

TECH TALK

the future of
CLONING

Dangers of human replication warrant immediate ban

The demise of Chicago in the Great Fire of 1871 was caused by Mrs. O'Malley's cow. Will the demise of the human race be caused by Dolly the sheep?

Dolly made headlines last year as the first cloned animal to be successfully produced. Dolly is the exact replica of her mother, down to the DNA, because she was produced by an embryo created from one of her mother's cells.



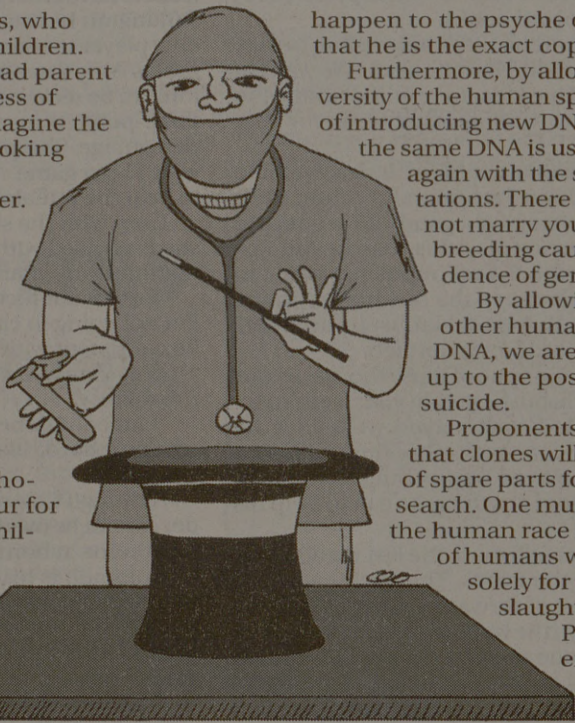
MANISHA PAREKH
columnist

Her birth has touched a storm of questions about the cloning of other animals; more specifically, the questions are about human cloning. Physicist Richard Seed believes that there is no question: humans can be cloned, should be cloned, will be cloned within the next few years. The real question, though, is not "Can we replicate humans, but should we?" Seed says, "Clones are going to be fun. I can't wait to make two or three of my own self." Hello? Puppies are fun. Bunnies are fun. Playing God and toying with lives of sentient human beings is not fun. It is dangerous, risky and unethical. Proponents of human cloning claim that this

breakthrough will allow couples, who otherwise could not, to have children. "It's common now to see the dead parent father a baby through the process of frozen sperm implantation. Imagine the joy of a widow raising a child looking like her beloved deceased husband," says Dr. Brigitte Boisselier. The joy?

Putting aside the fact that artificial insemination and human cloning are two separate and very different things (not to mention that frozen sperm implantation is not common in any sense of the word), Boisselier's attitude typifies the problems with human cloning. It is hard to imagine the psychological problems that could occur for both parents and their cloned children.

Children already go through enough problems establishing a separate identity from their parents. One can only wonder what will



happen to the psyche of a child who knows that he is the exact copy of his parent.

Furthermore, by allowing cloning, the diversity of the human species drops. Instead of introducing new DNA into a gene pool, the same DNA is used over and over again with the same defects and mutations. There is a reason you can not marry your own cousin: inbreeding causes a greater incidence of genetic faults.

By allowing people to form other humans with the same DNA, we are opening ourselves up to the possibility of genetic suicide.

Proponents of cloning also claim that clones will be a valuable source of spare parts for transplants and research. One must ask what it says for the human race if we create a group of humans who will be raised solely for the purpose of being slaughtered.

People say that slavery is reprehensible; we must ask then what can be said

about cloning.

There was a large outcry several years ago when the Ayalas, a Californian couple, had a baby in the hopes that it would be able to donate marrow to their daughter, Marissa, who had cancer.

At least the Ayalas were going to love and raise the child even if it wasn't a compatible donor. Can that be said of those who will breed clones?

Nineteen European nations signed an agreement to ban human cloning on January 12, stating that it is "contrary to human dignity." Two countries, Germany and Britain, were hesitant to give their approval.

Germany felt that the agreement was too weak. They wanted something more stringent, along the lines of a German law which forbids all research of human embryos; the law was enacted in response to Nazi attempts to conduct genetic engineering experiments on humans.

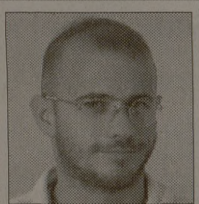
The Europeans have made their stand against human cloning. Now it is time for the United States to follow their lead and also impose a ban. If the human race is to keep its dignity and integrity, there is no question about it.

Manisha Parekh is a sophomore psychology and journalism major.

LONE STAR LOWDOWN

Inmate's newfound redemption should not influence death sentence

A woman in Huntsville is sitting all alone in a jail cell on death row. She has been sentenced to die by lethal injection on Feb. 3 for a heinous crime she openly admits committing. At about the time most of us will be eating dinner on that Tuesday night, Karla Faye Tucker will be escorted to a little room with a medical-looking table in the middle.



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She will be strapped to that table while reporters and a few others, chosen in an official capacity, look on. Shortly thereafter, a poison will be pumped into her arms and for a few brief moments she will feel death flowing over her body. Karla will die, and the state will have killed her.

Well... big deal. This is Texas. Texans do not put up with deadly criminals very much. Never have. But, as a result of a television interview by Larry King on CNN, over a thousand letters have poured in from Texas and across the country to Governor Bush, claiming that Karla is a special case and should be spared.

You see, in addition to being a clean, attractive, intelligent, well-mannered woman with nice teeth and pretty hair, Karla is a born-again Christian who seems to have turned her life around in the last 10 years.

She was a bad girl who saw the light and became good. But she was a very bad girl, indeed.

In 1983, Karla and her boyfriend in an attempt to burglarize an apartment, savagely murdered two people. Karla killed one of the victims herself with 20 stabbings of a pick ax. A pick ax, mind you.

Anyway, the homicide detective on the case said it was the most brutal murder he had ever seen, and the judge threw the book at both of them, sentencing them to death.

In her interview with Larry King, Karla said the murders occurred just as they have been publicized. She not only stated that under Texas law she would be put to death, but that as a Christian she was forgiven by God and is ready to die.

Of course, she would rather not die, and the reason for being spared — like most of the letters sent to Austin have claimed — is that she is a completely different person. This is undoubtedly true, but is this a reason to be spared the death sentence?

In order to answer such a question we have to be certain the issues surrounding this case are early separated.

First, whether the death penalty should be levied is not relevant in this case. It is legal, and she meets the criteria overwhelmingly. Her being female shouldn't be a factor because of obvious sexist implications.

Even though our culture generally finds killing women more disturbing than killing men, one might argue that due to strength considerations she had to put forth even more effort than a comparably sized man in order to sink the ax into her victim's body so many times.

That she has become a born-again Christian is equally irrelevant in that murder is a crime against the state, a state that doesn't recognize preferential treatment based on religion.

Her supernatural forgiveness may count in the spiritual realm, but she is still in the natural world, and the Texas Department of Corrections is hardly heaven.

Unfortunately, the most legally irrelevant, albeit most socially relevant consideration in Karla's case is our own emotionality. Regardless of the facts, most people know how they would judge Karla based on how they generally feel about the death penalty, women, particularly attractive articulate women, Christian values, born-again Christians, and whether the TDC is responsible for criminal deterrence, retribution or varying degrees of both. People's emotions usually make these types of decisions for them.

So, people are left with the fact that she is now just a good person, nothing else. But in order to be truly fair and impartial people must look at Karla as "Karl." He's a sweaty, hairy man with rotting teeth, foul language, a swastika branded on his forehead and Mickey Mouse shooting the finger tattooed on his chest, who in his interview with Larry King was clearly dumb as a shoe.

In 1983 Karl picked up an ax and bludgeoned one of your relatives into a bloody mush just to rob her house. But, for the last 10 years on death row Karl has been a devout Buddhist, writing children's books about the importance of compassion, honoring one's parents and hard work. All profits are given to cancer research, his favorite charity.

Karl is a completely different person now and although he is ready to die for his crime, he is asking that he be spared based on his current merit. Both inmates have undergone major rehabilitative transformations, and would bring back their victims if they could.

Both are sorry for what they did in the past. The only significant difference between the two criminals is how we feel about them based on factors that should remain irrelevant, particularly in a legal setting.

An attractive Christian woman and a brutish Buddhist man in Huntsville are sitting all alone in a jail cell on death row.

Although the issue at hand is the life of Karla, not Karl, they are still the same life. Given the circumstances, it's not important whether they live or die, only that they live or die together.

Frank Stanford is a philosophy graduate student.



MAIL CALL

Educational lows not feminists' fault

In response to Donny Ferguson's Jan. 22 column:

Ferguson's column is one of several anti-feminist columns I have read in *The Battalion* since beginning my studies at Texas A&M. Somehow, Ferguson believes that feminists are responsible for children's low test scores because text books replace words like "fireman" with "firefighter."

He claims that this "gender equity" is harming both male and female students and accuses feminists of trying to "sell their anti-male, anti-Western culture snake oil." Yeah, that sounds reasonable.

I grew up in California and attended Mills College, a rather feminist all-women's college in Northern California.

Moving to Texas was quite a culture shock, and I am always disappointed when I read absurd remarks spoken with Rush

Limbaugh propaganda that tout feminism as the cause of all of society's ills. A similar column last year stated that "women should not put their confidence in themselves but in Jesus Christ our lord." Is everyone on the planet a Christian? The same column also accused feminists of using their sexuality to climb the corporate ladder.

Oh, yeah, and it called feminists "man-haters," as well. Need I say more?

Ferguson offers no evidence for his claim. Instead he resorts to pathetic name calling and demonstrates his woeful lack of knowledge about the feminist movement in general.

Feminists definitely are not manhaters, and they are not necessarily women.

Feminism is about equal respect and opportunity for both genders, and if that means changing the occasional male-oriented word like fireman to firefighter, I do not see how that damages the intellect of boys.

I do, however, see how using words like "fireman," "policeman," "weatherman," etc. may damage the self-esteem of girls.

When I was a kid, before I knew what a feminist was, I wondered why all these words were for men, and as I attended religious meetings, I was told that women are subordinate to men.

Yeah, well, if I had followed that I would not be studying biochemistry at Texas A&M, I would be home

raising two children and cooking my husband's dinner. Now, don't get me wrong by saying I think "housework" is demeaning. I don't. I just think women should be able to choose how to live their lives. If that means staying home or going to work, who cares?

Ferguson's "argumentum ad hominon" discussion makes him seem ignorant of and threatened by all feminists.

Do not blame feminism for lowered test scores — blame poor public schools, drug-ridden streets or lack of funding for education. You can also blame the media, video games and gangs. Blaming language in a textbook that uses the term "firefighter" is absurd.

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