

THURSDAY 1/29/09

HSB

## Enact restrictions on cadavers shown in public exhibits

**A** Barnum & Bailey-style exhibition of skinless, mummified human bodies from China completed a seven-month stretch last weekend at Ala Moana Center, but any return appearance should undergo scrutiny. Enactment of legislation sponsored by Rep. Marcus Oshiro and approved this week by a House committee is needed to assure respect for the dead.

The legislation will not interfere with the display of bodies at funerals or the exhibit of cultural artifacts that include human hair or teeth.

More than 10 million people across Europe and the United States have seen "Bodies ... The Exhibition," an assortment of cadavers configured in life-like poses. The exhibition, sponsored by Atlanta-based Premier Exhibitions, closed at Ala Moana and opened last week in Dublin, prompting calls for examination by the Irish Human Rights Commission.

The corpse preservation involves removing fluids and replacing them with chemical polymers, or plastic. It was developed by Gunther von Hagens, a German scientist and competitor of Premier whose company has taken in more than \$200 million by displaying corpses over the past decade. Premier agreed three years ago to pay \$25 million for a reliable supply of bodies from China.

But whose bodies were they? Premier has maintained that it uses unclaimed and unidentified bodies given by police in China to the Dalian Medical University in northeastern China. A university spokesman says it has no knowledge of the bodies' origins.

"The grim reality is the Premier Exhibitions has profited from displaying the remains of individuals who may have been tortured and executed in China," New York Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo concluded last May after investigating the exhibition that opened in Manhattan in 2006. He said Premier "was unable to demonstrate the cause of death or the origin of the decedents."

In a settlement with the state of New York, Premier agreed to "obtain written documentation demonstrating the source of each body and body part, the cause of death and the decedent's consent to the use of his or her body."

The settlement requires Premier to disclose on its Web site and in advertisements that it is unable to confirm that the bodies and parts that were displayed in New York "were not, or did not belong to, Chinese prisoners who may have been victims of torture and execution." To this day, Premier's Web site states, "Premier Exhibitions cannot, however, independently guarantee the origin of the specimens."

Even documentation that is provided might be suspect, as shown by birth certificates provided by the Chinese government in a controversy over young girls who won gold medals in women's gymnastics at last year's Olympic Games in Beijing.

"In China, what becomes fact is what the government says is fact," notes Gay Mitchell, a member of the European Parliament from Dublin.

HSB EDITORIAL

1-30-09 HSB  
**Display of bodies  
shows lack of humanity**

I strongly agree with the sponsors of legislation concerning the exploitation of human bodies for commercial display, and hope it passes (Star-Bulletin,

Jan. 28). I found even the advertising for this exhibition to be offensive. It is disgraceful to exploit the remains of the dead in a commercial manner. It is disingenuous to claim this was an "educational" exhibit — if you want this kind of an education, get it at the University of Hawaii, not at the mall. I boycotted Nordstrom because this exhibit was next to the store.

It is astounding to read the comments from those who condoned this incredibly tasteless commercial exploitation. I have no quarrel with the science community, which needs to work with donated human bodies (particularly those donated willingly by people before their deaths) for their work. But this ... this was not about science or learning. This was about making money and demeaning humanity.

**Frances Cypher**  
*Kaneohe*

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TUESDAY | February 3, 2009

**'BODIES' BILL**

**Questionable exhibit  
should be prohibited**

I applaud the proposal before state lawmakers introduced by Rep. Marcus Oshiro and reported in the Jan. 28 article by Peter Boylan. I found the exhibition of "Bodies" reprehensible and completely agree with Rep. Oshiro that the sale and display of human bodies, without proving where they come from and getting consent from the deceased, should be prohibited. I am glad an elected official is trying to stop such presentations.

These "Bodies" came from the Communist Chinese police and could very well be those of persecuted Christians and other religious faith groups. China is listed in the top 10 persecutors of Christians in the world by Open Doors International.

It is time those outside of China said "no and not here" to "Bodies."

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