

## Chapter 14

# GENITAL INTEGRITY AND GENDER EQUITY

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**Abstract:** The struggles to protect male and female genital integrity may be analyzed as parts of larger struggles for men's and women's rights. While genital integrity still lacks binding legal safeguards, individual victories have been won. A number of important gender equity cases have been decided by the United States Supreme Court affirming men's right to equal treatment. Several illuminating parallels link genital integrity and gender equity. Like genital integrity, gender equity is fundamentally a civil rights movement. Both topics seem strange at first but ultimately derive from basic principles. Both causes are relatively unfamiliar to the broader legal community, not to mention the general public. Both can be rendered easily understandable through parallels with familiar topics. Genital integrity may *temporarily* be less legally robust. Both movements may be on the verge of some major breakthroughs. The interconnections between gender equity and genital integrity are growing in importance. Awareness of the gender equity movement should inform our activism regardless of our personal views. Both movements are relatively neglected at this particular historical moment. The very resistance such discussions raise may represent the barriers faced by activism in gaining support for its male-protective cause.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

American society evidently finds it very difficult to accept the profound importance of protecting the genital integrity of, at minimum, all individuals below the age of consent. Most blatantly, male circumcision is performed on well over a million US babies each year,<sup>1</sup> while female circumcision has been a federal crime for nearly a decade.<sup>2</sup> A number of different approaches have been used by commentators in trying to get to the root of the difficulty. One issue, bearing many potentially instructive lessons, has been largely

neglected in activist literature. We may learn much from comparing the movement for genital integrity with the movement for genuine gender equality. The two forms of activism bear a complex relationship to each other, as multifaceted as the many fascinating parallels connecting genital integrity activists and gender equity activists.

In referring to activists for genuine gender equality, I am regrettably not primarily referencing mainstream feminism in its current manifestation. Feminism was undeniably dedicated for many decades to securing gender equality for both men and women (which is a somewhat redundant phrase in any event). The feminist focus in the seventies and early eighties on passing an Equal Rights Amendment, coupled with a failure in more recent times to continue pursuing this reasonable legislation, merits inquiry. To some commentators, mainstream feminism now appears more focused on achieving privileges for women (or, in some cases, for “women and children”). At the same time, today there remain a large number of women who identify themselves as feminists and support men’s equality as well. Entire branches of feminism such as “equity feminism” concentrate on advancing issues of genuine gender equality. Leading proponents include Christina Hoff-Sommers and the organizations International Women’s Forum (IWF) and Women’s Freedom Network (WFN).

## **2. GENDER EQUITY AND GENITAL INTEGRITY ACTIVISM**

Personally, I find that I am spending a good percentage of my life fighting struggles that, in a better world, would never have been necessary, and also struggles whose lack of widespread endorsement never fails to surprise me. What could more clearly coincide with common sense than the principle that males as well as females should, in the absence of extremely compelling and exceptional reasons militating otherwise, retain the genitals that are their birthright? Perhaps only the even more basic idea that males, as well as females, should be entitled as far as possible to freedom from discrimination based on the nature of their genital equipment.

Gender equity envisions and struggles for a world free of discrimination against women in employment and free of discrimination against men in custody and child support cases. Gender equity activists fight for a future in which female health and male health are equally cherished and equally protected, so that funding flows amply to stop both prostate cancer and breast cancer, males and females are equally represented in clinical trials, and society addresses itself immediately to reversing men’s six fewer years of life expectancy. (Already, New Hampshire has opened the world’s first

men's affairs commission run under government auspices, though for the present it does not receive a dime of government money.) Those who strive to promote gender equity imagine a country in which criminal sentencing does not assign harsher sentences to men and in which males are not subject to a discriminatory military draft.

Genital integrity activists fight to protect men's (and of course women's) rights against amputation of a functional body part without their informed consent. The struggles to protect genital integrity may be analyzed as parts of larger struggles for men's and women's rights.

Yet, both the genital integrity and gender equity campaigns, while seemingly reflecting the most obviously meritorious of principles, are nevertheless paradoxically ostracized from widespread acceptance by a variety of factors. These barriers to acceptance include the reigning paradigm under which men's and women's discrimination are viewed differentially, lack of exposure due to historically meager press coverage (though as we shall see, currently media attention to both genital integrity activism and gender equity is growing), and court reluctance to affirm issues not yet socially approved. Also, both movements quite simply may cause some level of discomfort to individuals, institutions, and, indeed, society itself. Genital integrity partakes of sex, religion, psychological denial, medical procedures, parental denial, and a variety of other uncomfortable issues. Men's rights (if we use this somewhat misleading terminology) is almost as unappealing, striving to affirm the need for equal treatment of a sex that is seen as historically dominant and currently privileged in many or most aspects of human life.

A "hold back the floodgates" mentality may also be at play. If males are "in" as rightful claimants, the thinking may go, then nobody is "out" any more. The impulse to define one's efforts in terms of insiders and outsiders is natural; it may be harder to visualize an enemy when everyone is potentially a victim.

The same forces that separate the genital integrity and gender equity movements from broader success also separate the two movements from supporting each other. For many if not most of the reasons discussed above, activists for genital integrity often view other claims by men with a certain suspicion. Probably playing into this perspective are fears of message dilution, simple logistical inability to take on more than one struggle, submission to the reigning paradigm in which men's difficulties are not as easily acknowledged, and so on.

Similarly, many gender equity activists are uninterested in getting involved in such a seemingly outlandish and strange issue as male circumcision. Here, as well, we may find fear of message dilution, logistical limitations, and a submission to an equally pervasive dominant perspective

in which circumcision is not harmful (or, at least, not very harmful), has medical benefits, and in any event is a religious sacrament so must not be challenged. One other factor in the rejection of genital integrity as a proper concern is conscious or unconscious homophobia, whose powerful role among heterosexual American males should not be underestimated. Male genital integrity activists may be perceived as likely to be gay due to their evident interest in male genitalia.

One further parallel is that discrimination against males and violation of male genital integrity are both rendered more acceptable by focusing on supposed gender differences that justify differential treatment that hurts males while sparing females. The validity of these distinctions tends to quickly evaporate upon careful inspection.

Finally, we are all in a common struggle to advance ourselves as individuals and as a culture. Anti-male discrimination, as with forced military service for males, can often transmute into anti-female discrimination, as with prohibitions against female participation in certain sectors of the military. Similarly, the same arguments used to buttress alteration of male genitals in one part of the world support female genital cutting in another part. As recently as the 1970's, female genital mutilation was being performed and recommended in reputable medical journals by physicians within the United States!<sup>3</sup> Males have wives, daughters, mothers, and friends who dearly care about them, so we deceive ourselves if we imagine that harm to one gender does not ultimately impinge on the other. We are all connected.

## 2.1 Definitions, Nomenclature, and Purposes

It has been said that the result of a debate often hangs on how it is framed. There are few movements in this world for which this is so true as genital integrity and gender equity.

Problems with definitions and nomenclature exist in both movements that reflect society's confusion over the issues.

Are we against circumcision? Or, are we for genital integrity? Do we oppose so-called non-religious circumcision, all circumcision, or what? Are we against adult circumcision?

A similar set of questions arises for gender equity. Are we for men's rights, whatever that might mean? Are men essentially to blame for at least some of their problems and, if so, do we need to do anything about them? What if the pot is limited and supporting greater rights for men in practice involves fewer rights for women?

There are as many answers to these questions as there are activists. Part of the reason for the obscurity and struggles of both movements is that

society lacks the cognitive tools to develop its own commonplace understanding of the answers to these questions. Other social causes are more generally understood. Whatever one's feelings about them, people grasp the positions, for example, of so-called pro-life and so-called pro-choice activists.

## **2.2 A Personal Note**

I became interested in genital integrity first, back in 1989, while I was still a law student, and also have been interested in all forms of gender equality. The same factors of seeking fairness and justice motivate me in both areas. In my life, the two have gone almost hand in hand. I personally am first and foremost a lifetime activist for fairness and equality in all aspects and all phases of life. I also considered myself a feminist for many years and was dismayed when I found myself forced to abandon that affiliation. When I first attended law school so I could gain more tools to fight for social justice, I never dreamed that someday I might be working on behalf of males, let alone in two different pursuits!

My dedication has rarely wavered but has largely increased since I first became involved in each issue. Currently, I serve as a Board Member and the Public Relations Director of the National Coalition of Free Men (NCFM), the oldest and largest membership organization in the world devoted to promoting genuine gender equity.

## **2.3 A Note on Some Leading Gender Equity Organizations**

Interestingly, the National Organization of Women actually conferred an award on NCFM in 1980 for its report entitled "Ties that Bind: Price of Pursuing the Male Mystique." In those benighted early days, it was not only possible but wholly reasonable to hold out a vision of men and women working together to eradicate the different yet complementary bonds that held each of us back. Soon afterwards, however, things began to change. Dr. Warren Farrell, the leading author for gender equity, became a three-time board member of the New York City NOW and to this day the only man ever to hold such a position. A few years later, Dr. Farrell found himself forced to resign when he realized, to his shock and dismay, that NOW was concerned with promoting special privileges for women. Predictably, not long afterward, NOW removed from its publications the announcement of the award to NCFM and today denies that such an award was ever given.

In August 2004, in Fort Worth, Texas, NCFM held its second face-to-face board meeting in its twenty-seven-year history. NCFM's members are young and old, men and women, conservative and liberal, predominantly

straight but also bisexual and gay. Gender equity issues seem to run perpendicular to traditional categories. So it is that, of the two leading equity feminist organizations, the IWF and the WFN, the first is “conservative” and the second is “liberal.” As with genital integrity, these labels may be starting to become a bit passé. For me, and for some of my colleagues, the work on genital integrity and gender equity is intimately intertwined. NCFM’s vice president is an ardent supporter of genital integrity activism. A position statement drafted by activist organization Not Just Skin appears at the NCFM site.<sup>4</sup> This represents an excellent, but all too rare, example of activists in the two causes making common cause to work toward a shared goal.

### **3. WHAT IS GENDER EQUITY?**

The movement for genuine gender equity is based on the simple premise that males and females should be treated equally in all aspects of life. With a few unfortunate but extremely rare exceptions (roughly equivalent to the small yet still regrettable incidence of anti-Semites working to promote genital integrity), advocates for gender equity are ardent in their support for fair treatment of women. While often disagreeing on tactics and specific priorities, and often diverging strongly in their political orientation, nevertheless, in my experience, most such activists agree on and, indeed, devote their lives to promoting certain goals. They are united in struggling to promote the concept that each of us should be treated fairly and with love and kindness regardless of whether we are male or female. This may not mean a guaranteed equal outcome but it probably means an equal opportunity, level playing field. In a sense, this is also precisely what genital integrity activism is all about.

#### **3.1 Writing About Genital Integrity and Gender Equality**

Feminist activists and activists against female genital cutting (FGC), of course, often have drawn connections between their causes, routinely claiming the battle against FGC as a branch of the struggle for women’s equality. I agree, just as I believe the fight to protect genital integrity is part of the struggle for gender equity. Male genital integrity has been raised as a feminist issue by Rosemary Romberg,<sup>5</sup> Miriam Pollack,<sup>6</sup> Pamela Bone,<sup>7</sup> and others. A variety of reasons have been mentioned to justify this association: the bonding of mother and child is grossly affected by circumcision, the alliance of women with peace and humanity justifies their opposition to genital alteration, the difficulty of drawing a line between procedures on

males and females means that feminists must support genital integrity for everyone, feminists are fighting a power hierarchy that calls for such horrible acts of allegiance as circumcision, and so on.

Parallels between genital integrity and gender equality have been addressed by a number of authors, by some who are primarily identified with the former movement, and by others more closely allied with the latter. From the gender equity side, we have Dr. Warren Farrell,<sup>89</sup> Aaron Kipnis,<sup>10</sup> Jed Diamond,<sup>11</sup> Gordon Clay's monumental MenStuff website,<sup>12</sup> MenWeb,<sup>13</sup> James Whipple in a book produced by NCFM,<sup>14</sup> and others. From the genital integrity activist side, those who have spoken out include Tim Hammond and NOHARMM,<sup>15</sup> Billy Ray Boyd,<sup>16</sup> John Erickson,<sup>17</sup> Joseph Zoske,<sup>18</sup> Sam Keen,<sup>19</sup> and Tom Golden.<sup>20</sup> I published an essay in the gender equity movement's leading magazine examining commonalities between circumcision and men's issues.<sup>21</sup> In another illustration of useful collaboration, the writing team of Frederick Hodges and Jerry Warner published their classic article, "The Right to Our Own Bodies," on one of the leading men's issues websites.<sup>22</sup>

In his article, Zoske makes the trenchant point that we who strive to advance genital integrity don't talk as much as we might about issues such as men's loss and grief and circumcision's impact on a man's overall psychosexual development. Perhaps these subjects are uncomfortable for us, socialized as we are to expect our own and other men's invulnerability or the illusion thereof.

Sam Keen joins the dots together particularly well. Circumcision acts as a "sacrament" in our culture that prepares men for a life in which they are expected to engage in power-based relationships, violence, and warrior mentality:

Circumcision remains a mythic act whose real significance is stubbornly buried in the unconscious. That men and women who supposedly love their sons refuse to stop this barbaric practice strongly suggests that something powerfully strange is going on here. Feel the violation of your flesh, your being. What indelible message about the meaning of manhood [is] carved into your body? Masculinity requires a wounding of the body, a sacrifice of the natural endowment of sensuality and sexuality. A man is fashioned by a process of subtraction. We gain manhood by the willingness to bear mutilation.<sup>23</sup>

Therapist Golden writes about men remembering their circumcision.<sup>24</sup> Golden uses breathwork, EMDR and other techniques to assist people in moving into old pain to re-experience painful past events and thereby be relieved of the old trauma. (Breathwork is a therapeutic technique using energetic, directed breathing to focus the mind and body.) Golden notes that, for those who do follow this practice, painful memories often turn out to be

clustered together. One of the past-life events often re-experienced within a cluster of trauma is the pain of being circumcised. (I can't help noting here that, in a breathwork session, completely unexpectedly, I once very concretely re-experienced my circumcision at infancy.) When Golden first saw this, he was "amazed and shocked" as he hadn't seen circumcision as anything other than a routine procedure. (And so it is for each of us, on each issue to which we have not given previous thought. It took me years to take genital integrity activism seriously.) Golden relates that most of these men felt exactly the same way he initially did. They often were taken aback at the intensity of the pain. Other therapists, Golden reports, have related similar experiences to Golden's.<sup>25</sup>

Golden makes a very direct, concrete link between male circumcision and men's lives. "I am convinced that the practice of circumcision can create trauma in boys. I can't imagine anyone allowing little girls to be cut in their genital area shortly after birth. You would see an avalanche of protest! These boys get through the gauntlet of the birth canal only to find one of their very first experiences with other humans is being cut in one of their most sensitive parts."<sup>26</sup>

Dr. Farrell contributes what may be the most powerful, succinct summary of the intimate association for males of genital integrity and gender equity: "America's reflexive continuation of circumcision-without-research reflects the continuation of our tradition to desensitize boys to feelings of pain, to prepare them not to question the disposability of their bodies any more than they would question the disposability of their foreskins."<sup>27</sup>

#### **4. PARALLELS BETWEEN GENITAL INTEGRITY AND GENDER EQUITY**

A number of illuminating parallels link genital integrity and gender equity. Most obviously, some activists participate in both causes and see the two as intimately intertwined. In fact, I believe it is fair to say that most if not all persons who are involved in both movements view them as two sides of the same coin.

##### **4.1 General Parallels**

Like genital integrity, gender equity is fundamentally a civil rights movement. Many activists consciously model their thinking and/or their actions on various civil rights struggles from throughout history, most notable the women's suffrage cause of the nineteenth and early twentieth



centuries, and the struggle for civil rights for African-Americans, which came into its own in the fifties and sixties.

Another parallel is that both topics seem strange at first blush but paradoxically enough are allied in a very intimate way with basic principles by which most of us agree to regulate our lives and behavior in this post-Nuremberg Trials world. Who would deny that, so far as is possible, discrimination should be rooted out so that all people have the same equal opportunity? One of the few things that might be even more squarely aligned with common sense, especially if you spend any time around babies, is that babies should be loved and safeguarded from all forms of needless harm. However, given how deeply we are entrenched in the prejudices and preconceptions of our world, a moment of epiphany may be required for us to be able to attain the perspective to incorporate these new ideas into our lives.

One relatively unknown, yet well-documented connection between the two issues is that women were barred from participating in Jewish ritual circumcisions in a deliberate effort to minimize women's presence and importance in the temple.<sup>28</sup>

## **4.2 Legal Parallels**

Legal approaches to guaranteeing the right to genital integrity are workable as one prong of a multi-prong strategy to promote gender equity in both directions. (The converse is not as clearly true due to the greater specificity of the genital integrity cause).

Both issues are relatively unfamiliar to the broader legal community, not to mention the general public. Yet, the relationship between the two has been at least implicitly addressed by a number of legal and non-legal scholars.

Both concerns can be rendered easily understandable to the uninitiated through straightforward parallels with more familiar topics. Male genital integrity can be analogized with female genital integrity, and the need for equity for men can be analogized with the need for equity for women.

# **5. DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN GENITAL INTEGRITY AND GENDER EQUITY**

## **5.1 General Distinctions**

Relative to gender equity, genital integrity may in some senses be more immediately palatable to the public. First of all, it may be easier to maintain

and fortify a contention that men's equality does not need endorsement due to historical factors. It may be significantly tougher to argue that male baby genitals don't deserve protection just like female baby genitals. However, it certainly cannot be denied that people who are willing to make the attempt do exist! This has been managed to date through a blend of strategies, including lies about an absence of effect on males, explicit and implicit references to male circumcision's alleged religious (primarily Jewish) sacramental role, untruths about medical benefits, misrepresentations about babies' inability to feel pain, and so on.

However, signs are appearing on the horizon that such balancing acts are becoming more difficult to sustain. Recently, a number of influential medical organizations in Australia and New Zealand,<sup>29</sup> British Columbia,<sup>30</sup> and Saskatchewan<sup>31</sup> have forcefully rejected these claims. Regardless of one's views about adults, one tends to see male babies and female babies as both equally innocent and equally vulnerable.

Genital integrity is also likely to strike most people as a less important issue than gender equity. If less important, it may be less necessary to resist. It may also attract a query that I have had countless times about why it merits any attention, but focused repetition of key points should be able to cope with this objection. Finally, the concern about opening the floodgates by admitting the propriety of males' concerns may be less problematic with the more specific issue of genital integrity than it is regarding potentially much broader claims regarding gender equity.

## 5.2 Legal Distinctions

Genital integrity may be fundamentally more palatable to judges, for similar reasons to why it may be more palatable to the public. Actually, these reasons are not even necessarily separable, since, as mentioned earlier, judges tend to be reluctant to initiate social change, and contrary to popular belief have rarely done so. Again, we are likely to find far lower levels of fear about opening the floodgates.

Genital integrity may temporarily be (or may not be) less legally robust. Currently, courts are quite focused on discrimination, including gender discrimination. These concepts are very familiar to the courts. While it is true that the majority of cases have been decided primarily or exclusively to benefit women, nevertheless, on its terms, the constitution guarantees both men and women the right to freedom from discrimination. Despite the existence of facially discriminatory laws, such as the Violence Against Women Act, whose reconfirmation is apparently being authorized by Congress as this book goes to press, the *theoretical* equality of males and

females has never to my knowledge been directly challenged, successfully or otherwise, in a case of record.

The right to genital integrity, by contrast, has not yet been affirmed by the courts despite being contained in a host of human rights documents ratified by the United States and/or applicable to the US through customary law. Courts may view the issue as, at most, an intellectually interesting curiosity, a sideline, possibly an utter waste of time or, at worst, perhaps even an insidious, malevolent attempt to divert attention from truly meritorious issues such as female circumcision.

So, it may not be as big a stretch to decide another case affirming men's right to freedom from sex discrimination, relative to making the first general, on-the-record statement that a widespread practice must stop and genital integrity must be prioritized.

## **6. LEGAL CASES REGARDING GENITAL INTEGRITY AND GENDER EQUITY**

As most activists are aware, no legal cases with precedential value have yet been handed down to help safeguard genital integrity. Individual legal victories have been won, such as the notable settlement achieved in 2003 by plaintiff William Stowell and attorney David Llewellyn.<sup>32</sup>

A few important cases have been decided in state and federal court, affirming men's right to equal treatment. The famous Virginia Military Institute lawsuit held that any law broadly discriminatory against men or women on account of sex is subject to a "strong presumption" that it is unconstitutional, and that such presumption can be rebutted only by an "extremely persuasive justification."<sup>33</sup> Other cases reaffirming men's right to equality — all decided by the United States Supreme Court — include *Adkins v. Children's Hospital*,<sup>34</sup> *Reed v. Reed*,<sup>35</sup> *Stanley v. Illinois*,<sup>36</sup> *Frontiero v. Richardson*,<sup>37</sup> *Taylor v. Louisiana*,<sup>38</sup> *Weinberger v. Wiesenfeld*,<sup>39</sup> *Stanton v. Stanton*,<sup>40</sup> *Craig v. Boren*,<sup>41</sup> *Califano v. Goldfarb*,<sup>42</sup> *Duren v. Missouri*,<sup>43</sup> *Orr v. Orr*,<sup>44</sup> *Califano v. Wescott*,<sup>45</sup> *Wengler v. Druggists*,<sup>46</sup> *Kirchberg v. Feenstra*,<sup>47</sup> *Mississippi University for Women v. Hogan*,<sup>48</sup> and *J. E. B. v. Alabama ex rel. T. B.*<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, there is some strong suggestion of a parallel between feminism's endorsement of men's equality in the seventies and early eighties and the relatively high number of court cases handed down during that era relative to times before and since then. This striking parallel is not surprising since, contrary to popular belief, courts tend to follow public opinion rather than to lead it. The genuinely

activist court, out in front of the general public in its views and decisions, is quite rare both historically and currently.

One unhappy commonality between legal cases involving genital integrity and gender equity is that courts often search for any conceivable basis, such as a narrow decision regarding lack of legal standing, that may allow them to avoid addressing the potentially earthshaking (and possibly politically and/or personally treacherous) merits of such cases.

Thus, at least three times, in 1989 in the Adam London case,<sup>50</sup> then in 1996 in the Fishbeck v. North Dakota case brought by Zenas Baer,<sup>51</sup> and most recently in Baer's Flatt case,<sup>52</sup> courts have avoided squarely addressing the legality of male circumcision by diverting the discussion into such peripheral, procedural issues as standing. In a relatively recent case in which the author was involved, involving systematic discrimination against Spanish-speaking mothers from whom "consents" for circumcision were fraudulently extracted, a federal district court went to extraordinary, monumentally improper lengths to prevent fair consideration of a wrongfully circumcised boy's complaint.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, a potentially groundbreaking pair of related gender equity cases, one brought in Minnesota state court,<sup>54</sup> the other in federal court, came to an unsuccessful end after the second case was denied certiorari by the United States Supreme Court.<sup>55</sup> The cases were filed by a number of state taxpayers as a constitutional challenge to the state's power to spend money in a manner that clearly discriminates against men by explicitly barring them from any opportunity to seek assistance as victims of domestic violence. Both cases failed based on standing, without the merits ever being addressed by the courts. A similar lawsuit filed by plaintiffs who are both taxpayers and are also directly aggrieved, is currently under way against the State of California.<sup>56</sup>

Sometimes, such cases are decided on the grounds that, by upholding men's right to equal treatment, women's right to equal treatment is also upheld. No precedent exists directly drawing a line between genital integrity and gender equality, but several law review articles have suggested that affirming genital integrity goes hand in hand with safeguarding men's basic constitutional rights. Legal precedent affirming female right to genital integrity does exist, not to mention numerous federal and state laws in the US and in many other places. It can only be a matter of time until these two trends link up.

## **7. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE GENDER EQUITY MOVEMENT?**

Initially, I have to admit to a great deal of pessimism regarding both causes in which I am active, but lately I find that both movements may be on the verge of some major breakthroughs. In recent years, well-respected and well-known media outlets such as MSNBC's Donahue Show,<sup>57</sup> CNN,<sup>58</sup> NBC,<sup>59</sup> Fox6 News,<sup>60</sup> the *Los Angeles Times*,<sup>61</sup> *California State Bar Journal*,<sup>62</sup> and the *Los Angeles Daily Journal*<sup>63</sup> have placed stories on the men's movement. Similarly, well-written pieces on the genital integrity movement have appeared in, among other places, Showtime's Penn & Teller *Bullshit!*,<sup>64</sup> *Penthouse*,<sup>65</sup> the *Wall Street Journal*,<sup>66</sup> Yahoo.com,<sup>67</sup> Fox.com,<sup>68</sup> Salon.com,<sup>69</sup> the *National Journal*,<sup>70</sup> the *Washington Post*,<sup>71</sup> the *Harvard Law Bulletin*,<sup>72</sup> and the *San Jose Mercury-News*.<sup>73</sup> In both areas, things are proceeding beyond the curiosity level and starting to get substantive. We now appear to be just one level rather than two levels below general public awareness on each issue.

## **8. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

The interconnections between gender equity and genital integrity are growing in importance. Awareness of the gender equity movement and of the associated issues should inform our activism, regardless of our personal views about them. This is really no different from the way we treat other potentially thorny issues, such as religious customs, psychological mechanisms of denial, parental defensiveness, physicians' vested interests, etc.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

This is tough work and these are (paradoxically enough) delicate yet explosive issues. Some of you may feel some discomfort with this discussion and/or some of the points I have raised for consideration, or may simply disagree with me, vociferously or otherwise. I dare say, there may be at least one reader prepared to label me based on my concerns. I feel some discomfort myself at raising these issues, some bedrock feeling that such issues affecting males, including genital integrity, must be less important. Am I misbehaving? Am I being a "bad" genital integrity activist?

And, yet, I believe that gender equity is not less important than genital integrity. Nor is it more important. Both, regrettably, are relatively neglected

at this particular historical moment. The very resistance such discussions can raise may be representative of the difficulties and barriers faced by genital integrity activism in gaining support for its cause of protecting the genital integrity of males as well as females.

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