

# Preserved brain sparks debate

■ **American Indians** want 'Ishi's' brain restored to their community.

COLMA, Calif. (AP) — In a simple black jar set atop mottled stone, the ashes of a man believed to be the last of his tribe lie surrounded by the silence of the dead.

Chiseled into the surface of the container are the words: "Ishi. The Last Yahi Indian. 1916."

In another quiet room 3,000 miles away, Ishi's brain floats in formaldehyde, part of the Smithsonian Institution's anthropological collection.

American Indians want Ishi restored in whole to his tribal homeland.

"I think we're breaking new ground due to the fact that, as far as history is written, there's no descendant to the Yahi tribe," says Art Angle of the Butte County Native American Cultural Committee, which is requesting the return of Ishi based on a claim of cultural affinity.

Smithsonian officials say they're willing to return the brain — but not until they have determined who has a legitimate claim, likely to be a complex task because the Yahi were long ago wiped out by settlers and disease. And while Ishi was long described as the last Yahi, other theories about his ancestry may complicate the repatriation.

On Monday, the California Legislature tackled the matter with a

hearing exploring what became of the man known as "the last Wild Indian in North America."

"The revelation that Ishi's brain was separated from his body prior to cremation and sent to the Smithsonian Institution is a continuing affront to Native Americans and ought to be an embarrassment to the state of California," says state Sen. Patrick Johnston, one of the conveners of the hearing.

Ishi walked out of the past and into post-Gold Rush California early one August morning in 1911. He was found, emaciated and near starvation, crouching against a slaughterhouse fence near Oroville, in Butte County, and soon drew the attention of University of California anthropologists. One of them was Alfred Kroeber, a revered Berkeley figure whose name is today emblazoned on the anthropology department building.

Ishi was soon installed at the university's anthropology museum in San Francisco. There, according to a 1961 book written by Kroeber's wife, Theodora, he settled into an odd but apparently congenial routine. He made friends with UC researchers, did light work as assistant to the head janitor and became a kind of living exhibit, making spears, bows and arrows as fascinated visitors watched.

The middle-aged Ishi never told his name. Anthropologists came up with Ishi, which means "man" in a local Indian dialect.

By all contemporary accounts, Ishi was happy in his life at the university.

But civilization and alien germs proved too much for him. He died in 1916 of what doctors believed was tuberculosis.

Researchers knew Ishi did not want to be autopsied. He had once wandered into a hospital dissection room and been horrified, believing bodies should quickly be burned to release the soul.

Kroeber, who was in New York when Ishi died, wrote a letter ordering that Ishi's body should be cremated. "If there is any talk about the interests of science, say for me that science can go to hell," he declared.

Unfortunately, others couldn't resist the chance. Ishi's body was autopsied, the brain removed.

For years, the whereabouts of Ishi's brain was a mystery. In 1997 the Butte County committee began trying to locate Ishi's remains for proper burial in his tribal homeland near Mount Lassen.

A separate investigation started by the UC-San Francisco discovered that Kroeber, despite written objections to an autopsy, had sent the brain to the Smithsonian.

The findings prompted some soul-searching.

UC-Berkeley anthropology professors called the affair "a troubled chapter of our history" and acknowledged "our department's role in what happened to Ishi, a man who had already lost all that was dear to him."

Smithsonian spokesman Randall

Kremer says the museum won't be hurried into abandoning its process.

"We owe it to the individual tribal representatives and we owe it to the American people because this specimen is part of the national collection," he says. "In a sense it already belongs to not only the tribal representatives but all Americans."

But others say the saga of Ishi has gone on too long.

"We shouldn't get too righteous given the considerable defilement that occurred, perhaps inadvertently, perhaps intentionally, over 83 years," Johnston says.

Set into a glassed-in niche, the pot holding Ishi's cremated remains is a rustic contrast to the ornate bronzed and engraved containers favored by most of the residents of the Olivet Memorial Park Columbarium.

Whether Ishi's ashes stay here is unclear. Angle wants to reclaim Ishi's ashes as well as his brain, a venture Johnston is exploring.

Johnston believes it's time California owned up to its past.

"The romanticization of the Old West and the Gold Rush era ignores the brutal reality that Indians were forced from their homelands and often killed," he says.

"For a cemetery, a university, a museum or a government to stand on Western protocol as a way to evade the rightful return of the heritage of Indians to their descendants is a wrong that should not be allowed to stand."

## Safety walk scheduled for Saturday

From staff reports

Students, faculty members and staff who have concerns about campus safety may want to get up a bit earlier than usual this Saturday.

The Police Advisory Committee, the Chancellor's Safety Committee, and the Parking Advisory Committee, in cooperation with UNL Police, Parking, Landscape Services and Maintenance and Facilities will sponsor a safety walk beginning at 4 a.m. Saturday.

UNL Police Sgt. Bill Manning said the group will meet at the parking garage, where participants can park.

"The hope is that people come to us with areas of concern," he said.

Participants will explore general lighting, shrubbery and other concerns that affect the perception of campus safety, he said.

Anyone who wants to attend should e-mail Manning at [wmanning1@unl.edu](mailto:wmanning1@unl.edu), he said. Those who e-mail can also include specific areas they are concerned about, he said, so bus routes can be planned.

## Study links lesbianism with inner-ear emissions

Gays concerned with effects on attitudes

Daily Texan  
University of Texas-Austin

AUSTIN, Texas (U-Wire) — A study performed by a University of Texas-Austin researcher suggests that sexual preference in females may be linked to the tone of inner-ear emissions.

Dennis McFadden, who has studied inner-ear behavior in female subjects for the past year, measured spontaneous otoacoustic emissions (SOAEs), weak pure tones emitted by the human ear.

Tones produced in homosexual women's inner ears he studied were weaker in signal and less numerous than those of the heterosexual women studied. The homosexual women exhibited tones similar to those of male test subjects.

"The most plausible explanation is that the inner ears of the non-heterosexual women were partially masculinized at some time in development," said McFadden. "Possibly, at the same time that whatever brain structures are responsible for sexual orientation were also masculinized."

Similar research has been going on for more than 100 years.

In 1899, German researcher Magnus Hirschfeld suggested homosexuality was biological in nature and began the gay civil rights movement on those grounds.

More recently, in 1991, Simon LeVay, author of "The Sexual Brain," based biological claims for sexual orientation on the differences in brain structure of heterosexual and homosexual male corpses.

In 1993, Dean Hamer, author of "The Science of Desire," discovered the purported "gay gene." Hamer's study searched 40 pairs of homosexual brothers for five genetic markers. He found that 33 pairs shared the markers.

Supporters of genetic determination hailed the study as proof. Hamer, however, was cautious in agreeing. He felt that the genes played some role in 5 percent to 30 percent of gay men.

"From twin studies, we already know that half or more of the vari-

ability in sexual orientation is not inherited," Hamer said. "Our studies try to pinpoint the genetic factors ... not negate the psychological ones."

Despite these studies, the Family Research Council denounces claims of biological homosexuality.

Yvette Cantu, FRC policy analyst, said she chose to become heterosexual and feels gays and lesbians have the same opportunity.

"It took me three years to overcome sexuality," Cantu said. "It's difficult to imagine a more self-destructive behavior than homosexuality — I never regretted my decision to leave the lifestyle."

McFadden's inner-ear study also raises questions concerning male versus female homosexuality. Unlike females, male heterosexuals and homosexuals exhibit no inner-ear difference.

McFadden suggests there may be basic differences in the process through which a male or female sexual preference is determined.

McFadden's study is a double-edged sword, supporting biological origins for sexuality, but raising the specter of genetic policing. He explained that SOAEs aren't a diagnostic tool to determine sexual preference, but allowed that scientific developments could make tests possible.

"There are potential dangers surrounding (the study) ... concerning civil rights, genetic testing and the potential for abuse," said Julia Massimind, a member of Texas' Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Law Students Association.

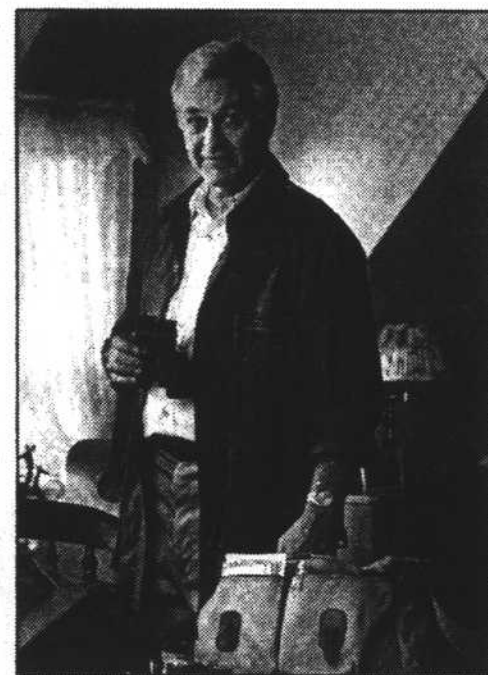
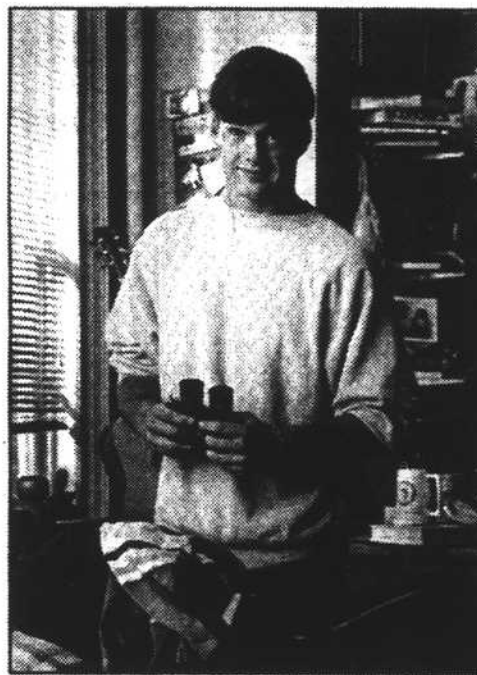
Some fear the potential for state-sponsored tests.

"Testing sexuality is almost like trying to get to the root of the problem," said Tree Marsoobian, founder and president of She SAYS, a student group for lesbian and bisexual woman.

Marsoobian added that gay-testing could complicate certain legal issues, such as the gay-adoption bill.

"People say, 'If I was gay I'd be outraged,'" she said. "Well, you're human, and you should be outraged."

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