

## Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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### Too precious Legislature shouldn't meddle by passing tissue ban

The University of Nebraska has been under the microscope in the past year.

Its academic reputation has been studied with furrowed brows, and, as the examination continues, it's been hypothesized that there is definite room for improvement.

In the wake of all this microscopic scrutiny, the Nebraska Legislature stands to stop a good portion of that improvement in its tracks.

Legislative Bill 304 would prohibit groups from selling and transferring fetal tissue. It further mandates that the University of Nebraska Medical Center stop using aborted fetal tissue as soon as alternative sources are located.

The bill also provides a system to monitor the tissue use.

Fetal tissue research became a controversial issue in the 2000 session after it was reported that

**If the state wants to squelch the minds of students at the university and squelch the possibility of scientific breakthroughs, it should impose this ban.**

UNMC was using the brain cells from the material to do research for diseases such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease and AIDS-related dementia.

A bill was introduced during the session but died because there wasn't time for debate.

Meanwhile, the university has aggressively sought alternatives to the use of fetal brain tissue from elective abortions to continue the research.

The university has said it is best if the Legislature stays out of the controversy and has also questioned the Legislature's ability to impose a legal ban on fetal tissue research.

We stand by the university in its quest to find alternatives.

We stand by the idea of academic freedom.

If the state of Nebraska wishes to stunt the university's growth, it should impose this ban.

If the state wants to ensure NU's status as a semi-good research university, it should impose this ban.

If the state wants to squelch the minds of students at the university and squelch the possibility of scientific breakthroughs, it should impose this ban.

The university has worked hard — and continues to work hard — to ensure academic freedom for its faculty and students. It's not fair for the state to swipe that freedom.

In the Omaha-World Herald, members of Nebraska Right to Life have said they have 32 senators in support of the ban, one short of the number needed to end a filibuster. Twenty five are needed to pass a bill.

Although we do believe a good number of the senators would vote in support of the ban, we hope they consider the intent and the efforts of the university before they cast that vote.

The bill will most likely be prioritized, which ensures the debate will continue.

We still have hope, even though we live in a state that has historically squelched anything controversial, liberal or ground-breaking.

So it wouldn't shock us if this bill actually passed, but it would enlighten us, as the young minds of this state, to see something change.

It would enlighten us, and the rest of the academic community, we believe, to see this research continue.

It would enlighten us to see that the university, along with the rest of the state, could be known for more than its past decisions.

In fact, to us, that knowledge would be groundbreaking.

#### Editorial Board

Sarah Baker, Bradley Davis, Jake Glazeski, Matthew Hansen, Samuel McKewon, Kimberly Sweet

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#### Editorial Policy

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### Criminals need help, not just time



Seth Felton

A couple days ago, a sidebar story appeared in the Lincoln Journal-Star about a Toledo convenience store robbery.

The man accused apparently walked into the Sunset Carry-Out and demanded \$40 even. The clerk gave him \$50, and, with some vexation, the man returned \$10, saying "I only wanted \$40."

He then walked nonchalantly out of the store and was later arrested at his home. He never said what the money was actually for.

Now I don't know about you, but I think we should give people who commit crimes this comical, this harmless, a break. We should certainly not let them off, but perhaps their punishment could consist of something ultimately constructive, like community service.

Unfortunately, this powerless man will most likely be sentenced to anywhere from one to five years in prison, especially if he has a record of previous petty charges.

There are stories about people like this all over the country. A couple years ago, a man in Texas was sentenced to 20 years in prison for having a single marijuana plant growing in his house. The sentence is even more absurd when one considers that the man had a wife and three children to support.

Granted, this is one of the more extreme stories, but it is the legacy of a decade of politicians "getting tough on crime." One would think that would mean attacking the roots of crime, but we are not in the business of crime prevention in this country.

We are more concerned with crime management. I know some will argue that both of the aforementioned men deserve whatever they get because they broke the law. It's that simple.

However, I'm not so much concerned with the sentence as with the purpose of incarceration, and also whether it makes sense in these cases.

Traditionally, prison is thought to be a deterrent because of the remorse one feels there. According to this ideal, evil acts must be harshly punished, which will motivate prisoners to modify their future behavior in order to avoid further imprisonment.

The current criminal justice system only provides one half of the necessary formula. It provides punishment and degradation for inmates to ensure that no one will want to come back.

For the most part, the system takes very little initiative to assist the ex-con in returning to normal society. No job training, therapy or any such program that could assist the ex-con in rejoining society is provided.

In fact, through this neglect, the criminal justice system ensures a very high rate of recidivism (a return to crime by prison alumni) by failing to provide ex-cons with any realistic options — aside from a return to crime, once released.

By incarcerating without providing marketable skills, we ensure that an ex-con will have plenty of incentive to return to crime as a way of life and as the only means of making a living. By ignoring the roots of crime, we essentially send the message that a certain rate of crime is acceptable, even desirable.

We know, for example, that poverty is a major source of crime (though we don't know how it causes crime). We know that, as the gap between rich and poor widens in a given area, the homicide rate rises (this is called the Gini Index).

We know that drug abuse is a source of crime, but we don't treat drug addiction. Rather, we treat the addiction as a crime and, as penance for character weakness, the addict is imprisoned.

Sixty percent of those currently incarcerated are there for non-violent offenses. With more than two million of our citizens in prison, we are at a breaking point. We can only throw so many of society's less fortunate into prison, where they learn the tenets of the criminal society and become better criminals, before we feel a backlash.

We know how to alleviate these situations. I argue that we can reduce the total crime rate if we reduce the poverty of the inner city, decriminalize the possession and personal use of drugs, and create treatment centers for the crippling addictions that afflict so many of our citizens.

Yes, that would mean a redistribution of wealth from the upper to the lower strata. Yes, that would mean an end to the drug war as we know it.

Yes, that would mean a massive reform of the prison system. And yes, a country this prosperous, this rich, with a people so ingenious, can do all these things and can create the conditions for a more humane society.

All that can stop us is the fear of change from those in power. That is the first thing to overcome.

#### Silly rabbit

In "The Purple Horseshoe Scam," Dan Leaman's grumbling about how little money he received when he sold his books back is not new, unfortunately.

Every year, I hear the same complaints by many other students. With so many serious university problems to address, I find this limited focus on the "buy-back program" questionable.

What students should understand is that these buy-back programs are not a right of the student. Students are not entitled to any specific percentage return on their book purchase. The program is not a privilege, either. The bookstore isn't doing the student any favors.

These programs are a way by which bookstores increase their profit margins by selling the same book over and over again. It just so happens that students get some money back from books they would rather not keep, residually.

Students can participate in the program or not, but they shouldn't waste time complaining about it as if they were entitled to something being so "unconscionably" withheld.

On the other hand, had Leaman criticized the process itself as being poorly organized or that the store only makes new, over-priced editions of the same textbooks available, or had he said the process by which they are sold and

resold is problematic, I would support his argument. But these were not part of Leaman's critique.

Robert Aguirre  
English

#### Ashcroft deserves nod

Graduate Student

To suggest John Ashcroft is unqualified to be attorney general merely because he is a strong conservative is absurd.

Is West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd unfit to serve his people because he is a former Ku-Klux-Klan member? Of course not. Was former Labor Secretary Robert Reich rejected because of his ties to the Communist Party? Not at all.

The President-elect has nominated a man he believes to be the most qualified. Ashcroft has served Missouri as attorney general, governor and senator, and with great success. Some leftist groups attempt to tar him as a racist, despite being the first Missouri governor to appoint a black woman to the state court of appeals, as well as voting to confirm 23 of 26 black judges appointed by President Clinton.

He should and will be confirmed.

Andrew M. Strnad  
UNL alumnus, 1998  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

### Good evening, Herr Hicks

Hello Hicks.

You know, I was just thinking about you. Wondering how things are going for you, how you like the place you've landed.

So, how are things there?  
The President was here. We gave him the usual Big Red Welcome.

He seems sadder now. Grayer. Like the last man on earth with no heir to console him. It makes him seem more presidential than ever, I think.

But you know, there's a theory...  
(I need a cocktail for this)  
...a theory that the universe splits off from itself at times of crisis.

Somewhere in a universe in which the Japanese and Germans won WWII, where you and I sprichts Deutsch.

(Gerhard Lauck is Mayor.)  
I myself have seen it happen before. Felt the world slip the wrong way.

Or felt myself sliding, the world tipping. It felt that way, to me, during the Nine Day Coup when Boris Yeltsin stepped over the tanks.

Somehow, beyond all expectation, the USSR laid down and died. It had pointedly not roared back to life amid hideous reprisals.

The shadow that had eclipsed my childhood, it was gone: a moon of soap.

And it feels that way again to me. I'm sure I will feel the frisson more intensely, come the 20<sup>th</sup>, when whitey takes the White House.

For what they're worth, the omens were ominous:

The November conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn — by many considered to have been the Original Star of Bethlehem — made its second appearance in the East.

(What rough beast, etc. slouches, etc. to be born?)

And when I consulted the I Ching, on election night, months before the final "final count," It predicted "an evil king." I suppose it must be true.

I find I can hardly believe it.

In the world I'm used to living in, village idiots do not get elected president. There was no President-Quail, for instance. (or was there? Woe to that world! I wonder how it all turned out.)

Mark  
Baldrige

*And when I consulted the I Ching, on election night, months before the final "final count," It predicted "an evil king." I suppose it must be true.*

Bad men, of course. Paranoids, naturally. Bipolar schitzoid types, sure, every other decade. But in the world I'm used to, the world I somehow thought of as the "real" world, it takes something between the ol' ears to head a country as big and dynamic as the U. S. of A.

The explanation?  
Is it possible the world really fractures on the fault lines of time?

Maybe, but maybe not.  
Maybe that's all crackpot science, cooked up over hashish and white wine at a dinner party for semi-literate armchair physicists.

Maybe it's a notion more aligned with our hopes than with our knowledge: we who are always mistaking the present for two tickets to a cruise we haven't taken yet, with someone we don't currently know.

Maybe it's just a humbug.

I'm sure I would never know the difference.  
But what, then, do I do with the unmistakable sensation of having been left behind by the world I knew, of having taken, like Bugs Bunny, a fatal wrong turn near Albuquerque?

Between two quantum mirrors, the theory goes, the world is reflected infinitely. But one of the reflections is Hell, literally, and another is Heaven.

One supposes our world rides the curve somewhere in the middle, but it need not be so.

At least we can take comfort in waving to the others, those happier worlds swimming somewhere in our lee.

Or we can't.

Which is it, do you think? Is the universe a multiplicity, like so many planaria in a petri?

Or is there just the one? Precious and individual, the genuine article, the one and only world.

Melting like the only snowflake on the tongue of time.

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