate and visually elegant method of communication. When we disregard the contributions and impact of deaf citizens, we miss out on all the deaf offer and the potential new students and faculty that would come seeking studies that include American Sign Language.

The issue has been raised before. Now, thanks to students and faculty, the question is raised again. Will we make change

happen and join our sister universities and the rest of the academic community?

Will we follow state and federal laws acknowledging ASL as a language and prepare educators and interpreters in ASL? Will interdepartmental and funding pressures give way to standing for diversity, rather than against it? Diversity means more than color, race, religious, ethnic and sexual experience. To suggest the deaf have no culture is inappropriate. It shouldn't be accepted as a reason to continue non-compliance with the law.

Therefore, in the belief that current positions are those of an uninformed few who have prevented the present many from moving forward academically, socially and professionally, we offer the University community an invitation to the ASL Now! forum to be held in March.

We will share deaf culture in ways this institution can no longer ignore. Speakers and contributors from across the country will come together and offer a prescription for change. The University should comply with

the law, and faculty responsible for making academic policy should do the right thing and immediately institute a curriculum that recognizes ASL as a language, and gives full credit to its study and satisfaction of the language requirements for graduation.

Further, we declare February to be ASL Education Month and will celebrate the culture and experience of the deaf in the United States throughout this month and encourage the University community to join us in questioning, expecting and requiring policy change. We invite students, faculty and administration to move forward academically and morally as we offer access to all who look to the University as a benchmark for diversity and opportunity in Oregon.

Please join us in March as we make change happen and expand our vocabulary and minds, inclusive of those deaf persons who are our family, friends and fellow citizens. For more information and to lend your support and time to this effort, contact us at aslnow@realitykitchen.com. Join us as we look forward to a day where diversity is assured and access to opportunity for all is the standard.

Jim Evangelista is senior bachelor of fine arts student in visual design.