

Opinion



Trans activist Shauna O'Toole

The Transgender Community needs to unite

By Shauna Marie O'Toole

The Transgender "Community" tends to be its own worst enemy.

It is sadly true. We are upwards of three million individuals -- many of whom are trying to "blend in" and disappear into society. That is the wish, one I understand. The reality is that, for many, this is never going to happen.

Some of us are drop-dead gorgeous/handsome and turn heads as a result. Others are gifted with looks that allow them to blend in with the rest of society.

Then there is everyone else.

I tend to be read as Transgender in about 1.74 seconds, +/- 0.02. I am good with this because that is my reality. Regardless of how much weight I lose or what procedures I have done, I am not going to blend. Truth be told, this has liberated me.

Maybe this is what we need -- A Transgender Liberation Movement.

We need to free ourselves from the constraints that we and society place upon ourselves. We need a combination societal and political movement that is not unlike the Women's Liberation Movement.

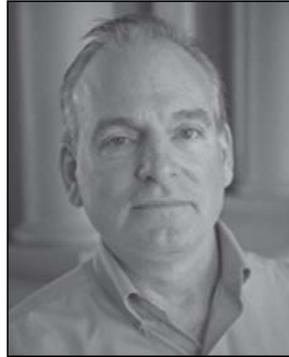
All of us simply want to live our lives. Be who we are and be respected for simply being Human.

To do this, we need to set aside the false standards that we place upon ourselves. We need to stop arguing about who "passes" and who doesn't! Watching transpeople go at each other over "who is trans enough" is like watching a feeding frenzy of piranha!

Look at what is happening politically in this nation. We don't have time for this bickering. Assume we get real -- because we are -- and move on.

We need to burn our bras and jockstraps, if you will. Set aside the constraints that society wants to place upon us. Then, and only then, can we truly become the SocioPolitical Force we need to be!

If we don't unify now, we better get used to being third class hominids. That is how society will continue to see us until we, as a unified community speaking with one voice, demand better.



"Intactivist" Tim Hammond

No place for personal sexual tastes in struggle for genital autonomy

By Tim Hammond, *Genital Autonomy America*

Having moved to California in 1983, I traveled back to Rochester in July and thoroughly enjoyed reconnecting with long-time friends and witnessing the exciting growth of Rochester's LGBTI community. I also had the opportunity at the Pride festival to staff a booth for Genital Autonomy America (GAA), of which I'm Vice President.

We advocate respect for children's rights to bodily integrity and protection from non-therapeutic genital surgeries ("circumcision" and other forms of cultural genital cutting). Bodily integrity is every child's right, whether they're male, female or intersex. Children should be free to grow up and decide for themselves how much of their genitals they get to keep.

Staffing the booth was very rewarding. Numerous Jewish parents, including a couple (both sex therapists), shared with me their decisions to keep their sons intact. A human sexuality professor at SUNY/Alfred told me how she always discusses the American custom of male genital cutting. A mother of several intact sons, volunteering at the Libertarian party booth, explained why protecting everyone from violations of their bodies and rights was a core Libertarian value.

In contrast, some visitors defended newborn circumcision on alleged medical grounds. Those arguments, however, are obsolete upon closer examination.

Penile cancer (and cervical cancer) result from sexually transmitted infection with Human Papillomavirus (HPV). There's no need, however, to cut off half the skin system of your son's penis when there's now a vaccine for both sexes, Gardasil, that prevents HPV infection.

The alleged 60 percent relative reduction in HIV risk with circumcision is actually only 1.8 percent when considering the absolute risk reduction. By contrast, the daily PrEP pill offers up to 98 percent protection

from HIV. And of course, condoms are still one of the best forms of protection. Essentially, you can use a condom every time, or you can cut off part of your penis and use a condom every time.

Promoting circumcision, in fact, leads to a false sense of protection. The mass campaigns of voluntary male medical circumcision (VMMC) targeting men and boys in Africa are causing unprecedented individual, familial and cultural harm that's being documented by the VMMC Experience Project (www.vmmcproject.org).

And with national circumcision rates trending below 50 percent (<20 percent out West), arguing the alleged importance of "looking like daddy or the other boys" is without scientific evidence, fallacious and shallow.

However, the most horrific defense of circumcision I encountered was from several who claimed to support circumcision based on their own sexual tastes. We're all entitled to our preferences, but fancying circumcised partners is NOT a reason to perpetuate the social custom of newborn circumcision.

One's sexual tastes are wholly inappropriate to the discussion of children's rights to bodily integrity and genital autonomy.

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