



EMPTY CLOSET

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Out Alliance
All Ways Authentic

The Out Alliance works to be champions for LGBTQ+ life and culture. We strive to ensure that all members of the LGBTQ+ communities, at all stages of their lives, are free to be fully participating citizens, living lives in which they are safe, stable and fully respected.

United Way #1135

THE OUT ALLIANCE

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Contents: June 2020

12 WHY IS PRIDE IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Anthony Hanley without it, I would still think that something was horribly, irrevocably wrong with me... with it, I am not broken, and I am not alone!

Stacie Houghtaling Because it gave my children another place where they felt accepted by someone other than me.

Samcicero Jimmyost It gives me strength to walk wherever I want and feel good being myself.

Heather Neu it took me three decades to "come out" and the hell if I'm not shouting it from the rooftops from now on!

Sara Hickman-Himes I work hard to be loud and proud about who I am so that others may know they're not alone.

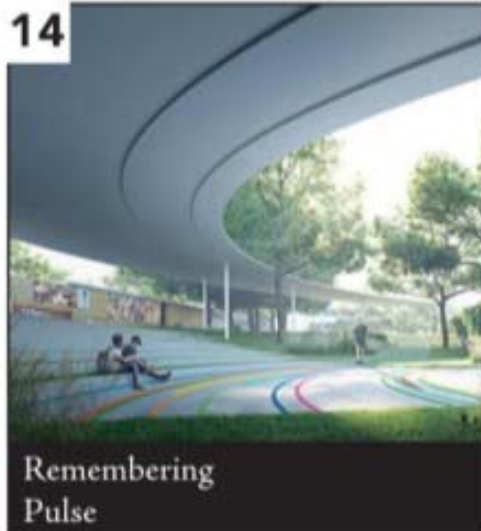
Dante Fraguada It's where I finally saw how many LGBT+ people actually live in my area. I saw so many happy people, ranging from teenagers to older people. It was so lively and fun to see! I love Pride so much.

Jenny Pugasaurus Everyone should be loved for who they are. It's a safe space for my friends and I to celebrate who we are and everyone with us.

Monica Lynn Blodgett It's part of who I am, and I'm not about to deny what makes me me. And I know that I have a community of people who

Shauna Marie O'Toole It helped me meet others who felt isolated and alone.

Why Pride Is Important



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Contributors



determination to preserve our history.

EVELYN BAILEY (she/her) is an educator, political activist and historian. Evelyn is the executive producer of the Shoulders To Stand On Documentary, chair of the Rainbow Dialogues, and Out Alliance staff historian. She writes a monthly column for the Empty Closet and never ceases in her relentless



1983 and working for several years at the UCSF AIDS Health project, he became involved in the issue of genital cutting of children, pursuing this passion under the pseudonym Tim Hammond.

TIM HAMMOND (he/him) is a Rochester native now living in Palm Springs, CA. As a young man, he was a prominent community activist involved in Dignity/Integrity, a co-founder of AIDS Rochester, co-founder of PFLAG/Rochester, and a Vinnie Cup recipient. After moving to San Francisco in



with their two cats in the South Wedge.

STEPHANIE R.C. HARAGEONES (she/her) has advocated for the LGBTQ community for over fifteen years, and is working feverishly to publish her same-sex romance novel, Burnt Bliss. She works in childcare, and graduated from SUNY Plattsburgh in 2012 with a B.A. in art and theatre. She and her husband live



revolution.

REILLY HURST (she/her, they/them) Foodie from age 7 (when she sauteed zucchini in butter and dill), has lived in many good places to eat: Cape Cod, San Diego, the Bay Area, Portland. Now in Rochester, she believes that what you taste now is the beginning of a renewed integrated Rochester



and at bryanmichielsen.com.

BRYAN MICHIELSEN (he/him) is a student in the creative writing program at Monroe Community College. He mainly writes fiction, but enjoys writing in other forms too. He is the Literary Editor for Cabbages & Kings, an award-winning literary magazine at MCC. He is pursuing an MFA in creative writing with



knowledge and work experience including not-for-profit management, grant-writing, service coordination and nursing.

TED MORRIS (he/him) is a Registered Professional Nurse (RN) and a self-proclaimed community change agent. He currently resides in his hometown of Rochester, New York where he serves as an Assistant Director of Nursing for a local health care company. He has a wealth of



Coordinator.

BRADEN C. REESE (he/him) is a proud Rochester transplant - who was born in Syracuse and grew up in Oneida, New York - but considers the Flower City his "chosen home." Braden graduated from SUNY College at Oswego with a B.A. in Political Science. He began as a programming volunteer at Out



the Ocean, hits stores in June 2020.

ALEX SANCHEZ (he/him) is the author of the American Library Association "Best Book for Young Adults", Rainbow Boys, and the Lambda Award-winning So Hard to Say. His debut graphic novel, You Brought Me



Max hopes to continue their legacy of doing good for the city which is so near and dear to our hearts.

MAX STERN (he/him) grew up the Rochester area (Brighton), and is currently a Junior at the University of Rochester double majoring in Business and History, and studying for his LSATs in order to go to Law School in the coming years. His family is very involved in the Rochester community, and



helping to ensure people in the LGBTQ+ are respected as humans. She is an active participant in ensuring that equality and nondiscrimination become the standard.

LYNDA WOLTERS (she/her) is a fierce advocate of the LGBTQ+ community. As the mother of a gay son raised in an ultra-conservative pocket of America, Lynda became a champion for him and others in the LGBTQ+ community. Using her voice and willingness to step outside her privilege, she is

A cut by any other name:

A deep-dive interview with ethicist Brian D. Earp (Part 2)

BY TIM HAMMOND

Whether called circumcision or mutilation, there's common ground to be explored between genital cutting of boys, girls and intersex children.

May 7, 2020 marks the 8th annual Worldwide Day of Genital Autonomy. This day commemorates the 2012 landmark decision by a German court recognizing that boys have the same right to bodily integrity and self-determination currently enjoyed under German law by girls. Rochester native Tim Hammond interviews a leading medical ethicist on these intersecting issues and their relevance to the LGBTQI movement.



The LGBTQI+ community knows 'religious freedom' is often used to rationalize actions that hurt others. You've spoken about this issue before as it applies to genital cutting.^[1] Where should society draw the line?

It helps to think about this in terms of who has power and who is vulnerable. This is something that feminists and those working in queer and gender studies often rightly remind us to do. People who've been mistreated because of their gender identity or sexual orientation are well aware of what it's like for those with power to set the rules for those without it.

The tension here is that, in Western societies, when genital cutting is done for religious reasons, it's in minority Muslim or Jewish communities. And people are quite rightly concerned about the potential mistreatment of these groups, given their minority status and historical abuses. But there is also a power asymmetry within those communities: adults over children.

When we're trying to be consistent in considering whose interests we should go out of our way to protect, it should be the most vulnerable: those who cannot fight or even speak for themselves. So even within minority religious communities, it's the infants and children who are most vulnerable.

So where do we draw the line? There's a tension here, too. Western societies have already made up their minds that there should be no religious exception for female genital cutting (FGC), no matter how minor or sterilized. Even a "ritual nick" that does not remove tissue is considered morally and legally impermissible. Many boys raised in religious communities grow up to ask why their own genitals did not deserve the same protection as that of their sisters.

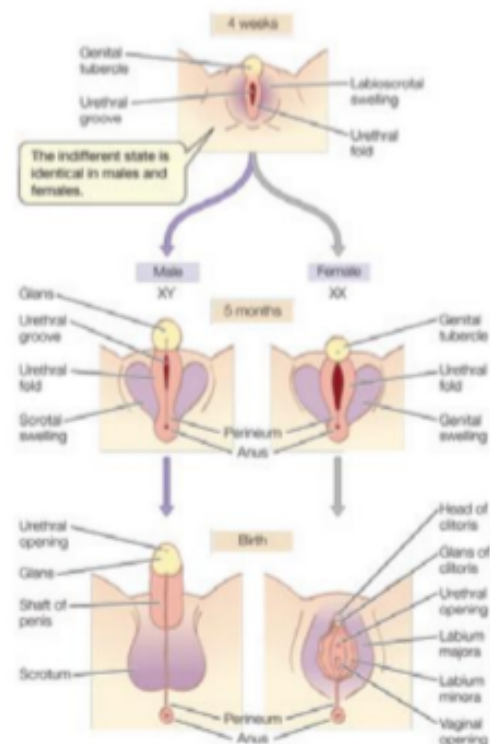
You created a diagram reflecting the spectrum of human genitalia. How does that bear on this issue?

In utero, all of us begin with a structure that becomes either a clitoris or a penis. This structure normally diverges, in response to hormones during fetal development, into either a larger, more external structure with a central urethra (penis) or a more

internal structure with a small part that's visible outside the body (clitoris). In some intersex cases, this organ is equally a small penis and/or a large clitoris.

So here is the issue. Since medically unnecessary female – but not male – genital cutting is illegal in Western societies, no matter how minimal, you have to draw a line around which tissues are "female" for purposes of the law. But with some intersex children, there is no determinate answer to whether the tissue is male or female. The line is arbitrary.

In general, the law should not be making sex-based distinctions. That was Ruth Bader Ginsberg's whole career, making that argument. So, for example, there is no "female assault" and "male assault." There is just assault.



Comparison of human genital development in utero and at birth

Recently, a federal judge struck down the U.S. law prohibiting 'female genital mutilation' or FGM. He argued that medically unnecessary, non-consensual cutting of female genitalia, no matter how minor, and even if done for religious reasons, was already illegal at the state level as a form of physical assault. Since the federal government doesn't have authority over state-level criminal matters, the FGM law was unconstitutional.

The kind of cutting at stake in the case was ritual pricking or nicking, possibly partial removal of the clitoral foreskin. This is something done for explicitly religious reasons by members of the Dawoodi Bohra, an Islamic sect that practices gender-inclusive "circumcision." In other words, they circumcise both boys and girls, only the form done to girls is less severe than the form done to boys. This creates a serious problem for current legal understandings.

Basically, if non-consensual pricking of the clitoral foreskin for religious reasons is physical assault, then non-consensual removal of the entire penile foreskin for similar reasons in the same community must also be physical assault.



This raises a conflict between the parents' right to religious freedom and the inherent right of their child to bodily integrity. Especially for Jewish and Muslim parents, what options are available?

This is not really my place to comment since I am not a religious scholar, nor am I Jewish or Muslim. This is something Jewish and Muslim communities will need to grapple with themselves. I will say that, since the late 1980s, more Jewish parents in the U.S., Israel and elsewhere have opted for a welcoming ritual for their sons that includes prayers, bestowing upon the child their Hebrew name, and so on, but no genital cutting. Brit Shalom^[2] is gaining popularity in Jewish families who want to both celebrate this ritual and protect their son's bodily integrity. A further advantage is that girls can undergo the same ceremony, also without cutting, so it promotes gender equality within the religion.

Within Islam, the situation varies. As I mentioned, some Muslim communities "circumcise" both sons and daughters (a

rather different route to gender equality). The Qur'an proper doesn't mention male or female circumcision. Both are mentioned in the Hadith, however, which are supplemental scriptures believed to be a record of words and actions of the prophet Mohammed. On some interpretations, both male and female circumcision are recommended, but neither is obligatory. Different sects draw different conclusions. But there is no specific age at which either form is supposed to be done. So, there is some movement among more progressive Muslims to say that each individual should decide for herself or himself when old enough to understand the risks and consequences.^[3] But the conversation about this is really just beginning.

Europe is struggling to treat boys and girls equally under existing human rights conventions regarding genital cutting customs. Swedish professor Sara Johnsdotter stated: "Sooner or later, European societies need to respond to the following questions ... Why should girls not enjoy the same opportunities as boys to be incorporated into cultural and religious communities through a ritual involving minor cutting of their genitals? Why should boys not have the same legal protection as girls against non-medically motivated alterations of their genitals?"^[4] Your thoughts?

Sara is a brilliant scholar. She's right that this is the question facing legal scholars and policy makers. Some defenders of ritual MGC are aware that this is the dilemma they face. They want to keep such MGC legal, so they've published arguments in bioethics and law journals recommending that we should now tolerate what they regard as minor forms of FGC, including non-consensual excision of the clitoral foreskin and even medically unnecessary labiaplasty.^[5]

I credit these authors for consistency in their arguments. They really believe it's morally OK to cut off a considerable amount of genital tissue from a non-consenting male child without medical necessity, for religious reasons or indeed any reason (there is no way to tell the "real" parental motive). It follows that it should be OK to remove comparatively less genital tissue from a non-consenting female child for comparable reasons.

"...[S]ocieties need to respond to the following questions ... Why should girls not enjoy the same opportunities as boys to be incorporated into cultural and religious communities through a ritual involving minor cutting of their genitals? Why should boys not have the same legal protection as girls against non-medically motivated alterations of their genitals?"

My own view is that, morally speaking, we shouldn't take a sharp object to the genitals of any non-consenting person if it isn't medically necessary. We don't know what religion they're going to grow up to endorse. Imagine a Christian parent tattooing a cross on their child's body to permanently "mark" them as a member of the faith. Most people would see this as obviously unethical.

How this should be handled legally is a very complicated question. I don't know if criminal law is the most appropriate way of changing social norms that are deeply entrenched. But I do know that the law cannot sustain a sex-based distinction for much longer.

Should human rights organizations in the LGBTQI+ movement take a position on social customs involving childhood genital cutting? If so, why, and what should that position be?

There's a strong tradition within the LGBTQI+ community of advocating for freedom of choice for people to live in their bodies and express their sexuality in a way that conforms to their own identities and values. Intervening in a sexualized part of a child's body before they even have sexual feelings or the ability to form a preference about how their body should look or function is contrary to that general picture.

“ ...[I]ntervening in a sexualized part of a child's body before they even have sexual feelings or any ability to form a preference about how their body should look or function is contrary to a long-standing core ethical commitment of LGBTQI+ activism.

Anything more you'd like to say in closing?

We should acknowledge that parents overwhelmingly want what's good for their children. That's true of parents who choose genital cutting for their sons, daughters, or intersex children, believing it's necessary for their future well-being. We mustn't vilify parents or accuse them of bad motives. I think what's needed is consciousness-raising. Every community can work to help parents understand that the best thing they can do for their child with respect to this very private part of their body is to leave the choice for them.

Brian D. Earp is Research Fellow at the Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics at the University of Oxford and Associate Director of the Yale-Hastings Program in Ethics and Health Policy. Twitter: @briandaveearp

Tim Hammond (aka Tim Sally) is a Rochester native now living in Palm Springs, CA. As an independent researcher he published two extensive surveys of men who suffer lifelong adverse physical, sexual, emotional or psychological outcomes from infant or childhood circumcision. Email: CircHarmSurvey@gmail.com

1. Childhood Genital Cutting and Religious Freedom: Where to Draw the Line? *YouTube*, 2018.

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2. See: www.BeyondTheBris.com

3. Circumcision - Does the Qur'an Approve it? *Quranic Path*
<http://www.quranicpath.com/misconceptions/circumcision.html>

4. Johnsdotter, S. Girls and Boys as Victims: Asymmetries and dynamics in European public discourses on genital modifications in children. International Seminar FGM/C: *From Medicine to Critical Anthropology*. Rome, 24-25 November, 2017.
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