

Analysis: Cadaver trade

March 10, 2004

NEAL CONAN, host: This is TALK OF THE NATION. I'm Neal Conan in Washington.

Most of the time, most of us would prefer not to think about what happens to our bodies after we die. Some of us make provisions to donate our remains to benefit medical science and sometimes our families make that decision. But few of us know what happens to those cadavers, where they go and what they're used for. Even more disturbing is news this past week of what appears to be a black market in human body parts. Some of what we'll be talking about this hour may not be suitable for all our listeners, so if you don't want to hear this discussion or children are with you, you may want to think about turning the dial and rejoining us later in the program when we'll turn to the story about what authorities in Zimbabwe say is a plane full of mercenary soldiers on their way to Equatorial Africa. But first, the trade in cadavers.

In Los Angeles, the head of the UCLA Medical School's Willed Body Program has been arrested for selling corpses and body parts for profit. Donors intended their bodies to be used for the education of doctors and medical students, a benefit to us all. Instead, it appears that some of the cadavers were allegedly cut up and sold for personal gain. If you have questions about what those parts are used for, where they come from and where they go, our number here in Washington is (800) 989-8255. That's (800) 989-TALK. And the e-mail address is totn@npr.org.

Our first guest is Charles Ornstein, a reporter for the Los Angeles Times. He's been covering this story at the UCLA Medical School.

And thanks very much for being with us today.

Mr. CHARLES ORNSTEIN (Los Angeles Times): Good to be with you, Neal.

CONAN: Can you explain the chain of events that's taken place since the arrest over the weekend of the head of the Willed Body Program? And then there's another man who's accused of buying the body parts.

Mr. ORNSTEIN: Yes. This has been a lot of activity in a fairly short period of time. On Saturday, UCLA police arrested a fellow by the name of Henry Reid, who was the director of the Willed Body Program at UCLA and who oversaw the intake of all of the cadavers coming into the program, about 175 a year, and decided--you know, oversaw their storage, their embalming and where they went. The allegations are that he took some of those bodies and allowed them to go to a middleman, a fellow by the name of Ernest Nelson, who acknowledges that he sold them to research companies, his 80 to 100 corporate clients. We were the only ones to have talked to Nelson since his arrest.

CONAN: And so what did...

Mr. ORNSTEIN: And he told...

CONAN: Yeah, what did he have to say?

Mr. ORNSTEIN: Well, he told us that over the course of six years that he had an opportunity to cut up 800 bodies, and he contended that it was with the full knowledge of UCLA officials, which is a charge that they vehemently deny.

CONAN: Well, according to him and according to what you wrote in the newspapers, he says, 'Look, I came in the front door, talked to everybody. They knew what I was doing. They could see what I was doing. And when I left, I walked out the front door.'

Mr. ORNSTEIN: Absolutely. He gave us a very vivid description of him coming in, toting his gray case filled with gloves, specimen bags and a power saw, a Milwaukee power saw. And he said that, you know, he sawed off the legs, the feet and hands on the embalming table and that assistants in the lab helped him cart those pieces of body out and they took them back to his warehouse where he would then help get them to the corporate clients that he had.

CONAN: OK. Now the Willed Body Program, as I understand it, has been suspended?

Mr. ORNSTEIN: Absolutely. UCLA officials yesterday made the decision to suspend the program indefinitely and perhaps permanently in light of the most recent allegations.

CONAN: A...

Mr. ORNSTEIN: It came as somewhat of a surprise because just a day earlier, they had said that they had to keep their program open in order to meet the educational and research needs of both students and faculty members.

CONAN: And you say 'most recent allegations.' There's an earlier case.

Mr. ORNSTEIN: Yes. Back in 1993, a different set of allegations came to light, one of how UCLA handled the remains of the cadavers after they had been used for research and teaching purposes. And according to a lawsuit that was filed several years later, UCLA took several bodies at once and incinerated them and then mixed the remains with medical waste, and in some cases animal ashes, and disposed of them in a city dump.

CONAN: Now what do people agree to when they donate their--you know, agree to donate their remains when they die to the UCLA Medical School? Do they say, 'This is for educating medical students at the UCLA Medical School, or doctors'? Do they understand that their parts might end up somewhere else?

Mr. ORNSTEIN: Well, the information that they get--you know, it's called the gift of knowledge, and it's very much with the impression that their bodies will be used to advance the teaching of first-year medical students who learn anatomy, as well as to help give researchers a basis for testing new products or devices. There's a line in the agreement which allows UCLA to distribute the body parts as they see fit, but the impression that's provided in

both the cover letter, as well as the question and answer sheet, indicates very clearly that there's no intention of selling them for a profit or allowing them to be used for anything other than what UCLA sees as valid uses.

CONAN: OK. Our number if you'd like to join our conversation is (800) 989-8255; (800) 989-TALK. And our e-mail address is totn@npr.org. And let's go to Mike. Mike's with us on the phone from St. Louis, Missouri.

MIKE (Caller): Hi, Neal. How are you?

CONAN: Very well, thanks.

MIKE: Good. I work in this industry as a salesperson for tissue to biomedical and pharmaceutical research companies.

CONAN: When you say 'tissue,' what do you mean?

MIKE: Well, procurement of human tissue is used now for genetic research in the pharmaceutical and biomedical industry to develop new drugs. And by doing so, as long as the collection is of the highest ethical standards and you're not actually selling the tissue but you're selling the clinical information that goes along with that tissue, it's not illegal to sell clinical information, but it is illegal by the federal government to sell human tissue.

CONAN: The distinction is somehow escaping me, Mike. When is it legal again and when is it not?

MIKE: Well, in 1983 the federal government passed a law that made it illegal to sell human parts, but unfortunately they didn't say anything about selling the clinical information that comes with it. Clinical information, I mean, age, sex, race, disease state, those sorts of things.

CONAN: Uh-huh.

MIKE: So the value to the biomedical industry and the pharmaceutical industry is knowing where that tissue comes from, knowing what the disease state of that tissue is, and by using that, they can break that down into its most rudimentary form to develop new drugs.

CONAN: But it sounds like this is still a gray area.

MIKE: Well, it's only a gray area in terms of how willing you are as a company to exploit the value of that particular tissue. Some tissues are much more valuable than others based on its rarity of collection and disease state. For example, today prostate cancer is a very curable disease. So finding prostate cancer in a very advanced stage so the biomedical industry can use that to develop new drugs based on the advances of that disease state is more difficult to find, so it gives more value to that particular tissue, that particular clinical information.

CONAN: So, Charles Ornstein, might the middleman in the UCLA medical case, might he have sold tissues to the company that Mike worked for?

Mr. ORNSTEIN: Well, I think that there's a bit of a distinction between what seems to have happened at UCLA and the company that Mike works for. What seems to have happened at UCLA is that they were looking more at like hands and legs and arms and joints and, you know, were using them to develop new devices to use on those, as opposed to, say, advances for, say, cancer. And one of the...

CONAN: So new surgical type devices.

Mr. ORNSTEIN: Precisely. And we've already been able to identify one company that did receive some of the cadavers from the middleman, Johnson & Johnson and one of its subsidiaries called Mitek.

CONAN: OK.

Mr. ORNSTEIN: And the subsi...

CONAN: Go ahead.

Mr. ORNSTEIN: The subsidiary used them to help to both produce surgical products for treating soft tissue sports injuries as they try to develop them, as well as to teach doctors on how to use them.

CONAN: OK. Thank you for the call, Mike. Appreciate it.

MIKE: Thanks very much.

CONAN: And let's ask you then, if this middleman, Ernest Nelson, was paying all this money for these body parts, where did that money go?

Mr. ORNSTEIN: That's a great question and one that we're still trying to find out. Mr. Nelson's attorney showed us the other day 70 invoices over the course of six years which amounted to about \$705,000 for the sale of 496 cadavers over that period. And what we were told is that that doesn't even represent the full extent of the cadavers that were purchased during that time. And so we're still trying to understand where that money went. But from UCLA's perspective, it's clear that it didn't go to UCLA.

CONAN: OK. But were the invoices sent to the UCLA financial office or were they sent to Mr. Reid?

Mr. ORNSTEIN: Well, interestingly the cashier's checks that we've seen were all sent to Mr. Reid, with his name on them.

CONAN: Hm. All right. Well, thanks very much. What's the next step in the investigation, by the way?

Mr. ORNSTEIN: Well, I think right now one of the prime tasks for UCLA is determining which bodies were involved in this and how many bodies. I think that there--you know, naturally they're being inundated with calls from family members who want to know if their family members were the ones whose bodies were taken and were sent to these research companies. And they want to give them answers. So right now that's a huge step, and then a second step is they've formed a commission that's going to be led by the former California governor George Deukmejian, and he's going to conduct an investigation into the program and suggest steps and reforms to take if they are to reopen it, if at all.

CONAN: Charles Ornstein, thanks for being with us.

Mr. ORNSTEIN: Nice to be with you, Neal.

CONAN: Charles Ornstein, a reporter for the Los Angeles Times. He spoke to us from the studios at the newspaper's offices there in Los Angeles.

And joining us now from our bureau in New York is writer Annie Cheney. Her story on the cadaver trade called *The Resurrection Men* appears in the current issue of Harper's Magazine.

And good to have you on our program.

Ms. ANNIE CHENEY (Writer): Nice to be here.

CONAN: First of all, let me remind listeners that we're not talking about in any sense organs for transplant. That is an entirely different business and has nothing to do with what we're talking about. But, Annie Cheney, this cadaver trade, is this legal?

Ms. CHENEY: That's an excellent question, and I think it has sort of a complex answer. The law says that you cannot buy or sell body parts. However, as the earlier caller pointed out, you can recoup your costs. And so what these brokers and tissue banks do is, you know, they charge X amount of dollars for an arm and they say, 'Well, we had to refrigerate it, we had to pay the person who had to cut it off. And so the money we're charging for it is just making up for that.' I would say, you know, that that's an unusual argument and it doesn't make a lot of sense to me. I mean, you know, it would be like, forgive the analogy, but it would be like going out to dinner and ordering a meal and the waiter saying, 'Well, we're not selling this to you. You're just paying us for the cost of the steak and the cost of our kitchen help.' You know, it is buying and selling. And so in that case, I think it's questionable whether it is legal.

CONAN: So it's all euphemistic, is what you're saying.

Ms. CHENEY: Right.

CONAN: Yeah. And, again, we're talking about this case in Los Angeles, UCLA Medical School, but are medical schools and these Willd Body Programs, are those the primary source of cadavers and cadaver parts for this industry?

Ms. CHENEY: No. They are a source. One of the things that I mentioned in my article was that typically, medical schools embalm their cadavers. I don't know what the situation is at UCLA, but most schools embalm them heavily so that they'll last for a whole semester. And the surgical equipment companies, or whoever's putting on a training seminar, they require usually fresh tissue, which means it hasn't been embalmed; it's just been frozen. And so not a lot of medical schools can meet that need, and that has created this opening for entrepreneurs who supply fresh tissue because the schools can't always do that.

CONAN: And you describe one of the seminars you attended, in fact, in Florida, where torsos are laid out on gurneys at a hotel conference room for doctors who sign up to learn various surgical techniques.

Ms. CHENEY: That's right.

CONAN: And that's--it was a disturbing scene, to say the least.

Ms. CHENEY: Well, it is. And, you know, it was very surprising to me. I was told that this went on when I first researched this, and even on my way to Florida I didn't believe that I was really going to go to a hotel and see fresh, untreated torsos lying on tables in the banquet center. That seemed unimaginable. And, in fact, it did happen. The hotel seemed to be well aware of it. And when I inquired with the health department there about whether this was, you know, breaking any law, they said, 'Well, no, you know, it's probably fine.'

CONAN: It's an amazing scene and an amazing article in Harper's called *The Resurrection Men* by Annie Cheney. If you have a copy of Harper's Magazine, you may want to check it out. We'll have more with her when we come back from a short break and take more of your calls. Our phone number is (800) 989-8255; that's (800) 989-TALK. Or you can send us e-mail. The address is totn@npr.org.

I'm Neal Conan. This is TALK OF THE NATION from NPR News.

(Soundbite of music)

CONAN: This is TALK OF THE NATION. I'm Neal Conan in Washington.

We're talking about the use of human bodies and body parts for medical research. If you're a doctor who's learned surgical procedures on cadavers, a medical student learning about human anatomy or if you're thinking about donating your body for scientific or medical research, we'd like to hear from you. And a reminder, some of this information may not be suitable for all of our listeners, especially children. Our number is (800) 989-8255; (800) 989-TALK. The e-mail address is totn@npr.org.

We're speaking with Annie Cheney, the author of *The Resurrection Men: Scenes from the cadaver trade*, which appears in the current issue of Harper's Magazine.

And, Annie, one of the things you write about in the story is that human remains are more valuable as parts than they are as whole.

Ms. CHENEY: Yes, I would say that that's generally true.

CONAN: And why is that?

Ms. CHENEY: Well, you know, I think it grew out of something pretty simple, and that is that, you know, different surgical equipment companies or different research organizations require different parts of the human body. And, you know, it's wasteful, as they put it, to buy a whole body when you just need an arm. So they've parceled out the body, and I think once you parcel it out, well, then you can charge, you know, whatever you want for each piece of it. So, you know, while a medical school might charge a thousand dollars for a cadaver, once you cut it up, a tissue bank could go up into the 5,000-dollar range, even more, maybe 10.

CONAN: Mm-hmm. And there are, again, questions about how some of this material is shipped around the country.

Ms. CHENEY: Yeah. There are--I have some questions about that. You know, this is an interstate traffic. And while there may be laws--some states have laws about what material can enter the state and what material can leave the state. But once you start shipping through, you know, a freight forwarder or a company like FedEx, for example, and you don't mark the package, well, what good are the laws, you know. The parts are being sent

around. And as I said in my story, in Missouri, some leaking packages showed up at a FedEx depot, and when they were opened, indeed they contained body parts that were fresh. And, you know, I would say that's possibly a public health hazard. I don't know. I'm not an expert in that, but you know, it seems like common sense.

CONAN: Let's get another caller on the line. This is Michael, who's with us from Rochester, Minnesota.

MICHAEL (Caller): Hello.

CONAN: Hi.

MICHAEL: When I was a college sophomore, I worked part time at a hearing research hospital in Portland, Oregon. And one night, I noticed a bag of five adult male heads that were just--this was a vinyl bag under a sink. And, I mean, literally just under a sink with cleaner and scrub brushes and things. And this was a hearing research hospital, and these heads were heavily preserved, severed at the neck and split down the middle so they were halved. And for the four or five years that I worked at this research hospital--you know, I was just the janitor there while I was going to college, but I was just utterly shocked and floored at how casual--I'm not talking about a cabinet or a refrigeration unit or even some place--I'm talking about under the sink with the scrub brush and the cleaner and the Comet.

And for the entire five years I worked there, that's where they were kept. And if a doctor needed a head portion--you know, I saw--one evening going through the clinic, I saw a doctor with one of the heads on a plate and he was practicing an operation on the ear. And when he saw me, he said, 'This doesn't bother you?' I said, 'Well, no. What are you doing?' And he said, 'Well, I have to operate on a student tomorrow'--or, I mean--'a person tomorrow. I'm practicing the procedure.'

So I can understand fully the need, but I was really, really shocked and floored, and still am at the age of 50, 27 years later, at how absolutely casual and indifferent and disrespectful the storage of these heads were. They literally were just in a vinyl bag about three feet square shoved under a kitchen--a laboratory sink.

CONAN: Yeah.

MICHAEL: And that's where they were kept the whole time.

CONAN: Annie Cheney, does that surprise you?

Ms. CHENEY: Well, I guess I have a couple things to say. It doesn't surprise me, no. But I think there are a couple things to point out. One is people should be happy to know that doctors, you know, want to practice so that when they go into the operating room, they do it right. And I was impressed and I admired the doctors who came to my conference and wanted to learn how to do what they're doing. But I'm not surprised at how casual the caller--you know, the scene that he's describing because, indeed, at the hotel in Miami where I went, it was equally casual and none of the doctors really seemed to care or want to know where these torsos came from.

And I think that's a problem. And I don't know if it grows out of, you know, spending time around bodies in medical school, you get used to it. You know, maybe you stop thinking so much about, you know, who they belonged to when they were alive. I'm not sure. But you know, it's unfortunate. That's an unfortunate thing. I think it probably happens a lot. But at the same time, I think it's important not to focus so much on the horrific side of it and to think more--you know, these are needed. Obviously, the doctor needed it for something. How can we address this issue and make sure that these things are treated ethically?

CONAN: Michael, thanks very much.

MICHAEL: Mm-hmm.

CONAN: OK. Bye-bye.

Let's turn now to Latonya(ph), and Latonya's calling from Louisville, Kentucky.

LATONYA (Caller): Yes, sir. My question is as far as what options the doctors have as to procedural education as far as, like, either going to these research places or going to school or--What are their different options as far as to get their practice in to learn the new techniques?

CONAN: Are there alternatives, Annie Cheney?

Ms. CHENEY: Alternatives to surgical training courses like the one I went to, you mean?

LATONYA: Well, you're saying that there's new techniques, like one had to practice doing his ear surgery. Where else could they go to learn these things if they're not, you know, practicing on, you know, tissue, cadavers or whatever?

Ms. CHENEY: Right. Well, I think, you know, the good courses include cadavers because that's the best way to learn how to do surgery. And so, you know, those courses are held sometimes at medical schools, sometimes they're held at hospitals. Occasionally, unfortunately, they're held in hotels. Doctors can also go to courses that don't have any human material at them and just have a lecture, although, you know, I'm not sure how effective that is. You know, the best way to learn is on the tissue.

CONAN: You write in the article that previously, surgical techniques were practiced on pigs.

Ms. CHENEY: Yeah. Now this is something that was explained to me. I haven't done a lot of research on it. But I think live pigs were used frequently, and one of the reasons they were used is because doctors could learn how to control the bleeding. If you have a live specimen, that's one of the things you have to deal with. Now there was some protest from animal rights groups, and that may be one reason why they're using fewer pigs and more cadavers, although, you know, I'm not sure all of the reasons for that, but that could be one of them.

CONAN: OK. Latonya, thanks very much.

Joining us now is Mark **Griesenbrock**(ph), a chief business officer at Life Legacy(ph). That's a non-profit research tissue organization in Tucson, Arizona, and he joins us on the phone from his office in Tucson.

And it's very good of you to be with us today.

Mr. MARK **GRIESENBRÖCK** (Life Legacy): Oh, my pleasure. Thank you, Neal.

CONAN: Now your company, Life Legacy, is an organ procurement company. Tell us what that is.

Mr. **GRIESEN BROCK**: We're actually a research tissue organization. We provide--our service is a community service. And what we do is we provide educational in-services to hospitals, hospices, nursing homes and their staff to offer families the donation alternative. And we find that certain families find themselves outside the transplant criteria, whether it's for reasons related to age, illness or a specific disease state that makes them unsuitable for transplant.

CONAN: And so?

Mr. **GRIESEN BROCK**: It allows us to provide them the alternative to donate for research purposes.

CONAN: And...

Mr. **GRIESEN BROCK**: So we educate the staff of the hospitals and the families of donors at hospice units as to the services that we do provide, or the ability that we have to provide that to the donor.

CONAN: And would you be paying them for this donation or would you be interested in them donating for the purpose of medical science?

Mr. **GRIESEN BROCK**: I'm sorry, I didn't catch first part.

CONAN: Would a donor or the donor's family be paid for this?

Mr. **GRIESEN BROCK**: No, no, we do no reimburse for donation. We also provide the service as a gratis service, so there is no exchanging of any money.

CONAN: So you're a non-profit organization of what's called a 501-3C.

Mr. **GRIESEN BROCK**: Absolutely. We're a 501(c)(3) a federal designated non-profit or a charity, similar to any other. We have the same restrictions and the same guidelines imposed upon us as do any other charity with that designation.

CONAN: And once the donations are made, do you receive them and then distribute them?

Mr. **GRIESEN BROCK**: We do. We procure the actual case in-house. We have the staff that is trained to do so. We follow obviously all the appropriate OSHA, IATA guidelines that go along with the procurement process. As far as the researchers themselves go, we have an application process that necessitates the researcher be able to be verified. If it's an institution, they're required to provide an institutional review, documentation for that. And we also have an in-house review of those research projects for merit purposes.

CONAN: And these would typically be--What?--universities or hospitals?

Mr. **GRIESEN BROCK**: It actually is a combination thereof. We work with universities, hospitals. We work with foundations during neurological disease. We have certain programs where we provide these specimens to those institutions providing neuro research, and what they in turn provide to the family is a complete pathology report that the family may or may (technical difficulties) normally be able to afford. That's provided free of charge.

CONAN: Now when donors make this agreement with you, do they know how their body parts will be used and that they may end up being scattered to the seven winds?

Mr. **GRIESEN BROCK**: No. Actually, they are informed. We have what we consider to be one of the most informed consents that is currently available in this particular donation space, and we help educate the family as to what the possibilities are. They are very well aware that this could potentially go to a commercial organization. They realize that the commercial organizations are the ones that often have the R&D dollars, as your previous caller stated, to be able to provide those drugs to the market or those particular remedies for specific diseases to the market, whereas non-profits like ourselves, we don't have that kind of potential, so...

CONAN: Let's get a caller on the line. This is Kate, who's with us from New London, Connecticut.

KATE (Caller): Hello.

CONAN: Hi, Kate.

KATE: This is the first time my call ever got through.

CONAN: Oh.

KATE: Several weeks ago, my husband died, and he donated his body to Yale Medical School. Perhaps I shouldn't say their name on the air, and when I die, my body will go there also. He was fortunate to have been able to study anatomy, gross anatomy at Columbia many years ago. And he very willingly donated his body to Yale, as will I, and really, we don't care what happens after that. The idea is not to waste a valuable resource, to be able to give something back to the world, and it doesn't really matter what happens after that, because we have done whatever we have done. I think that death is very sentimentalized and very romanticized today, very divorced from human reality, and most people I think just tend to go off the deep end because this is such a strange process. Back in the days when people died--my husband was very fortunate to have been able to die at home, and back in the days when people were able to die at home, it really wasn't such a big deal. You're sad for the loss, but then you want to do something good with the rest of it.

CONAN: Kate, thank you very much. I hope you're able to get through again.

KATE: Thank you. You're welcome.

CONAN: I appreciate it.

KATE: Thanks for taking my call.

CONAN: And, Mark **Griesenbrock**, is that an attitude that you run across from some of your donors?

Mr. **GRIESEN BROCK**: We actually run across that quite frequently. We do have a certain percentage of our donors who actually consent to the donation process themselves, and I think the reason that we're able to do that is because we do educate the families and, in most instances, the staff at the various institutions that have relationships with us as to exactly what are the goings-on around donation itself. And we like to set ourselves apart in that we have the ability to differentiate ourselves from instances like the ones in California where, you know, we have so many different parts of the process that has a built-in system of checks and balances where things like that can happen. There is no giving of cashier's checks. The person doing the billing and the receiving isn't the

same person who's responsible for the procurement of the donation and the distribution of the tissue. We make sure to keep all those things very separate. The...

CONAN: Thanks very much for being with us.

Mr. **GRIENBROCK**: No problem. Thank you.

CONAN: Mark **Griesenbrock** is chief business officer at Life Legacy, a non-profit research tissue research organization, and he spoke with us from his office in Tucson, Arizona. You're listening to TALK OF THE NATION from NPR News.

And Annie Cheney is still with us at our bureau in New York, and as you listened to what the caller and what Mr. **Griesenbrock** had to say, one of the issues that comes up is regulation or lack thereof. I think in your article you said only the state of New York of the 50 states has any regulations on this at all.

Ms. CHENEY: That's correct. I should point out, too, the New York State Health Department has done a great job. And, you know, they're pioneers really in having this whole licensing procedure, but they don't regularly inspect non-transplant tissue banks, so banks that are procuring tissue for research, and several of these tissue banks are also funeral homes. Now, you know, to me, there's a conflict of interest there. If you look at California, recently, a few years ago, there was a case where a guy was running a crematory. He started a tissue bank, and when he saw how much money he could make, he just started taking bodies--he was supposed to be cremating them--and cutting them up and selling them off. As far as I know, there's no state that has any law that says you can't have a crematory and a tissue bank. So there's very little regulation here, and people can pretty much do what they want.

CONAN: Let's get another caller in. Meg is on the line with us from Denver, Colorado.

MEG (Caller): Hi. I'm a physician and just wanted to give a little perspective to the horror stories that people are hearing or think about when they imagine that their loved one's body might be dismembered and sold. I give thanks on a regular basis to the lovely lady who donated her body to me and my three anatomy partners almost 20 years ago because it was by far uniformly the best way to learn anatomy, and it was an enormous gift. It gave me and those three other people a lifelong knowledge of the human body that we wouldn't have had on a computer, we couldn't have had on a pig or a dog or some other non-human mammal.

And I guess what I want to say is that the physicians that I know who trained even many years ago before there were scandals like this were very respectful of that, and we have a memorial service for our cadavers at the end of the anatomy course, and the families--some family members attended the memorial service, family members of the loved ones who donated their organs. They were cremated thereafter. There was never any foul play allowed of any kind. There was never any dark twisted humor. That was just not allowed in the anatomy lab. The professors were very clear about that from day one. And I guess I think it would be a shame if this one renegade anatomy lab guy in LA was able to somehow quell the number of cadavers that came through anatomy labs, which is just critical for medical knowledge and...

Ms. CHENEY: I...

CONAN: Go...

MEG: Go ahead.

CONAN: Go ahead, Annie.

Ms. CHENEY: I wanted to say I think you're right, and I think that most doctors and most medical schools work really hard to keep this process above board, but it's important to acknowledge here, we've had many cases over the last few years. What does this tell us? This tells us that there's a market for this stuff, and as long as there's a market and we're not doing anything about it, entrepreneurs are going to try and meet the need, and they may not always do so ethically. So we've got to acknowledge this and do something.

CONAN: Meg, thanks very much for the...

MEG: ...that laws would be h...

CONAN: I'm afraid, Meg, we're running out of time...

MEG: Thank you.

CONAN: ...so I'm going to have to say thank you and goodbye, and also goodbye and our thanks to Annie Cheney, who joined us from our bureau in New York. Again, her article in Harper's Magazine is called The Resurrection Men: Scenes from the cadaver trade.

When we come back, Zimbabwe and the mercenaries. It's TALK OF THE NATION from NPR News.

(Announcements)