

# Reproductive Justice is intersectional

Medical abuse against intersex people is part of a long and continuing history of efforts to control the bodies, lives, and families of marginalized populations. This includes forced sterilization on the basis of race, disability, poverty, and incarceration, and efforts to ban, criminalize, or limit access to abortion, contraception, assisted reproduction, and other reproductive health choices. All of these harmful practices or policies affect some intersex people.

Policies that define womanhood by reproductive capacity continue the practice of picking and choosing what traits make someone “allowed” to be considered a woman, a practice historically weaponized against women of color.

## Intersex men are impacted, too:

Men with intersex variations may suffer the loss of future reproductive options due to involuntary childhood surgeries that remove gamete-producing gonadal tissue, such as when testes are removed (often as part of cementing a female sex assignment that is ultimately incorrect for them).

Other times, when a person with a penile variation could contribute to a pregnancy via assisted insemination, a doctor’s biases about “traditional male fertility” requiring heterosexual intercourse can motivate unnecessary genital surgeries that negatively impact their health. Intersex men who have a uterus may experience medical discrimination if they wish to carry a pregnancy.

# Learn more about reproductive justice








<b>Reproductive Justice Now</b> Sparkrj.org	<b>Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective</b> SisterSong.net
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<b>National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice</b> Latinalnstitute.org	<b>Unite for Reproductive &amp; Gender Equity</b> Urge.org
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<b>Birth Justice</b> ElephantCircle.net	<b>Lawyering for Reproductive Justice</b> IfWhenHow.org
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*interACT works to empower intersex youth and advance the rights of all people with innate variations in their physical sex characteristics through advocacy, public engagement and community connection.*

## Get In Touch

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# Reproductive Justice Matters to Intersex People, Too!



## What is reproductive justice?

Black women developed the concept of reproductive justice to recognize that practical and systemic factors like power, oppression, and access barriers must be addressed before a right to “choice” can have real meaning. This is especially true for women of color along with other marginalized communities. Abortion and the right not to have children had dominated reproductive rights work at the time.

**Reproductive justice uplifts the right to have children and parent one’s children with dignity, in a world free from reproductive violence.**



## Intersex rights are necessary for reproductive justice

Throughout history, intersex children have been subjected to invasive and non-consensual medical interventions that can be sterilizing, stripping them of their reproductive freedom by taking away their capacity to reproduce.

**Reproductive justice for intersex people means preserving their freedom to make informed decisions about their own reproductive health including their future reproductive options.**

## Nonconsensual medical interventions threaten fertility

Gonadectomy, or surgically removing the ovarian or testicular tissue, is a sterilizing procedure because it prevents the production of gametes – sperm cells or eggs – needed for reproduction. Gonadectomies also end natural hormone production by the testes or ovaries, which affects a person’s bone health and requires lifelong hormone replacement therapy (HRT), including to initiate puberty. People with variations like androgen insensitivity, 5-alpha-reductase deficiency, 17-beta-HSD3 deficiency, and ovotestes are commonly at risk for childhood gonadectomies.

Clitoral reduction surgery not only impacts sexual function, but can also negatively impact fertility; the clitoris’s role in arousal causes changes in vaginal bloodflow, pH, and shape that temporarily promote successful sperm transport and therefore reproduction. Non-consensual surgery that removes clitoral tissue can disrupt this chain reaction, inducing “reproductive disability.”\*



**Reproductive technologies may include: IVF, uterus transplants, gonadal tissue cryopreservation, and much more!**

## What should policymakers know?

**Existing protections are not enough: intersex people are still being targeted for involuntary sterilization – most commonly in infancy and early childhood – while laws that guard against this are ignored.**

Failing to prevent this discriminatory practice implicitly allows an “intersex exception” to a fundamental right.

When it comes to protecting intersex rights, listen to impacted individuals. While supportive doctors and families are incredible allies, parents’ and medical experts’ perspectives may not always align first and foremost with safeguarding an intersex infant’s right to self-determination and reproductive freedom.

Like legal protections against the involuntary sterilization of disabled individuals, legal protections for intersex children in this context are crucial to ensure their fundamental rights are upheld.

## What should reproductive justice organizations know?

Don’t exclude intersex people because of misconceptions. Myths that intersex people cannot reproduce biologically, or would not choose to if reproductive technologies were made available, are harmful when they lead advocates to neglect intersex people’s rights and access needs.

\*Roy J. Levin, *The Clitoris – An Appraisal of its Reproductive Function* (2019).