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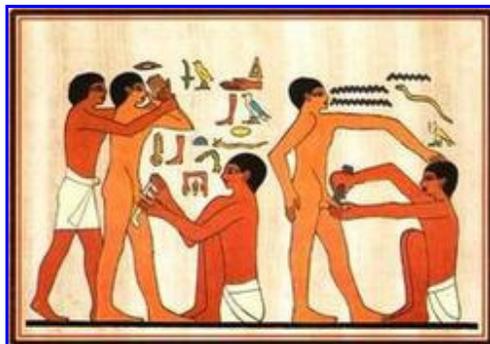
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## Circumcision Ban Isn't "Only in San Francisco" After All

By Erin Sherbert

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S.F. isn't the only city that wants to cut circumcision from its laws

Apparently, you can find a little touch of San Francisco's bizarre in nearly every corner of the country.

The city isn't the only one looking to [criminalize male circumcision](#). This national effort to ban the "mutilation" of foreskins has made a stop in Santa Monica. The [Male Genital Mutilation](#), a national group (the name says it all), has proposed its own ballot measure in Santa Monica that would ban male circumcision under the age of 18.

"The measure specifies that the belief of any person that the circumcision is required by 'custom or ritual' could not be considered in applying the law," according to the draft language.

The frightening thing is that this group is not singling out Santa Monica. MGM has long been [lobbying state and federal lawmakers](#) to enact a ban on male circumcision -- it hadn't gained traction until now. In January, the group submitted proposals to more than 2,800 lawmakers across the country, saying the procedure is "medically unnecessary" and robs males of their right to keep their penises intact.

"Boys are born with a foreskin for a reason," says MGM president Matthew Hess, who wrote San Francisco's ballot language. "The foreskin functions like an eyelid, providing protection and keeping the penis moist and sensitive."

And the sexual pleasure argument doesn't hold up. While those who are opposed to a circumcision ban argue that a circumcised penis adds to sexual pleasure, MGM says that the foreskin contains thousands of nerve endings and acts as a natural lubricant during sexual activity.

Nobody really thought San Francisco's measure would make it to the ballot until a few weeks ago, when proponents turned over an "excess" of signatures. Soon after, it qualified for the November ballot. All along, Jewish leaders and lawyers have stated such a ban is [unconstitutional](#), claiming it is violating freedom of religion. The Jewish community has vowed to fight the measure, which would prohibit the 3,000-year-old practice.



Hess pointed out that federal law protects girls from genital mutilation, so why not boys? He plans to take his efforts all the way to the federal government until it becomes law.

"You cannot in any way cut the genitals of girls, not even a drop of blood, in the name of religion," Hess says. "So why is this exception being made for the foreskin? It's a double standard."

Abby Porth, associate director with the Jewish Community Relations Council, told *SF Weekly* today that circumcision is hardly genital mutilation. In fact, the practice is just the opposite, she said. It has significant health benefits, including reduction in HIV risk and penile cancer. The San Francisco Jewish community has already created a broad coalition, which includes medical authorities, to fight this November ballot measure.

MGM was formed in 2003, strictly to prevent baby boys from having their genitals "mutilated." Admittedly, it has had a slow start, yet Hess says that the San Francisco ballot measure has helped the group gain momentum across the country. Hess says last year, cities across 46 states approached him, asking him to write similar ballot language to San Francisco's. The issue even made it to the Massachusetts Legislature for a public hearing, only to be killed at the committee level.

"If it passes [in San Francisco], it will help our chances everywhere," Hess tells *SF Weekly*. "And even if it doesn't pass, we've raised awareness."

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#### Showing 16 comments



**big fella** 20 hours ago

What a stupid fucking joke.....



**Roth** 20 hours ago

Forget the religious point of opinion, it's the sanitary sense that comes out as the benefactor in clipping a bit of skin. Isn't it best done at a toddler age rather than at 18?



**MrEricSir** 17 hours ago [in reply to Roth](#)

Well, yes and no. It's going to hurt an 18 year old a lot more. But on the other hand, circumcisions aren't necessarily that clean to begin with; many are done outside of hospitals. And babies lack the immune system to deal with a possible infection.



**ml66uk** 17 hours ago [in reply to Roth](#)

Not a single national medical organization in the world recommends neonatal male circumcision. Even where it is done, doing it straight after birth is the worst possible time. There are only two countries in the world where more than 50% of baby boys are

circumcised btw - the USA and Israel.



**J** 48 minutes ago [in reply to Roth](#)

As to the theory that penis parts should be cut off in order to facilitate hygiene, consider the following comments of a pediatrician. This is certainly a different (and more logical) view of Hygiene:

"My experience as a pediatrician has convinced me that circumcision makes the penis dirtier, a fact that was confirmed by a study recently published in the British Journal of Urology. For at least a week after circumcision, the baby is left with a large open wound that is in almost constant contact with urine and feces--hardly a hygienic advantage. Additionally, throughout life the circumcised penis is open and exposed to dirt and contaminants of all kinds. The wrinkles and folds that often form around the circumcision scar frequently harbor dirt and germs.

Thanks to the foreskin, the intact penis is protected from dirt and contamination. While this important protective function is extremely useful while the baby is in diapers, the foreskin provides protection to the glans and urinary opening for a lifetime. At all ages, the foreskin keeps the glans safe, soft, and clean.

Throughout childhood, there is no need to wash underneath the foreskin. Mothers used to be advised to retract the foreskin and wash beneath it every day. This was very bad advice indeed. When the foreskin becomes fully retractable, usually by the end of puberty, your son can retract it and rinse his glans with warm water while he is in the shower."



**Joshua Baker** 19 hours ago

I fully support the ban. Freedom of religion gives a person the right to make their own choices about their life and their body, not force their opinions on someone else's body. There is no reason that a healthy baby boy needs to have a perfectly normal and functional part of his penis amputated. Why, then, is it acceptable to force the procedure on them anyway, as opposed to letting the man make his own decision about what he likes best, and what is best for his life? What compels a parent to be so controlling as to cut off part of their son's penis without permission, and to think that it is their "right as a parent" all the while? I have raised intact children, and I have to say the big hygiene issue that people like to whine about simply is not an issue. Teach them to clean themselves, and there will be no problems. I don't understand why anyone in their right mind would rather cut up their child's penis and then put the thing, wound and all, in a cr@#py diaper.



**Elizabeth frantes** 19 hours ago [in reply to Joshua Baker](#)

You know, this could be applied to \*any\* medical Tx of a surgical nature. It could mean that "children" shouldn't be given any drugs, either. So . . . would you anticirc smegma fans want Christian Science rules to apply to children for everything? No surgery of any kind? After all, \*any\* surgery is trauma. And once again, the only real reason anyone is anticirc is due to a foreskin fetish.



**ml66uk** 17 hours ago [in reply to Elizabeth frantes](#)

It could and should be applied to cutting any normal healthy living body parts.

Are you against female circumcision because of a fetish? Didn't think so. Females produce more smegma than males btw, but they seem to get by without surgery.

Why don't we just let people decide for themselves whether or not they want parts of their genitals cut off or not? It's \*their\* body.



**Craig** 17 hours ago [in reply to Elizabeth frantes](#)

Remember that newborn circumcision is medically \*unnecessary\*. It is the removal of \*healthy\* tissue for cultural or religious reasons. It is not medical care, so you can't compare it to medically necessary surgeries.



**Elizabeth frantes** 19 hours ago [in reply to Joshua Baker](#)

Oh, by the way ... your "interest" in "helping" a small boy clean out his foreskin is kinda creepy. Just saying . . .well, one of the most common excuses incestuous daddies use is "I was just trying to teach him/her about sex" . . . one could make a case that your "raising intact children" was an interest in playing with their penises. Let's remember that almost all molestations are done by a parent or caregiver.



**Joshua Baker** 18 hours ago [in reply to Elizabeth frantes](#)

Um. Wow. My comment was about a parent teaching a kid basic hygiene, not raping them. Do you understand the difference?

If you are too afraid to teach your kids how to be responsible and take care of themselves, please don't have kids.



**Nelly Ninja** 13 hours ago [in reply to Elizabeth frantes](#)

Because a mohel sucking blood from the baby's penis isn't molestation at all.



**ml66uk** 17 hours ago

What's "bizarre" is not that people are trying to get circumcision banned, but that anyone is cutting off parts off the genitals of small boys in the first place.

It's illegal to cut off a girl's prepuce, or to make any incision on a girl's genitals, even if no tissue is removed. Why don't boys get the same protection? Everyone should be able to decide for themselves whether they want parts of their genitals cut off. It's \*their\* body.

It's worth remembering that no-one except for Jewish people and Muslims would even be having this discussion if it weren't for the fact that 19th century doctors thought that

- a) masturbation caused various physical and mental problems (including epilepsy, convulsions, paralysis, tuberculosis etc), and
- b) circumcision stopped masturbation.

Both of those sound ridiculous today I know, but how that's how they thought back then, and that's how non-religious circumcision got started. If you don't believe me, then google this: "A Short History of Circumcision in North America In the Physicians' Own Words". Heck, they even passed laws against "self-pollution" as it was called.



**TLCTugger** 13 hours ago



It's settled law that the 1st amendment doesn't grant the right to harm or neglect a child in the name of religion. Just ask a Snake Handler (children may not handle by law), Jehovah's Witness (denial of blood transfusion banned), Christian Scientist (denial of medical treatment banned), Latter Day Saint (forced child marriage banned), or Muslim (genital cutting of females banned).

The 14th amendment demands equal protection under the law. We can't FAIL to protect someone from harm just because of his gender or his parents' faith.

Circumcision is NOT a medical procedure when there is no diagnosis of defect or disease, and no record of other less-destructive remedies tried before resorting to the drastic last-resort step of amputation. "Male" is not a diagnosis. Foreskin is not a birth defect.

Not one national medical association on earth (not even Israel's) endorses routine circumcision.

Foreskin feels REALLY good. HIS body, HIS decision.



**Yeoman Roman** 7 hours ago

Excellent replies to Elizabeth frantes, who clearly has something odd going on....?

I am so loving the idea of getting this ban on the ballot -and in different cities. We used to be thought of as an odd bunch of grassroots folks. We are small in number, but we are having a swell of support. I hope both bills pass and become law.

I was born a Jew and deeply resent having my sexual organs purposely damaged in this way. Yes, it does affect your sex life negatively. No, there should be no religious exceptions, just like there were none for the FGM law.

Having people think they are being "religious" by cutting kids genitals is to me deeply bizarre. We are talking about a Bronze Age blood ritual, that probably served as a substitute for full child sacrifice! Tradition it may be, but it is by no means ethical. And Jews have modified circumcision extensively, from Bris Milah, to Periah, to Mezitzah B'Peh. Yuck for all 3.

In America it is about the money. Circumcision is approximately a billion dollar industry in the USA. For doctors it is an easy cash cow with little risk, they push for it all the time.

Oppose FGM? - I do. Then you should stop MGM here. -African cultures argue quite logically that their "cultural practices" on girls are special and important to them, just as male circumcision is important for us. They feel validated in FGM, when we continue MGM.

Supporting male circumcision of infants is sexist. Boys right to their complete bodies should matter. Human Rights are for everyone.

I have intact boys ages 9 and 12. They will be taught to rinse when the time comes. There is nothing I have to do. Foreskins are low maintenance and high satisfaction.

I am very glad to give them the gift of wholeness, something that sadly, was denied to me.



**J** 50 minutes ago

Baby boy penis part removal should already be considered illegal under the 1996 federal law banning genital cutting -- 14th Amendment equal protection clause. Those saying that preventing the cutting off of penis parts of a baby boy violates the cutter's freedom of religion, are way out there in irrational land. One's religion ends where their knife touches another human's body. The idea that another human's ritual (rite) trumps one's right to body parts is insane and creepy. Baby boy penis parts removal cuts off thousands of fine touch and

stretch nerves. This is like disconnecting the fingertips or lips from the brain. No human should be subjected to sensory system harm as well as a forced decrease of sexual function and PLEASURE for life!