



October 17, 2018
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#ENDINTERSEXSURGERY

VOICES4 AND THE INTERSEX JUSTICE PROJECT (IJP) WILL STAGE A DEMONSTRATION AT THE NEW YORK - PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL / WEILL CORNELL MEDICAL SCHOOL DEMANDING AN END TO MEDICALLY UNNECESSARY, NON CONSENSUAL SURGERY ON INTERSEX YOUTH.

NEW YORK —The Intersex Justice Project in collaboration with Voices4 will stage a demonstration **Saturday, October 27th, at 2PM**, at New York-Presbyterian Hospital /Weill Cornell Medical College. The action comes one day after Intersex Awareness Day, which marks the date of the first public protest by intersex individuals in Boston outside an American Academy of Pediatrics meeting in 1996.

What is Intersex: “Intersex” refers to people who are born with any of a range of physical sex characteristics that don’t fit typical notions about male or female bodies. Variations may be in their chromosomes, genitals, or internal organs like testes or ovaries. Some intersex traits are identified at birth, while others may not be discovered until puberty or later in life. As many as 1.7% of people are born with intersex traits – about the same number who are born with red hair.

What does “Intersex Surgery” mean: For many years, medicine has viewed babies born with atypical sex characteristics as needing to be “fixed.” Approximately 1 in 2000 babies are born intersex and at risk of early unnecessary medical intervention – extensive, involuntary surgeries for no other reason than to make their bodies conform to traditional notions of what it means to be male or female. Many of these surgeries change the appearance or sexual function of a child’s genitals such as clitoral reductions, removal of functional testes, and vaginoplasties. The vast majority of these surgeries are not medically necessary and should instead be delayed until the individual can decide whether cosmetic surgery is wanted. Some intersex people grow up without ever knowing about the procedures they underwent as children. Others were told that surgery was necessary, only to find out later that this was not true.

Why we are protesting: These medical interventions often cause physical and psychological harm. Evidence is increasingly showing the harms of surgeries performed without informed consent, which include pain, loss of sensitivity, scarring, and even sterilization, as well as psychological consequences like PTSD and the risk that the sex assigned will not match one’s gender identity. Because of these risks, intersex surgeries are now considered human rights violations by groups like the United Nations, the World Health Organization, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Physicians for Human Rights. However, such procedures are not directly prohibited in the United States, and they are still performed by a small group of specialists across the country. Intersex youth and adults today talk about the consequences suffered as a result of unwanted surgeries, including depression, anxiety, and issues with trust and intimacy in relationships. While parents and doctors may act with the best intentions, rushing to “fix” an intersex child’s bodily difference most often does much more harm than good. Unfortunately, parents may feel pressured into making irreversible decisions about their children’s bodies before the child can choose what, if any, medical procedures they desire. *No one should be subjected to a forced sex change, and this is especially true for intersex children who aren’t able to consent.*

Why at New York Presbyterian Hospital /Weill Cornell Medical College: Dr. Dix Poppas, Chief of Pediatric Urology at New York-Presbyterian Hospital-Weill Cornell Medical Center, is a leading provider of these nonconsensual and medically unnecessary surgeries. Poppas said in an interview that delaying surgery would mean “forcing them to grow up as girls—which we know they are...with genitalia that doesn’t align with their gender.” What Poppas does not understand is that everyone is entitled to discover their own gender identity as they grow up. Sean Saifa Wall, co-founder of the Intersex Justice Project, is a survivor of medical violence at this hospital. Although born with undescended testes and XY chromosomes, he was assigned female at birth but now identifies as male. He didn’t learn the truth until he retrieved his medical records and states, “I was castrated at New-York Presbyterian Hospital by Dr. Terry Hensle when I was 13 years old. As an institution, this Hospital has and continues to harbor

practitioners that continue to advocate for intersex genital mutilation such as Dr. Hensle, Dr. Dix Poppas and Dr. Anke Ehrhardt, a protege of Dr. John Money--and it needs to end.”

We Demand: That New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical College 1) Declare a public apology to the intersex patients they have harmed and formally support intersex-led patient advocacy efforts in medicine and beyond; 2) Develop a patient-focused policy that bans all non-consensual intersex genital surgeries and forced hormone therapies that are not life-saving; 3) Provide reparations in the form of free medical care that does not position intersex variations as problems to be “fixed”. This includes providing hormones and psychological support for intersex people and their parents; 4) Immediate disciplinary measures against Dix Poppas for perpetuating the human rights violations of IGM of intersex children.

Attendees will include: Intersex activists Sean Saifa Wall and Pidgeon Pagonis, Intersex Supermodel Hanne Gaby, Ru Paul’s Drag Race’s Milk, sexual assault activist and artist Zeke Thomas, NBC Rise’s Ellie Desautels & Angus O’Brien, activist Adam Eli.

About Voices4: Voices4 is a direct action advocacy group dedicated to advancing human rights for the LGBTQIA+ community worldwide. Our goal is to draw attention to human rights violations around the world and to hold the international community to a high standard in the treatment of LGBTQIA+ individuals around the world.

About Intersex Justice Project: The Intersex Justice Project (IJP) is an intersex people of color (POC) led group that launched the #EndIntersexSurgery campaign in Chicago last year, and seeks to end medically invasive and unnecessary surgeries on intersex children in the United States.

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#EndIntersexSurgery

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