

Cuba versus the United Nations on Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology : Cuba's Prohibition of Cloning Technology

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Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#)

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Fidel Castro recently had increased interest in the prospects of genetic engineering, genetic cloning to be specific. Ever since Castro asked leading scientists to attempt to mass-clone a "supercow" know as Ubre Blanca or "White Udder", Fidel has invested an unbelievable amount of funds to support this technology.

In fact, Fidel poured hundreds of millions of dollars into what he believed to be a highly promising venture. In modern days, Cuba is the single largest exporter of pharmaceutical medicines in all of Latin America, and is able to boast about 50 countries on its client list.

This nation has even had more than 100 patents in genetics, with 26 of them filed in the US. When 6 Cuban geneticists traveled to Finland for equipment, they returned with an abundance of lab tools. Now, certain Cuban pharmacies are worth \$700 million annually.

One scientist, Professor Campa, stated, "I remember one day telling Fidel that we needed a new ultracentrifuge, which costs about \$70,000," Campa says. "After five minutes of listening he said, 'No. You'll need 10.'" Among many things Cuba's Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology discovered the vaccine for hepatitis B. The center also invented the world's most advanced anti-coagulant for breaking up blood clots in heart attack victims. Cuba is fast becoming one of the world's leading centers for genetic pharmaceuticals.

The UN has a very different stand on the issue of genetic cloning and other technologies. The UN's draft resolution for Resolution 53/152 of 9 December 1998 stated that: "the reproductive cloning of human beings... shall not be permitted." This was formally adopted, but later, the act was repealed. The UN believes that "mankind as a whole benefits from the life sciences, while seeking to prevent them from being used for any purpose other than the good mankind." This is stating that cloning shall be banned to all member nations of the UN, because it can be used in a purpose other than for "the good of mankind".

Our proposal for a solution to this disagreement between the UN and Cuba are as follows. Cuba should continue with its advances in aspects of genetic engineering and new vaccines. However, these should be monitored in retrospect the agreement of the UN, as it is Cuba's responsibility as a member of the United Nations to provide leadership in agreement with

the policies and will of the UN General Assembly. Cuba would like to see this act of banning genetic human cloning repealed; however, as Cuba is still advancing through the stages of animal cloning and experimentation, she would like the possibility of regulated human cloning to be open for the time she reaches that stage. Human cloning is surely a fragile subject, as is animal cloning, and should proceed with great caution and with restrictions from the governing body of the UN. Ethical laws of man cannot hold back mankind's eternal quest for knowledge in subjects such as the life sciences. If too many laws are created that limit scientist's freedom to experiment, then man's thirst for this knowledge will be limited and slowed. Indeed, we have never in time encountered such a highly ethical and important matter such as this. Some even say we are "playing god". But nonetheless, we must proceed with an agreement between powers such as Cuba and the UN, and come to a resolution on how such scientific powers such as human cloning should be used in the hands of scientists.

Anton Hsu is a 15-year-old high school student in the International Baccalaureate programme in Atlanta. He has a deep passion and interest in genetic engineering. Anton lives in the US and England.

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http://havanajournal.com/culture/entry/cuban_science_is_not_working_on_human_cloning/

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