

Pro-Lifers Are Part of Back Story In Bush's Ban on Chimerawhats?

By J. Scott Orr

Not on George W. Bush's watch.

In his State of the Union address, the president vowed to pursue legislation to outlaw all forms of "human/animal hybrids," a what-the-heck phrase that may have left Americans wondering if Bush was asking Congress to ban mermaids and centaurs.

It was, instead, a reference to the latest debate over the definition of human life and where to draw the line in merging human and animal cells and genes.

At issue is the creation of so-called "chimeras," generally defined as beings that share human and animal cells. Backers of this brand of biotechnology say chimeras — named for the mythical Greek monster with a lion's head, goat's body and serpent's tail — are used routinely by researchers who bear no resemblance to the mad scientist in the H.G. Wells classic "The Island of Dr. Moreau."

A typical chimera might be a mouse endowed with a few human brain cells to make it a better subject for experimentation on treatments for diseases like Parkinson's or Alzheimer's.

Another example is the addition of human cells into sheep and pigs in hopes they could be used one day as sources for organs transplanted into humans. Technically speaking, thousands of chimeras are walking around unnoticed: people whose faulty heart valves have been replaced by ones harvested from pigs or cows.

While chimeric research is going on at universities and private labs around the world, the technology remains in its infancy and has yet to yield any significant medical breakthroughs.

At Stanford University, professor Irving Weissman has created a mouse with a 1 percent human brain and hopes someday to develop one whose brain is 100 percent human. Studying such a mouse could lead to a better understanding of how human brains develop and are affected by disease.

"There's really a very small amount of research going on now, but it is increasing and will continue to grow," said Arthur Caplan, director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania.

Religious conservatives say science, by creating new life forms, is tampering with the work of God. They are joined by some ethicists in warning that the merging of animal and human cells should be banned, lest humankind be faced with all kinds of moral decisions about the rights of newly created man-beasts.

The critics of hybrid research agree that scientists cannot be trusted to serve as the morality police of their own laboratories.

"My sense is that we will see the development of human/animal hybrids, mammals that have more and more bits of human in them. You can see a progression developing here that you might not be able to stop," said Nigel Cameron, a research professor of bioethics at the

Illinois Institute of Technology.

"If people say, 'Trust the scientists,' what if we were talking about war and they were saying 'Trust the generals?' Scientists defining science policy is terrifying."

In his State of the Union address Jan. 31, Bush mentioned human/animal hybrids during a right-to-life passage in which he called human life "a gift from our Creator — and that gift should never be discarded, devalued or put up for sale."

Among those applauding that night was Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan., the religious right's favored candidate for president in 2008 and one of America's foremost anti-chimera activists. He is the sponsor of the Human Chimera Prohibition Act, which among other things would ban fertilizing nonhuman eggs with human sperm or vice versa, if that ever became possible.

Brownback's bill would ban all kinds of interspecies mingling out of "respect for human dignity and the integrity of the human species." The bill also notes that the mingling of cells is a ready way to spread diseases, such as avian flu, from animals to humans.

Those who object on moral grounds to research on embryonic stem cells have the same concerns about chimera research if it, too, leads to destruction of human embryos.

David Prentice, senior fellow for life sciences at the conservative Family Resource Council, said banning human/animal hybrids should not apply to laboratory animals invested with a few human cells. But he said his group would object to tampering with human embryos by adding animal genes.

"The only reason to do that would seem to be to try and make that embryo less than human and make it available for research. It's science run amok. It's not a necessary direction that we want or need to go in," Prentice said.

Hank Greely, a professor at Stanford University's Center for Law and Bioethics, said the human race has nothing to fear from today's chimeras.

"What they are focused on is putting human cells, human stem cells, into animals for use as laboratory research tools. Nobody is trying to make a wolf man or a sphinx," Greely said.

"We could study tumors by putting them into people instead of humanized lab rats, but that would be wrong. People are not good lab animals."

Caplan said he was a bit surprised to hear the president talking about human/animal hybrids in the context of the State of the Union.

"I bet a lot of people thought he was going to ban Minotaurs and round up the mermaids," Caplan joked.

"It was really a bone thrown out to conservatives who knew exactly what he meant," Caplan said. "What they are concerned about is embryo destruction, as if the embryo is a person."

J. Scott Orr is a writer for Newhouse News Service.

Media Maestro Makes Inroads for Adult Free Speech

By Robert D. Richards and Clay Calvert

Underneath the high umbrellas of the garden terrace restaurant at Hollywood's Chateau Marmont on a crisp and clear late-February afternoon, Mark Kulkis sits confidently and chats easily, unrecognized by those at the tables surrounding him.

As with many in Los Angeles who frequent this fabled haunt, where John Belushi famously ended his wired life and fast times, Kulkis earns his living in the entertainment industry.

It's just that Kulkis' particular niche of that industry — adult entertainment — is not the kind that prompts the oh-so-chic people here to gawk and the paparazzi to stalk.

Still, Kulkis, a 1987 graduate of the University of Michigan who attended law school for a semester at Fordham before working in public relations for half a decade in New York City, is perhaps the most prominent and increasingly important face of a new generation of adult entrepreneurs.

He's also thoroughly disarming, unpretentious and decidedly unconventional. From the conscious decision to locate his business in downtown Los Angeles rather than over the hill in the porn-saturated San Fernando Valley to his high-profile promotional tactics — among them sponsoring the 2003 California gubernatorial campaign of his then-contract girl, adult actress Mary Carey — Kulkis is blazing trails in an industry that, by some estimates, generates \$12 billion a year in revenue.

Like the name of his company, Kick Ass Pictures, Kulkis is taking the adult entertainment industry by storm and, in the process, moving adult fare squarely into the mainstream of modern American culture.

"The industry is becoming more accepted, partly because of the Internet," he suggests. "People also are exposed to it more in advertising and movies that are becoming more sexual ... Nowadays, being a porn star is a legitimate career choice."

Kulkis recognizes convenience as a key force behind the industry's growing popularity, noting that "[i]n the old days, people had to seek [adult materials] out by going to the shady side of town, but now — thanks to the Internet — from within their own home, they can have basically anything they want in terms of porn."

Kulkis sees the mainstreaming of adult entertainment as part of a long-term evolutionary process — one



in which his own company plays a significant role.

"I used my public relations skills when I signed Mary Carey to an exclusive contract with my company and, in the process, had a girl there who would be good in front of the cameras," he observes. "The first big thing I did was run her for governor [of California]. Everyone touts that as one of the milestones of the mainstreaming of porn, at least in the last few years."

During the course of our wide-ranging, 90-minute interview with Kulkis and his girlfriend, the man who helped launch Hustler Video before striking out on his own with such successful fare as the "Barefoot Confidential" foot fetish series of DVDs and videos freely dished out his own unabashed views on a number of topics.

The former managing editor of the Adult Video News, Kulkis is clearly media savvy, from his background in public relations to his appearance with Carey on "The Daily Show" with Jon Stewart to an op-ed commentary published in this very newspaper in 2005 that called out feminist legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon ("MacKinnon's Anti-Porn Crusaders: Thought Police in Disguise," July 20, 2005, Daily Journal).

Here, then, in his own words, is

Mark Kulkis — the man who calls Larry Flynt a "founding father" of the industry and who someday just might rival him in name recognition and importance.

On why the First Amendment should protect adult content: "The First Amendment doesn't mean anything unless it protects the speech you hate. If it's only going to protect polite speech, it really does no good. The founding fathers of the Constitution had in mind people who want to speak out against a popular figure, so it's basically offensive speech that they wanted to be protected."

On the purpose of the First Amendment protection of free expression: "The purpose is to prevent tyranny because [the founders] were thinking of the days when there was a king. If you said anything against the king, you were thrown in prison."

"Free speech is the only way you can root out corruption and other bad things. If you have a very powerful person who is doing something wrong, the only way to bring him down is through public opinion. The only way to get a large corporation for wrongdoing ... is to get a groundswell of people going against it."

On the major political parties in the United States: "I don't think any party really wants to have an affiliation with the adult entertainment industry because it's a no-win situation for them. Other company owners like me are sort of Arnold Schwarzenegger Republicans — socially liberal and financially conservative. Basically, I'm against government in all areas of life. I wish there would be more of a Libertarian Party."

On the current federal obscenity prosecution in Pittsburgh, Pa., of Rob Black's aptly named Southern California-based adult company, Extreme Associates: "There is a whole spectrum of porn available to consumers, and most of it is just consenting people engaged in sex, but Rob Black goes out on a limb purposely trying to offend people, which doesn't turn on most of the people who buy porn. On the positive side, he is someone who is so stubborn that he basically egged on the government and invited the Justice Department to bust him. Now he's going to fight his court case. If he ends up winning, then he'll benefit us all because the result will be to throw out these obscenity laws."

"He's a two-edged sword in the business — he is a lightning rod for the government's crusade against

porn. He gives the religious zealots some pretty strong material to wave around in their PR campaign. But although the movies Rob got busted for are not my personal cup of tea, I support him 100 percent and believe he should have the right to distribute those movies. Because at the end of the day, everything in his movies is fiction and fantasy.

"Nobody was really harmed. It's just like the Danish cartoons of Muhammad that have been in the news lately. Do they offend some people? Absolutely. But should they be declared illegal because of that? Absolutely not."

On the influence of obscenity laws on the content in his own productions at Kick Ass Pictures:

"Everyone knows that if you're going beyond the pack — if you're a Rob Black — you're going to be targeted for prosecution. Thus, producers tend to hold back and don't do everything they would like to do. The things they avoid most times would be perfectly fine, but they're a little gun-shy."

"When my films were being distributed by Hustler, for example, I had to run all my tapes through the legal department there. If there was chinking in a film — even 10 seconds of a consensual act of choking as a turn-on — they would tell me to take it out. It has a chilling effect."

On the need for the industry to have a place in the political and legislative process:

"It's hugely important. As the business gets bigger and bigger, it's becoming more mainstream and we want to be more accepted. [The industry] needs to have a voice in the legislative process to avoid people making decisions without consulting the group most affected."

"That's how some of these bad laws are made. No one is going to stand up and say, 'Well, what about the pornographers? Is anyone thinking about them?' So we have to have someone there at the table."

When lunch with Kulkis ends, we get the distinct feeling that America will be hearing more from him in the not-too-distant future — even if those around Kulkis that day at the Chateau couldn't recognize his face: that of a new generation of adult entertainment.

Robert D. Richards and Clay Calvert are attorneys and professors of communications and law, as well as codirectors of the Pennsylvania Center for the First Amendment, at Pennsylvania State University.

Two Mexicos, One Border: Looking at Life From Both Sides Now

By Jorge Ramos

There are two Mexicos separated by one border. And their differences are clearer day by day.

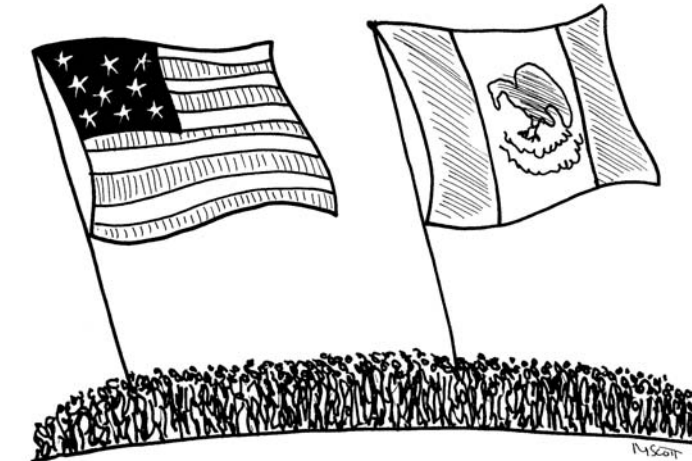
There is the Mexico over there, the one with a population of 103 million, the one immersed in the turbulence of presidential political campaigns, the one that every year tosses out (seemingly not really wanting to) some of its best workers, the one that has not quite reached modernity, the one that is always about to ... but isn't quite there yet.

And there's the Mexico over here — the one that we came to from over there: one that has formed itself into a kind of island with tentacles within another country, one that has made a cultural reconquest, one that has 25 million people of Mexican origin, one that dreams about the other Mexico but dares not return because ... what for?

On these cold New York streets it is easy to find the ones that are part of the Mexico this side of the border: They're the ones who have the most difficult jobs, the ones who clean, cook and serve at restaurants, the ones who, in short, do what nobody else wants to do. And when you ask them, Where are you from? the answer is nearly always the same: from Puebla, from Michoacan, from Oaxaca ... the Mexican population is the fastest-growing segment in New York.

You can also say, however, the same about California, Texas, Arizona, Illinois or North Carolina. What happens is that the Mexico this side of the border is fed by the half a million immigrants who enter the United States every year and by all the babies who are born here of Mexican families. We are many, and we will be more.

We, the Mexicans this side of the border, keep on being connected in many ways to the Mexico on the



other side: one out of every three has traveled to Mexico in the last year; six out of 10 have sent money to family members; and eight out of 10 have made phone calls to Mexico, according to the last survey by the Pew Hispanic Center. That is, we miss and worry about what is happening back in the other Mexico.

However, the longer we stay here, the more distant we become. We forget to speak proper Spanish. Sometimes we say "aseguranza" (whose roots are from the word "insurance") instead of "seguro," "troca" (from "truck") instead of "camion," "parquear" the car (from "to park") instead of "estacionar" the car, and to call a "rufero" (roofer) when the roof "liquea" (leaks). Television, school, job pressures and laziness make us hop over to Spanglish.

We say we want to go back to Mexico, but few ever do. People usually tell me, as if justifying that decision, "There aren't any good jobs over there." Or, "Well, my kids were born here." I myself came to the United States for a year, and I've been here now for 22. I am not the only one.

Of course, we are interested in Mexican politics, but not much more so than in the results of a soccer match at the Azteca stadium or in the Mexican national team

at an international game. And that lack of interest in politics was seen most clearly during the recent effort to register Mexicans to vote from abroad.

Of the 10 million Mexicans born in Mexico but living in the United States, only about 40,000 actually will be able to vote by mail from abroad for Mexico's July 2 presidential elections. Why so few? Because Mexico's Congress considerably limited voter registration, because the Federal Electoral Institute could not pull off effective and efficient promotion in the United States and because, truth be told, Mexicans this side of the border have more pressing things to think about and pay for than the \$8 required for voting by mail.

Some 55 out of every 100 Mexican voters in the United States did not even know there were going to be elections in Mexico. And only seven out of every 100 Mexican nationals here had been informed about the requirements for voting from abroad. That shows the sorry limits of the IFE's improvised campaign. At the end of the day, the Dominican Republic could get more votes from abroad for its elections than Mexico could, even considering there are only 670,000 Dominicans living in the United States.

But beyond the organizational

problems and the restrictions imposed upon the IFE by the Mexican Congress, the low political participation by Mexicans abroad took many of us by surprise. For years, I, for one, believed the vote from abroad could make the vital difference in a close election in Mexico. But that is not the case. Now we know Mexicans in the United States are more worried about their lives here — their jobs, their children's education, acquiring their own home, obtaining medical insurance — than closely following promises made by presidential candidates in Mexico.

In spite of all the above, it is interesting what the Pew survey suggests about the few Mexicans who actually could vote from abroad. Felipe Calderon, from the National Action Party, is ahead in the polls here (26 percent) over Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador from the Democratic Revolution Party (21 percent) and Roberto Madrazo from the Institutional Revolutionary Party (13 percent). That vision, more tilted to the right, contrasts with the polls in Mexico, which are leaning to the left and indicate Lopez Obrador as the candidate in the lead. Even on this point, the Mexico this side of the border for the moment seems to differentiate itself from the one over there.

Mexico was cut in half 158 years ago. The two Mexicos that resulted experience cycles of nearing or distancing themselves, and not without tensions. And although their differences are becoming ever more apparent, neither can understand itself without the other. There are simply two Mexicos divided by a border.

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