

# Intact America

## Children's Rights

<https://www.intactamerica.org/category/voices-2/page/5/>

## Campaign and Advocacy

May 20, 2019

Inspired by the Me Too movement, I would like to voice my own victims impact statement.

For years, I have written to legislators, the courts, and to other rights organizations about the genital slicing that was forced on me shortly after my birth. I have written to tell them that cutting the genitals of little boys is exactly the kind of age and sex discrimination they pretend to be against. I have been ridiculed, ignored, and thrown under the bus. MeToo never answered my letters. My letters to politicians and to Human Rights Campaign, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Anti-Defamation League, the Center for Constitutional Rights, and Amnesty International all have been met with silence. I had thought they supported all humans equally, but it seems I was wrong.

Do boys like me have 13th Amendment protections? Tissues excised from my private parts and those of millions of other similarly situated and objectified infants not only violated laws prohibiting involuntary tissue/organ donations (made without consent), but rather than discard the unusable tissues, doctors and hospitals used the prepuces (including mine), and profits have been made on male penile spare parts. When do we donors share in those profits?

Why am I not protected under the 14th Amendment to the U.S Constitution, which states No state shall make or enforce any law which shall deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws? Am I not a person?

Why am I categorically excluded from equal treatment under 18 USC, Section 116, which prohibits genital mutilation but only of girls?

Apparently, for boys the Constitution means nothing. Its not about the excuses (or intent), but the lifelong impact. Even though I am a male (born a boy), I am a person.

I support, respect and appreciate all the work Intact America is doing. If our legislators and bureaucrats were as heroic and hardworking as you are, wed all be happy.

*James W*

Interested in lending your voice? Send an email to [\[emailprotected\]](mailto:[emailprotected]), giving us a brief summary of what you would like to write about, and we will get back to you.

Mar 15, 2019

For most of my life, circumcision was not an issue. I was circumcised, and I noticed one of my childhood friends was intact, but aside from that I didnt give it much thought. Sometime in my mid-40s, however, I read an article about the unnecessary circumcision of American baby boys.

Everything changed for me that day. It was like a light had been switched on, and as the thought stayed with me, I became angrier. Foreskins are part of the whole male infant at birth. No parent has any right to clip away a childs body part unless there is an immediate medical reason to do so. If he wants to have his penis circumcised when hes 18 years old, that is his decision.

As the years went by, I became more and more upset that I had been robbed of my birthright. When I asked my mother why she had had me circumcised, she said she wanted to make it easier for me to keep my penis clean. I couldnt believe it. Young boys cant be taught to clean themselves? Girls are.

Among the benefits of foreskin are the thousands of nerve endings it contains that contribute to sexual pleasure. Studies have shown that the circumcised penis has less sensitivity than one that is intact. I have restored about 80 percent of my foreskin over 15 years, but it will never act the way real foreskin acts. Its more of a psychological thing for me, although I also feel better physically.

When I broach the subject with others, both women and men give me many reasons they had their sons circumcised. I dont want my son looking like he didnt come from me is a favorite among fathers. I have had a hard time managing my anger in those moments, and I found out quickly that confrontation only leads to anger on their part. They feel threatened that I am messing with their rights as parents.

Ive learned to temper my anger during conversations, but I still find it difficult, if not impossible, to bring up the subject with family members and close friends. I dont mean to blameI want to educate, open their eyesbut they usually go on the defensive.

I know Intact Americas goal is to change the way Americans think about circumcision. Its hard for many parents to agree with the case against circumcision if they gave the go-ahead when their sons were born. But even if I cant convince them that its wrong, I can plant a seed of curiosity. Perhaps theyll explore the topic further on their own and change their minds, persuade their friends, and help to bring an end to the practice of cutting babies.

*Mark Wilder, intactivist from the great state of Washington*

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Dec 20, 2018

Taking a whole baby home was way harder than I ever thought it would be. Protecting a whole baby was hard, too.

I don't know how old I was when I first discovered what the word circumcision meant, but from my earliest memories, I knew I didn't like it. I could never understand why someone would do that to another person, especially a baby I still can't. So, I guess the answer to when I first decided to refuse circumcision for my son is, long before I ever considered having children. However, since it is not a decision made by one parent, I had to make sure my wife and I were on the same page.

Initially she was quite surprised that anyone wouldn't circumcise. She said she had never even thought about the subject, let alone formed an opinion about it, and always assumed it was something that was just done. After many hours of talking about my feelings on the topic, and her doing independent research (thank god for the internet at that point), she also decided she was against circumcision for any future children. The final straw that won her over to the pro-intact side was when we were taking a parenting class offered by the local health department, and the teacher, a public health nurse, showed slides of a circumcision being performed and talked about how it was unnecessary.

My son was born at Onslow Memorial Hospital in Jacksonville, NC and they tried many times to take him from us to circumcise him. We had met with the hospital administrator before the delivery and they approved and signed the birth plan that clearly said he would not be circumcised and that no one should manipulate or retract his foreskin. They pressured us repeatedly, saying it would be better to have it done before we left. Hospital policy didn't permit rooming-in, but I never left the hospital and I wouldn't let the staff take my son out of our room unless I was allowed to go with him. Nurses argued several times that they had to take him to the nursery for rounds and that the doctors liked to have all the babies lined up to be checked at the same time. I refused and told them I'd be happy to sign AMA or they could tell the doctor to walk down to our room. They eventually relented and even allowed me to sit in the nursery with my son while he underwent phototherapy.

I had a similar pro-circumcision experience following the birth of my daughter. She was born in North Carolina also, at Naval Hospital, Camp Lejeune. Shortly after her birth, a doctor stopped by the room and said, Are you ready for the circumcision? I replied, Since we didn't circumcise our son, we won't be circumcising our daughter. They apologized profusely, and walked away embarrassed.

The fight to protect my son didn't stop when we left the hospital after his birth. Although he was never forcibly retracted, one of his pediatricians wanted to. I had warned my wife about doctors who would try to retract. She didn't believe it would happen though, so she didn't say anything about it at the beginning of the well-baby visit. When the time came for the genital portion of the exam, the doctor frowned when he saw my son was intact and started manipulating my son's foreskin. My wife immediately said STOP! and asked what he was doing. The doctor said he had to pull it back so he could see that the urethra was in the right place. My wife said, No, you don't and the doctor said, Yes I do, in order to make sure he can urinate. My wife said, He's been urinating just fine for months and you're not pulling it back. They argued a bit more, but my wife stood her ground, my son was not retracted, and the bit of manipulation the doctor had done before she stopped him did not cause any damage or discomfort. After that we changed doctors and we always made sure to have the don't retract conversation before any undressing occurred. Fortunately, when we had the conversation with our son's new pediatrician, his response was, I would never!

The don't retract conversation continued with grandparents, caregivers and daycare administrators. We even typed a little info letter, which we had the daycare sign when we registered our son there. It actually started several conversations, because some people had never heard of not circumcising and were curious why we didn't. Most of the caregivers had never seen an intact male or cared for one. Some thought maybe you had to stick something in there and clean it, but after the simple clean it like a finger and just wipe it off conversation a couple of them even remarked how much easier it was to clean an intact boy than a circumcised boy.

We moved to Italy nearly six years ago. It is shocking how different public opinion is here about circumcision, and to realize how ignorant most Americans (including physicians) are about basic anatomy. Many of my Italian friends were shocked to learn that so many people in the United States circumcise their sons. Most of them don't even know it is something that happens and they are incredulous to hear its routine.

I first learned about Intact America in 2009. Like many people, I think, I initially approached the subject of circumcision with trepidation and fear of how other people would react. In fact, I didn't tell anyone my feelings about circumcision until my sister asked me what I thought before her first son was born, and then not again until I got married. It's strange that even though I am from a very progressive city in California, where almost anything is socially acceptable, I always felt afraid to talk about circumcision. That is why I am so grateful for Intact America. Your message lets other men know that they are not alone and they are not the only ones who stand against circumcision. To this day I am a somewhat closeted intactivist. I have talked to a few friends who asked me for information because they knew I kept my son intact and I tried to share facts and opinion, but for the most part I don't discuss the issue.

Thank you so much for what you are doing to help people understand how unnecessary and harmful circumcision is, and for helping to educate our healthcare professionals.

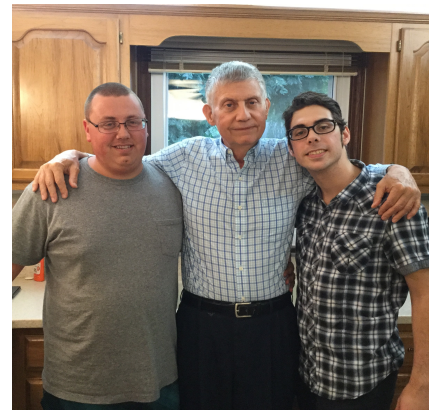
*Damon Favor*

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Oct 17, 2018

Even sixty-four years later, I can still remember the seemingly trivial conversation between my father and I that devastated my sexual integrity and eliminated my trust in my fathers benevolence towards me. It happened in late winter when I was eight years old, just a few weeks before I was scheduled for a surgical hernia repair during my school spring vacation. I was showering after a day of running around my neighborhood with my friends, when my father joined me in our homes basement where the shower was located. He seemed almost embarrassed at first, as he questioned me about my intact penis. When I was born in 1946, universal routine infant circumcision had already been introduced into American society.



My father, born at his familys rural home in 1926, has escaped being genitally cut as a child. He had declined the offer by the physician who delivered me to circumcise me as a newborn, apparently assuming I would be satisfied with being genitally complete, as was he. He had observed the obsession in his white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant peers to genitally cut all their sons, seeming as a sign of social distinction. He passed up an opportunity to have me clipped at age six during my first hernia repair. I suspect his normal desire to provide me with all the accessory status symbols of WASP society proved overwhelming when I was eight and scheduled for another hernia repair. It was a perfect opportunity to alter me from a natural male into an all-American clean-cut boy, culturally groomed and genitally modified for an easy entrance into the WASP society that he assumed I would greatly desire to be part of as an adult.

My father, pointing to my intact penis that I just happened to be washing then, asked me if the (fore)skin covering the head of my penis ever bothered or embarrassed me. I told him that it was O.K., that I was happy with it, and that I never had any problems with it, just as it was. He made no further comment and seemed satisfied with my answer. I thought nothing more about my conversation with him at that time. He never gave me any warning that he had apparently decided to proceed with my genital cutting by our family physician after the general surgeon had completed my hernia repair. My father chose our family physician to do my circumcision because that physician was Jewish, and my father believed that a Jewish physician would have the most competence when doing such genital modifications.

I can still remember waking up after surgery, in agony from pain radiating from my damaged penis, pain I can still vividly recollect, and which will occasionally reoccur even at age 72. I was too young at age eight to verbalize my emotional distress, but I knew that I had been irrevocably injured. My father had allowed me to be genitally assaulted and permanently mutilated, and I would subconsciously never trust him again to promote my personal welfare or protect my physical integrity. I withdrew emotionally from him from that point forward, a permanent rupture of a previously affectionate familial relationship, a gulf between us that would last for the remainder of his life. I would never again allow him to see my naked, vulnerable body, and I would later pursue training as a teenager in martial arts to protect myself.

After that surgery and up until puberty, I had weekly nightmares about my privates being cut or torn away from me, visions so vivid that they would wake me up from my sleep. I would cover my circumcised penis with my hand at night, to deter someone from amputating even more shaft skin while I was unconscious. To escape the recurrent emotional anxiety, I started repressing the memory of my circumcision and denying my penile deformity. By the time puberty arrived, I had decided that my circumcision had never occurred, and that I still had my original foreskin that was permanently retracted. I even avoided glancing at the bared head of my penis whenever I urinated. It took me many decades to forgive my father for his monumental, but fully understandable mistake in assuming that I desired to possess a standard penis cut and trimmed to reflect the universal sexual and cultural trends in America in the 1950s.

I attended high school in the early 1960s, when all the boys in mandatory physical education classes had to shower together in a large, single shower room before redressing for regular academic classes after PE. Every one of us was genitally cut, although I fantasized that I really possessed a foreskin that was simply retracted all the time. It was my senior year in high school before I saw another male student who possessed an actual foreskin. I knew that my penis was originally designed to resemble his. About that time, I started experimenting with taping my remaining shaft skin forward over my glans, all to no avail. The tape would always loosen during involuntary erections at night, and I would be left by morning with an uncovered glans. I would continue futilely to tape my shaft skin forward up and over my glans, trying to permanently stretch my remaining shaft skin to cover my bared glans. I would persist in those attempts for the next sixteen years, through college, graduate school, and medical school, right up until the time I had my first surgical preputial reconstruction completed in 1980 by a preeminent genital reconstructive surgeon practicing on the East Coast. I still remember his grave warnings to me that my soon-to-be-foreskinned penis would greatly increase my susceptibility to venereal diseases and penile cancer and complicate my genital hygiene. I wonder how much of his comments he believed, since he proceeded the following day with completing an excellent surgical reconstruction of a foreskin for my phallus.

The few high school buddies with whom I would share my distress at my being deprived of a complete penis with full sensation had no idea what I was complaining about, since all of them had been genitally cut as infants. None of them had the slightest idea what a natural, intact teenage male actually looked like, or the advantages of being intact! They offered me no sympathy or support at all, and several even belittled me for voicing such a trivial complaint. Their derision taught me to suffer in silence.

My medical school junior clerkship in obstetrics generated an interesting challenge. I was required to learn how to and personally complete by myself no less than eight neonatal circumcisions during the rotation. I, of course, had already decided to decline to genitally cut children as I had been cut. One morning about half way through the rotation, a fellow junior medical student and myself were assigned to do the neonatal circumcisions on all the intact baby boys in the nursery who would be discharged later that day with their mothers. As luck would have it, the faculty pediatrician supervising us was a refugee physician from a Cuban medical school, a country where routine infant circumcision is not practiced. When I explained to him that I did not feel comfortable imposing elective, cosmetic genital reductive surgery on children who, as adults, might want to retain their foreskins, he complimented me on my genital integrity concerns and realistic ethical objections. He cautioned me NOT to broadcast my lack of acceptance of the American cultural party line that all males should be circumcised as soon as the first opportunity presents itself. He also graciously certified to my clerkship supervisor that I had completed the required number of infant circs for the rotation. The other junior medical student rotating with me



had personally attended many a bris and circumcised without any hesitation every uncut male infant in the nursery scheduled for discharge that morning.

The positive changes in genital sensation in my phallus after my first foreskin reconstruction in 1980 allowed me to enter the sexual arena with renewed vigor. My new protective foreskin allowed my glans to recover some of its previously absent sensitivity. Sexual intercourse became much less work, and much more fun! I pursued two more trivial touch-up surgeries during the following twelve years, before I was satisfied with my genital appearance to my paramours.

My first son was born when I was fifty, followed by a second son when I was fifty-one. Not only did I have to convince their mother to allow them to remain genitally intact, but I also had to convince her obstetrician and pediatrician that allowing a male child to retain his natural, complete reproductive equipment was not child abuse. (Persons who practice or approve of genital cutting develop aggressive, vigorous emotional and intellectual defense mechanisms to justify their beliefs.) Her obstetrician casually mentioned to me during a post-partum visit after the birth of our second child that my sons were the first males that he had delivered in over twenty years who left the hospital still possessing their foreskins. I suspect the fact that I was a licensed physician at the time of their births was pivotal to my ability to protect my sons genital integrity as newborns and young boys.

Both of my adult sons are pleased with their present intact genital status, and both tell me that they plan for their sons to also retain their complete genital heritage with full sexual sensitivity. My older sons wife is pleased with his complete genitalia, and insisted that their son, now ten months old, also remain genitally intact, or at least until age eighteen. When my grandson reaches his majority, he will then have the option that I never had of making his own informed decisions about retaining his complete reproductive apparatus.

*Paul G., M.D. with adult sons Jim and Mike, residing in Indiana.*

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Sep 14, 2018

It was my third week in a Bioenergetics/Primal Therapy Intensive in Washington, D.C. when Barbara Brennan, my facilitator, taught me how to go through the motions of a temper tantrum. I was thirty years old and in my normal life I was perceived to be a mild-mannered, somewhat shy library assistant at the University of Virginia, but a woman friend, suspecting I was holding back feelings that needed to be expressed, had urged me to attend the intensive. She had handed me a pile of books, including *The Primal Scream*, that convinced me I indeed needed this sort of help.

After two weeks of bioenergetic exercises, group therapy, and solo sessions, Brennan suggested I lie on my back on a king-size mattress, knees up, fists at my sides, turning my head and torso left then right, hitting the mattress with my fists and heels. Suddenly, what was described to me as an exercise turned into a genuine tantrum, life-long pent-up screams filling the room, followed by tears, relief, and even some laughter, my normally cool hands surprisingly warm.



What had this been about? No one at the Intensive, including myself, seemed to know. At that time many people were attempting to re-experience their births, but that primal, my therapists said, didnt seem like a birth trauma. Afterwards, off and on for several months in my apartment in Virginia, I repeated this exercise when neighbors were away, but gradually I stopped as my attention shifted to a new relationship, marriage, fatherhood, and a career as a writer and editor at Gallaudet University in the nations capital.

Decades after my first experience with primal therapy, while my wife and I were on a fossil-collecting trip in West Virginia, I was resting on a bed in a motel when she came over to speak to me affectionately. I was astonished as I looked up at her by a sensation of being a baby in pain, looking up pleadingly at my mother. I hid this embarrassing feeling, but the experience prompted a search for assistance that led me after we got home to a book called *The Psychology of the Deepest Self* by Paul Vereshack. This book described in great detail ways to discover and relive painful memories on ones own. In a nutshell, the process involves developing sensitivity to areas of feeling we ordinarily ignore. Tensions we try to disregard in social situations become, in deep feeling therapy, the focus of our attention.

In this process I was surprised by the extent to which, as an infant, I was desperate for my mothers help to ease various forms of suffering. My early recollections of my father, on the other hand, were of an angry, impatient person. He had long ago told me that when I was an infant, upon discovering that I had made a mess on the living room floor, hed given me living hell. I didnt consciously remember this, but in one session I tried to establish in my mind and body a congruency with such a situation. As I did so, much to my surprise, I began crying the high-pitched cries of a newborn, flailing my arms and legs in a baby tantrum that instantly provoked the somatic memory of cutting pains around the shaft of my penis. The sensations were so specific and intense that I immediately stopped my flailing and sat up, the word circumcision popping into my head.

Although I was 60 years old at the time, I knew next to nothing about circumcision and had always vaguely assumed that something may have been done down there when I was little but it must have been a necessary thing like severing the umbilical cord. I knew my father surely wasnt the person who would have done this, but something about the impulse to fight back must have brought back the memory. I didnt realize immediately, but soon figured out that punching and kicking in an effort to ward off circumcisers is precisely what is prevented by the plastic circumstraint boards designed to restrain baby boys while doctors do their work. Sometime later I learned that when I was born in 1945, a nurse typically held down a babys arms and legs while a doctor performed the circumcision. My effort to fight back freed feelings of rage that had been suppressed for 60 years.

Immediately after having this circumcision primal, I looked up circumcision on the Internet to learn why this is done and its value or rationale. You can imagine my astonishment upon discovering many websites decrying the barbaric practice of circumcision and its effects on male sexuality. A lifetime of inexplicable nervous reactions to the opportunity of sex suddenly became understandable. My

genital integrity, I learned, had been brutally and agonizingly violated shortly after birth. Most of my erogenous nerves and the sensitive sheath that protected the mucous membrane of the glans had been ripped and severed from my penis.

I have been seriously disillusioned by what I have learned about neonatal circumcision. I have discovered that my parents did not do all they could have done to protect my bodily integrity. I'm angry that they never said a word about what they had allowed to happen to me. I am upset that the doctors who oversaw my birth did not give serious thought to the eventual negative effects of the surgery on my general disposition and the sexual happiness of me and whoever I might eventually choose as a spouse. I have shed many tears over these betrayals of my best interests and the interests of the woman to whom I am married.

*Robert Clover Johnson*

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Jul 18, 2018



I knew nothing about circumcision until I was planning to have a baby back in 1983. I was 31 years old, living in New Haven, Connecticut, and married to a Jewish man.

My husband, Richard, and I knew right away we wanted a home birth, and fortunately we found two independent midwives along with five other local women planning to have home births with them. We also met with an ob-gyn doctor who was willing to back up the home birth if the mother needed to be taken to the hospital. I felt so supported as I faced birthing a baby.

As the days and months went by, a strong and nurturing relationship began to grow among the women planning a home birth. We all thought a lot about birthing and how to do it with the least amount of trauma to the mother and the infant. We shared what we knew about the care of the infant and breastfeeding. We gave our collective a name: Round Belly. We agreed to take pictures of our birthing days and share them with each other.

During this time I began a program for childbirth education with Informed Home Birth by Rahima Baldwin. It was then I became fully aware of the procedure of circumcision. I not only read about it, I saw photos of the infant strapped down or held down, without anesthesia (other than wine or sugar water and maybe some lidocaine). The foreskin of the penis is pulled from its attachment and cut and removed. The infant screams and, without a doubt, is in severe pain.

I turned into a mother animal and could not find any reason to allow this to happen to my baby if I had a boy. I could see with my own eyes that this was trauma, big trauma! I knew I had to convince my Jewish husband that this was wrong. He grew up in a faith that spiritualizes circumcision and performs it as a religious ceremony.

The answer came one day in a Jewish delicatessen, where Richard and I were having lunch. As we were leaving, we noticed a large framed poster advertisement for Manischewitz wine on the wall. The occasion was a bris. Men in the photo were raising their glasses of wine in joyous celebration of the ceremony. The baby, on the other hand, was screaming, with a beet red face, his mouth wide open and eyes closed tight. His hands were in tight little fists. We stared at this image for several moments. I was happy and relieved when Richard turned to me and said that it doesn't make sense anymore to do this to an infant. He said he would stand by me to leave our baby's genitals alone.



One by one, the babies in our group were being born at home, and by the third baby all boys there were no circumcisions. I was fourth and on July 23, as the sun was rising, I birthed a baby boy. We did not have him circumcised. The last two births were also at home two more boys, left whole.

Round Belly continued to meet for years afterward along with our sons, and at times with just the mothers, sharing our collective

wisdom and swapping stories. That early support of like-minded women was like gold. Most American doctors insist circumcision is necessary for hygiene and as a preventive procedure for health reasons.

Millions of parents around the world will tell you that's not true. Thoughtful hygiene for the genital area, be it with a boy or a girl, is important and sufficient. Frequent diaper changes, warm baths and airing out are the groundwork.

I became aware of Intact America in 2010 and knew I had to add my support. My heart is filled with gratitude for the work of Intact America and for the perseverance of Georganne Chapin. She is an Amazon warrior as she stands up for the rights of our baby boys. I hope with all my heart that society will increasingly question the practice of routine circumcision and that fewer and fewer people will choose to allow this painful cut to such a delicate part of a baby's precious little body. As a preventive medical procedure performed on infants, circumcision has no place. And as for religious traditions, these do change over time. Many Jews are not circumcising their sons and are, instead, marking their infant boys' covenant with God in a peaceful and non-harming way, so that they can mature into peaceful men.