

# Human cloning promotes questionable values

Playing with genetics could be unfair to the cloned child.

We are going to have almost as much knowledge and almost as much power as God," said Dr. Richard Seed in a National Public Radio interview. So, cloning technology is once again the subject of CNN's pseudo-news programs. But in round two of the cloning media blitz, humans are the guinea pigs — not sheep. Why should we clone humans?

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The playing-God advocates say that infertile couples deserve any chance they can afford in order to have a child. Some will say that it would be nice if parents who have lost children would be able to start over fresh with a clone of their dead child. And every once in a while you might hear a question

instead of an answer — why shouldn't we clone humans?

I can answer this with a two-fold response, and without resorting to any religious arguments. First, in the short-term, human cloning should be banned because cloning techniques are far too imperfect for human experiments. Consider that it took 277 tries to produce Dolly, the cloned sheep. One counterpoint that could be raised is that human embryos are lost all the time to miscarriages — what's the difference?

Conception is a messy process, and fetuses can be developmentally impaired because of genetic defects, maternal drug and alcohol use or accidents. Cloning could just be another prenatal risk factor. The difficulty is that we do not know what that risk factor is. Scientists do not even know if a cloned animal such as a sheep or a human would have the same lifespan as a non-clone.

At least for now human cloning should be banned until more research is conducted on animals to predict what sort of medical implications cloning would have for a human baby. Suppose for a moment that human cloning techniques were perfect. The clones would show no medical deviations from non-clones. With perfect techniques it

seems that the danger might have been left behind.

It is still there. Why would someone want a cloned child? Because the person wants his child to be like somebody else. This would be true for celebrity cloning, deceased child cloning, self-cloning, or catalog cloning (example: "Look, honey, Number 43 has a 130 IQ and graduated from Wake Forest University!").

I won't pretend for a moment that parents don't have certain expectations of their children. What parent hasn't wished for his child to play football or practice piano or something else like the kid next door? Cloning is a different kind of expectation. Parents with a "normal" newborn child could not have selected that child to be anything but what it is. Human cloning, though, gives to the parents the power of selecting before birth exactly what sort of person their child will be. The problem is that their expectation for a cloned child is largely an illusion. People's bodies, minds, and characters are not solely determined by genes. Gene set 43, when cloned, might graduate from Duke!

My point is that cloning might be unfair to the cloned child. Furthermore, I must wonder if perhaps the more a parent tries to make his child be a certain way, the more his love is of a conditional nature.

# Low-quality TV shows can be loads of fun

'Lesser' ESPN coverage and 'Life on the Beat' prove very insightful.

Perhaps one of the most enjoyable aspects of winter break is being able to go home and catch up on all of the inane television that I miss during the course of a semester. During the school year I can make time for movies, but I tend to gloss over a lot of the quality programming that occurs during the natural flow of the week.

During the school year, I get to watch a solid amount of ESPN, but the shows are limited to feature games and *Sportscenter*. I really enjoy watching the network when it is unable to cover the "big" game. In this situation, it usually makes no effort to even compete with the prime networks.

I was watching the *Monday Night Football* game between the New England Patriots and the Miami Dolphins when I thought about ESPN and was curious as to what competition it might be posing. It

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met all my expectations, airing the Bull-Fighting Championships. It's as if even the executives are saying, "Let's be real honest. No one is going to watch us. Why even try?"

The Bull-Fighting Championships were no doubt some of the stiffest competition *Monday Night* has seen in a while. I tuned in just as the clown competition was getting under way. For those who weren't brave enough to leave the game, the basic premise of the clown competition is for the rodeo clowns to taunt and embarrass the bulls at uncomfortably close distances, all the while eluding the eventual spearing.

The best part about these clowns is their willingness to grapple with the bulls. They would actually get frustrated if the bull didn't want to charge them, so they would get closer and hit the bull in an effort to further irritate it. Good thinking, fellas.

One of the announcers was marveling over a competitor and actually said that the man was a "natural" at clowning. What an unusual talent to have. Many people are born with an ear for music or natural athletic ability, but to know that one is "born to clown" sounds more like a curse than a gift. It's like, "Hey look. There's Tim taunting those steers again. You know, he sure wears a lot of make-up. By God, it may not be my thing, but that boy has a real knack for wearing face paint and avoiding death-by-goring. He's gonna make a fine clown some day, you wait."

Another winner that I saw in the midst of another network's prime-time triumph was the World Poker Championships. Surprisingly, this is not an easy match to watch: four slovenly men with dark glasses huddled around a table, mulling over cards. The action was fast and furious; the announcing was eloquent.

I got a thrill out of the sponsors for the championships, too. We are all accustomed to seeing the likes of Gatorade, different soft drinks and other huge companies. Not the poker championships, though. The advertisers knew the audience they were catering to and the viewer could see that in the ads. There was an assortment of cheap whiskeys, marriage counselors and headache pills — just a real target audience.

The highlight was the end of the match while the winner was being interviewed. He said, "You know, I felt good today. I was really in command of the cards." What? You were in command of the cards? No, you weren't. That's the point of playing poker. You don't know what you are going to get. If you were in command, why play? The whole premise of the game is moot.

Another show I got to sink my teeth into was one of the *COPS* spin-off shows, *LAPD: Life on the Beat*. *COPS* was fine because there was enough crime in the nation to keep the show lively and intriguing. *Life on the Beat* was really searching for some hard crime to record.

The show picked up with two officers at the beach, ridding the world of some of its more pressing threats: open containers in public.

The officers went around the boardwalk questioning all these people who were just trying to have a nice day at the beach. It was disturbing because these officers were just desperate for something to go wrong.

I was amazed at the moronic things that made it past the editing stages of production. The officers approached this one lady lying in the sand. She had a basket with her and one of the officers started interrogating her. The dialogue went as follows:

Male Officer: Excuse me, ma'am, is that beer in your basket?

The lady pulls out a watermelon.

Male Officer: What about that knife?

Lady: It's used for cutting the watermelon.

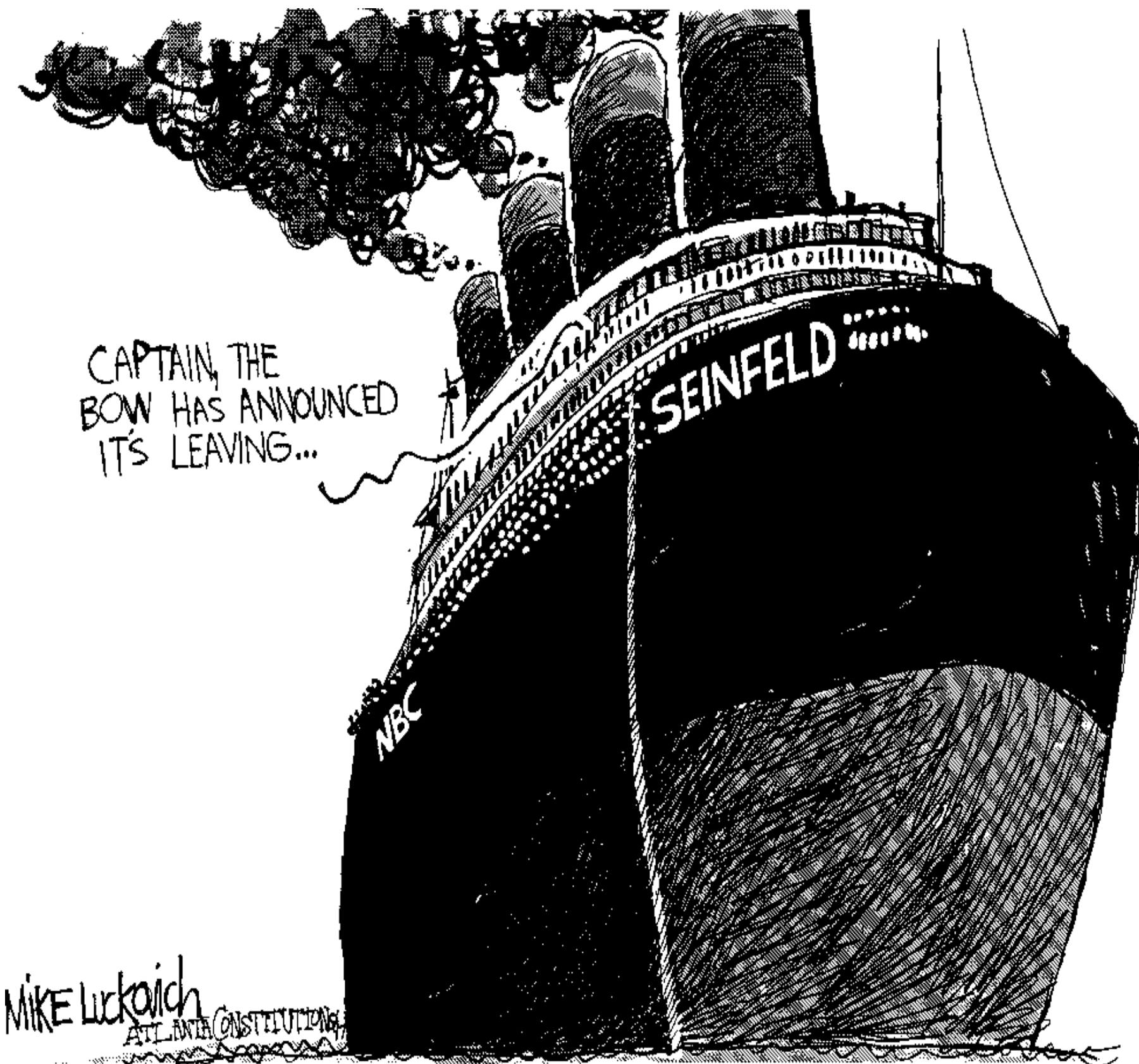
Female Officer: Well, that's not all it can be used for.

Male Officer: Can you put that away so no kids can get at it?

I thought the last part was an excellent way of saving face.

The officers wrapped up the segment by boasting 210 citations a week, at approximately \$95 each. The boardwalk will never be the same. The Los Angeles Police Department has enough trouble with amateur videos making its officers look like fools; I don't see why it would solicit this problem from professional sources as well.

So, as evidenced, it was nice to go home and catch up on some of the quality shows I miss during the bustle of the school year.



# Trip home over winter break brings gift of perspective

Reconnecting with family and friends causes a fresh view of life circumstances.

As I prepared for the holidays, I found myself both excited and anxious to be with my family in California and daughter in Hawaii. First of all, I was amazed at how quickly the fall semester had come and gone, with five months lapsing since I last saw

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my family and my six-year old daughter, Noelani. Secondly, I was reflecting on what it would be like to be "home" again — wondering about how much my family members, my daughter and I have probably grown and changed in different ways since my last visit.

I think for some of us the whole experience of going home for the holidays feels like we are stepping back into a time warp wherein memories of past events or experiences present their own unique set of challenges for us to handle. In the past, dealing with my family's expectations and my own expectations would sometimes get in the way of my

ability to fully enjoy the true spirit of joy associated with the holidays.

However, this year was different. This year, going home for me was an experience of "coming home" to myself, feeling a deeper sense of joy and peace in my life than I have ever felt before.

Perhaps part of the deeper sense of joy and peace I experienced may simply be a function of my age (turning forty this year was a big deal for me). But I think another, more significant factor which contributed to this joy was knowing that I survived a challenging year, and yes, I am alive and well as a result! How many times have we ever wondered if we were ever really going to make it to the end of a year or academic semester, especially when we find so much of our lives consumed by our work, our studies, our commitments and everything else which affects our lives inside and outside of the university?

This year, the most significant gift I received from others (and which I was also able to return), was the gift of perspective. I found myself deeply engaged in a whole range of conversations with my family and special friends at home about what creates meaning in our lives. We laughed, we cried, we hugged and consoled one another as we realized that each one of us have our own unique challenges to deal with and in recognizing, too, that we're not alone in the world — we're

all searching for what defines life, love and the pursuit of happiness. Being home with my family this year reminded me of the poignant scenes from the movie, *The Joy Luck Club*.

Being with my six-year old daughter, too, always gives me another take on life. For it is through her eyes and her experience of the world that I receive new and different perspectives of my life. She reminds me that life is too short not to be happy! Maybe those of you who have younger siblings, nieces, nephews or grandchildren can relate to this. The innocence of children gives us something refreshing and life-giving. Perhaps their gift to us is not to take our lives too seriously.

I found my reconnecting time with my family and with Noelani to be a very rich, full-bodied and life-giving experience for me this holiday season. In being with my family, I recognized how alike, yet how different, we all are, which is what makes being home such a dynamic experience. They gave me a gift of perspective — the view that the strength of our family diversity is more a plus than a minus. The key then lies in how I choose to respond or react to what is presented to me, and so my New Year's resolution is to use these experiences with my family as constructive learning opportunities.

As we move into the New Year, opening school with our annual

Martin Luther King Jr. and theme year festivities, mixed with our sobering memorials to community members who are no longer with us, may we all remind ourselves of the gifts we have to offer one another — one of the most important ones being the gift of perspective.

I believe that there are many valuable perspectives which we have to offer each other, some which will help us examine and re-evaluate our quality of life index at the university. Thus, the question that I pose to you is: What will you resolve to do differently in this new year, in terms of the gift of perspective you would be willing to share and be open to exploring with others? And on a larger scale, how can we as a community promote our sharing of perspectives in light of the biases and attitudes that still serve to make a chilly climate for some?

If we can all recognize the value of what we bring to the university through our "gathering of gifts" (our multidimensional perspectives and life experiences), and moreover, remain open to exposing ourselves to different viewpoints, then perhaps we will find that the new year will be a time for new beginnings, and a time for us to celebrate and appreciate what "coming home" to ourselves is all about. Happy new year!

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