

## Gender Equality Demands that the Bodily Integrity, Autonomy, and Rights of ALL Children be Equally Protected

Female genital cutting in the US and other nations has been outlawed, leaving other children without such protections. If we in the LGBTI community truly believe in gender equality, we must become advocates for ALL children, and promote policies and laws that protect their autonomy regarding bodily integrity. Otherwise, such inequities expose our own cultural chauvinism against “barbaric” cultural practices of others and ignore our own practices that outsiders consider barbaric.

All forced genital cutting of children shares anti-sexual histories and excuses. The US medical practice of male (and female) circumcision is rooted in anti-sexual Victorian-era paranoia over masturbation and fears about children’s sexuality.

It’s pointless to argue about competitive suffering based on gender. All children deserve an open future that respects their bodies, their sexuality, and their human rights. This goal is consistent with the principles of the LGBTI movement.



This brochure was authored by Tim Hammond, openly gay producer of the documentary, *Whose Body, Whose Rights?*, founder of NOHARMM, co-founder of the National Organization of Restoring Men, and survey programmer for the *Global Survey of Circumcision Harm*.

### Attorneys for the Rights of the Child

[ARCLaw.org](http://ARCLaw.org)

Seeks to secure equal protection for, and broaden public and legal recognition of, children’s legal and human rights to bodily integrity and self-determination that are violated by unnecessary genital cutting of male, female and intersex children.

### Doctors Opposing Circumcision

[DoctorsOpposingCircumcision.org](http://DoctorsOpposingCircumcision.org)

An international network of physicians dedicated to protecting the genital integrity and eventual autonomy of all children, serving both health professionals and the public through education, support, and advocacy.

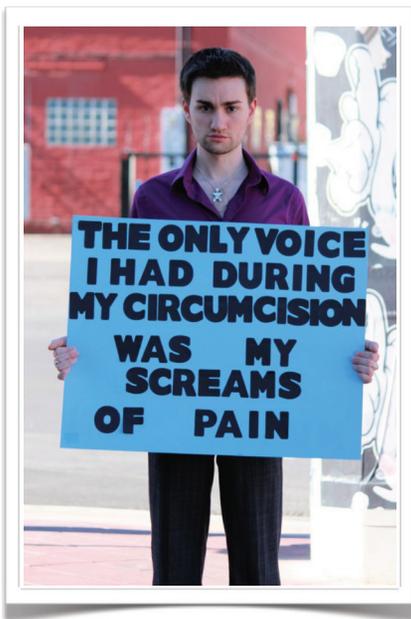
**WE WELCOME YOUR PROFESSIONAL, FINANCIAL, AND ACTIVE SUPPORT.**

Local Contact

# CIRCUMCISION and the LGBTI Community



*Who should decide  
how much of a child’s genitals  
they get to keep?*



Most of the world's population does not practice circumcision (80% of those born with a penis are genitally intact). Still, medically unnecessary circumcision of children is a global problem affecting over 100 million females, 650 million males, and an unknown number of transgender women and intersex people. In North America, genital cutting customs are largely imposed only on those too young to consent. Circumcision is often trivialized as a newborn “snip,” but it’s an extremely painful removal of what ultimately becomes one-third to one-half of the skin system of the adult penis. The foreskin is the only movable structure of the penis, comparable to the female foreskin and labia. The foreskin is also the most densely nerve-laden and erogenous part of the penis.

Over 80% of adult gay/bisexual men, as well as trans women and intersex people in North America today, have had their natural genital

integrity violated at birth. [CircumcisionHarm.org](http://CircumcisionHarm.org) documents the long-term harm of this non-medically indicated social custom. Those with intact foreskins are often made to feel by the wider culture that their natural bodies are abnormal, shameful, or unclean. Like other parents, LGBTI parents often face social pressure to cut their children.

*Stop changing the genitals of vulnerable children and start changing the culture.*

## WILL YOU SPEAK UP FOR CHILDREN?

### Circumcision is a Sexually Oppressive Abuse of Human Rights

Circumcision is practiced by dominator societies under which women, gays, people of color, and children suffer. Circumcision in the US not only has a racist history, but it’s rooted in beliefs that treat children as chattel. Many cultures consider women’s genitals to be unclean, while others presume the same about intact males, trusting neither to adopt good hygiene or safer sex practices. Forced circumcision of children too young to consent violates rights of body ownership, self-determination, and control over one’s own reproductive organs (genital autonomy).

### Circumcision Affects Our Gay and Intersex Children

The average US rate of newborn circumcision is about 50% (over 80% in the Midwest and as low as 20% in the West). Each year, over 1.25 million babies in the US are subjected to this commonly unanesthetized and destructive genital alteration—more than 3,300 babies daily—one every 26 seconds! Collectively, about 5-10% of newborns will eventually identify as gay, bisexual, intersex, or trans, and many will resent this violation of their bodily integrity and right to self-determination.

Not all intersex interventions involve genital surgeries (like hormonal treatments to manipulate sex characteristics). However, all forced genital cutting of children is rooted in attempts to “normalize” children’s bodies to meet acceptable social expectations. Intersex genital surgeries seek to make the child “fit in” to a preferred binary category (male/female) to spare the child any presumed trauma or shame about their “inferior” non-binary status. Likewise, circumcision seeks to normalize boys to “fit in” to a preferred category to spare them any presumed trauma or shame about being “inferior” (uncircumcised). Even the pejorative prefix “un-” implicitly body shames those with intact genitalia.

### Circumcision Affects Transgender Women

Some trans women resent having had the foreskin unnecessarily removed from their penis in childhood and view it as having violated their genital autonomy and right to bodily integrity. Other trans women resent having been forcibly circumcised as a child because their foreskin could have been used later during penile-inversion surgery to create a neovagina as part of gender-affirming care.

### Forced Circumcision is Anti-Feminist

Core principles of feminism include respect for the right of every person to control what’s done to their body, especially when it affects one’s reproductive organs and sexuality. Social, religious, and cultural pressures to circumcise infringe on parents’ natural instincts to protect their children from harm. Defenders of religious male circumcision have recently begun to argue that since laws against female genital cutting may conflict with constitutional requirements of gender-neutral equal protection, they propose that the best way to achieve equality and protect the practice of penile circumcision is to legalize the lesser forms of female genital cutting.

**To all who fight for the freedom of women, we say:**

*To liberate the body of women, we must liberate the body of all.*

### Forced Circumcision is Anti-Immigrant

Circumcision is not practiced—and in many cases unimaginable—in most cultures around the world, especially in Asian and Latinx cultures. When new immigrants to the US—some of whom may not be fluent in English—give birth in US hospitals, many are pressured to consent to circumcision simply to make their child “fit in” or to “look American.”

“The excuses submitted for circumcision . . . reveal anti-sexual attitudes at odds with the goals of gay liberation. Infant circumcision should be abandoned not only because it violates a defenseless person’s rights, but also because it reinforces destructive anti-sexual attitudes that we as gay people need to oppose.”

“Stop Circumcision” (editorial), *The Guide: Gay Travel, Entertainment, Politics and Sex*, May 1996