

YOUTH&I

Issue 2



2021

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Issue 2

YOUTH&I acknowledges the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this book was created.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge that the land is stolen land, which we benefit from occupying, and that sovereignty was never ceded.

YOUTH&I extends this acknowledgement to all First Nations peoples around the world on whose lands these entries were created.

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Special thanks to our translators who have helped make it possible to publish works from around the world: **Laura Inter, Magda Rakita, Free, Macarena Muru, Yulia Dwi Andriyanti, Stephan Mills, Otto Etraud, Audrey Aegerter and Alicja Krawczun-Rygmaczewska**. We have faithfully tried to translate the original texts though at times have preferenced keeping essence and style over a literal translation.

This anthology includes themes of coerced medical intervention and IGM (intersex genital mutilation), trauma, suicidality and nudity. Information on some regional support organisations are provided at the end of the publication.

Foreword

Welcome to Issue 2 of YOUTh&I! YOUTh&I is an intersex youth publication with stories reflecting experiences of living with an intersex body in a world still struggling to understand what intersex means.

Intersex people are born with variations in sex characteristics. These variations cover a range of different body types that do not fit expectations for typically female or male bodies. While our bodies may look very different to each other, we share in common risks of stigma and harm. Intersex people routinely face surgery without personal consent and other interventions to 'normalise' our bodies, even where there is no medical need. Little consideration is given to the long-term mental and physical health impacts of these interventions nor to the importance of connection with other intersex people before they are undertaken. The stories in Issue 2 reveal how these experiences are common across all regions of the world and can have devastating impacts on us and our relationships with people in our lives.

There have been some shifts in the intersex policy landscape since the publication of Issue 1 in 2019. More countries now prohibit unnecessary

medical interventions on intersex people without personal consent and two Australian jurisdictions are working towards developing legislation to this effect. Nevertheless, the longer-term impacts of these changes are yet to be seen and legislative change, in and of itself, cannot change everything. It will take time, education and cultural change to reduce stigma, misunderstanding and discrimination, improve access to good health care, and ensure resourcing for intersex community support. For these changes to be seen, it is essential that the words and stories of intersex people themselves are heard.

Young intersex people are rarely given agency in decision-making about their medical care. Decisions are often made for us, by doctors or parents, commonly based on assumptions about what we should look like and what we should do with our bodies, and grounded in fear of difference. We are often told to be silent and not share our experiences. Frequently, we are told we are the only one or one in a million. For those of us who do want to talk, too often it feels like no one could possibly understand. We are too different, too unheard of, too shameful. Instead, we are told about our bodies, about who we are,

and about what was done to us. Few people listen and ask us what we want.

This issue's theme 'It's their turn to listen' is directed at these experiences. YOUTH&I shares the creative works of young intersex people, aged 30 and younger. These stories discuss the struggles of not being heard, the frustration at people making assumptions about what intersex is and the frustration in some of our relationships with family members, friends and people close to us who misunderstand or choose not to listen. More than this, though, these stories reflect our relationships with ourselves and our own bodies, the moments of loss but also of rebuilding, of not knowing where we belong in the world around us but finding moments of belonging in ourselves. In this issue you can see the places where we have found each other, where we heal together and where we speak out about what has happened to us. These stories are a call from across the world for people to listen to what we have to say and to do something about it. Our hope is that by sharing these stories, these experiences will become memories that are not relived by each generation of intersex people.

YOUTH&I seeks to elevate these voices. To this end, we have sought to reach out to even more young intersex people, particularly those who are heard the least. In this issue we have accepted contributions from intersex people in any language and have worked with translators to publish works both in their original language and in English. We are delighted to have received and published stories from every

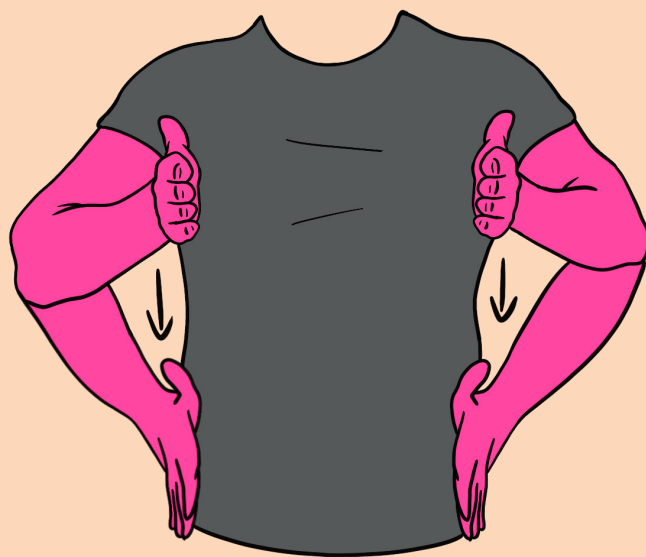
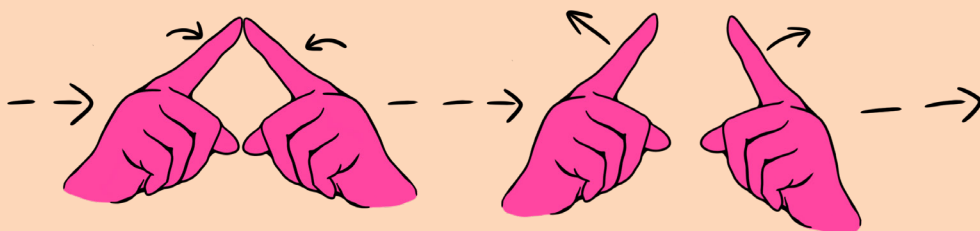
region of the world—but we acknowledge there is ongoing work to do to ensure intersex people everywhere can contribute to and be involved in global initiatives which are largely conducted in English. We give great thanks to our translators who have made it possible for us to engage with more intersex people in this issue.

We also give huge thanks to Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA) who have generously supported YOUTH&I. IHRA's assistance has allowed us to support young intersex creatives as well as involve intersex people in the entire development of this issue. We are proud to have been able to support the work and development of young intersex people particularly during such a difficult time. COVID-19 has had devastating impacts across the world and has hurt intersex people and communities in unique ways, including difficulties in access to health care and mental health support, disruption of supply of necessary medications and exacerbated social isolation. These challenging times remain with us for now but at least, through all of this, it is wonderful to bring something positive to our communities and into the world—we present to you, Issue 2 of YOUTH&I.

Steph Lum, Editor-in-chief

Georgia Andrews, Stakeholder manager

December 2021



Auslan (Australian Sign Language) signs for 'diverse' and 'body'

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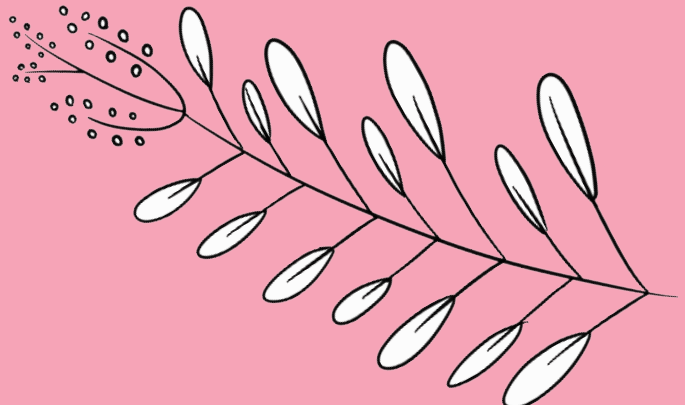
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Kintsugi of the self

GABRIEL FILPI

I found myself in intimacy,
In the arms of others who held me tight
and embraced a form I only saw before,
as a sum of mismatched pieces.

Squeezed together under the pressure of their comfort,
That held everything together.
To be seen as whole, as beautiful, as strong
When through my eyes everything was fragile.

I know that I am not fragile.

It took time,
How much, I can't say;
To fill each crack with gold.
Reform,
Reclaim.

No longer through another's lens did I need to see myself.
Not a sculpture carved of unyielding stone,
But one drawn together from clay, by loving hands
Into infinite forms, worked and reworked,
Molded into the shape of a man, pieced together by rivers of gold.

It runs through my veins,
Free flowing.
Like Midas I spread it
wherever I go.
Kindness, and love

A reminder that you
are always enough.



Don't tell anyone

IRENE KUZEMKO

"Why do you have to be so detailed and share everything about yourself to everyone?"

"Don't mention the testicle that you had, why do you have to mention it?"

"Don't come out to this elderly relative, it'll kill them!"

"No, I will never tell anyone about the activism that you do and the topic you're working on."

I made this photo after a long day of arguing with a family member, and it is about the burning pain of being told "don't tell anyone". Even after being out for years, I feel pushed back into the closet by family members. I'm proud to be intersex, I accept and love my body, and I refuse to hide. I wish my family could support me in this.



Qué somos Who we are

MACARENA MURU

Un tercer sexo
freaks de circo, un fetiche
monstruos mitológicos

¡No!

Cuerpos enfermos
síndromes, anomalías
emergencias clínicas

¡No!

Somos intersex
Con la carne de nuestros cuerpos
vinimos a desmontar el mito
En el cielo
el grito resiliente

¡Fuera sus bisturís de nuestros cuerpos!
¡Fuera sus bisturís de nuestros cuerpos!
¡Fuera sus bisturís de nuestros cuerpos!

Habrán mutilado nuestros genitales
pero no podrán amputar nuestras
gargantas

A third sex
circus freaks, fetishes
mythical creatures

No!

Tainted bodies
anomalies, syndromes
health emergencies

No!

We are intersex
The flesh of our bodies
strips the myth
Our resilient cry
pierces the air

Scalpels away!
Scalpels away!
Scalpels away!

They may have mutilated our bodies
but they can't amputate our voice

Un cuerpo entre muchos

A body among many

MACARENA MURU

Un cuerpo se contrae
con una varilla de metal adentro
No transpira
cuando corre
No se comunica
por dentro

A body shrinks
with a metal tube inside
No perspiration
outside
No connection
inside

Un cuerpo crece gracias
a la potencia de hormonas sintéticas
Un cuerpo vaciado
por dentro
Lampión
por fuera

A body develops
with the aid of synthetic hormones
A body emptied
inside
Hairless
outside

Es sólo un cuerpo entre muchos
¿o muchos cuerpos solos
entre muchos otros?

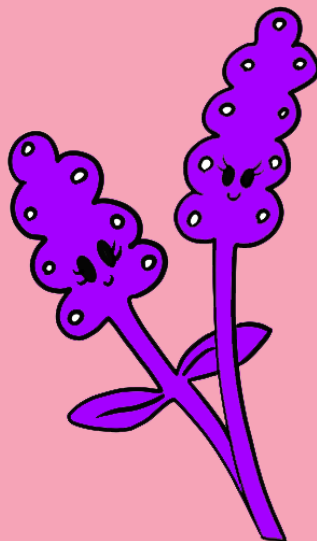
A body alone among many
or are there many bodies alone
among many others?

Jesteś tak blisko, że mnie nie słyszysz

ZUZA PIONTKE

Trzy lata temu dokonałam mojego pierwszego coming outu i podzieliłam się historią życia z MRKH (Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser syndrome). Był to jeden z najtrudniejszych i ważniejszych momentów w moim życiu, który czasem wciąż ma przykre konsekwencje, ma wpływ na moje relacje i sposób, w jaki jestem odbierana. Jednak nie żałuję tego, że postanowiłam podzielić się swoją historią i tym samym wspierać osoby, które tego potrzebują. Niestety szybko zostało mi narzucone bycie osobą interplciową, bez uprzedniego wyjaśnienia co to oznacza, i zostałam zaproszona do społeczności, której w tamtym momencie nie chciałam być częścią. Wszystko to było dla mnie wtedy zupełnie niezrozumiałe. Moja niechęć wynikała z niewiedzy, niepewności i strachu, bo było to dla mnie zupełnie nowe doświadczenie. Chyba po prostu się bałam. A nie dla wszystkich było to jasne - bo przecież skoro zabierasz głos i dzielisz się swoją historią, to istnieje założenie, że jesteś odważna, wszystko przepracowałaś i jesteś w stanie sobie ze wszystkim poradzić. Ale ja tak się nie czułam.

Dopiero kilka miesięcy temu zaczęłam określać siebie jako interplciową kobietę. I po raz kolejny, to jak ja definiuję siebie zostało wystawione na próbę. Podczas udzielania wywiadu jedna z dziennikarek zaczęła podważać bycie bezpestkową (osobą z MRKH) jako bycie osobą interplciową. Zaraz potem ktoś uznał, że przecież to nic nowego i mój bezpestkowy coming out był jednoznaczny z definiowaniem siebie jako inter (osoba interplciowa).



Wychodzi na to, że ponieważ mam MRKH jestem gdzieś pomiędzy byciem kobietą a byciem queer, wiecznie niewystarczająca i niedopasowana. Przynajmniej to najczęstsza narracja o osobach z MRKH. Niektórzy uważają, że nie należy nam się przynależność do kobiecych kręgów z powodu braku miesiączki i niemożności zajścia w ciążę. Ale z drugiej strony, ponieważ większość z nas jest na siłę wciskana w heteronormatywną szufladkę trudniej jest nam stać się częścią queerowej społeczności, do której część z nas chce należeć, ale nie może się w niej odnaleźć.

Osoby bezpestkowe są uciszane. W Polsce mało który lekarz jest w stanie udzielić nam pomocy. Ciągłe musimy ich edukować, udawać i dostosowywać się, a gdy już zabieramy głos, to okazuje się, że musimy dopasować się do przestrzeni, która została nam dana. W ciągu ostatnich trzech lat zrozumiałam, że dawanie komuś przestrzeni na wypowiedź jest nie tylko bardzo ważne, ale również stanowi wyzwanie. Osoby sojusznicze nie powinny naciskać na kogoś, żeby dzielił się swoją historią lub określać go w konkretny sposób. To wydaje się całkiem proste i logiczne, ale w tym wszystkim łatwo się zatracić i zbliżyć na tyle, że przestajemy słyszeć osobę, której dajemy przestrzeń do wypowiedzi. Bycie sojusznikiem wymaga nie tylko chęci do działania, ale także dużej dawki empatii i chęci słuchania, co nie każdy ma lub jest w stanie zaoferować. Jeśli chcesz być dobrym sojusznikiem, musisz pamiętać, że ktoś dzieli się z tobą swoim doświadczeniem i że stajesz się odpowiedzialny za przesłanie tej osoby.

Chciałabym po prostu móc działać bez zastanawiania się jak ktoś będzie mnie odbierał, co ktoś o mnie pomyśli, jak zinterpretuje to, co powiedziałam lub zrobiłam. Chciałabym móc działać nie myśląc o tym, że muszę się pilnować, by dostosować się do czyichś zasad. Chciałabym przestać myśleć o tym, jak aktywizm wpływa na moje codzienne życie. Bez przerwy się tego boję i jestem już zmęczona tym strachem. Chcę w końcu móc myśleć o sobie i się za to nie obwiniać.

*Bezpestkowe to projekt założony w 2018 roku, którego celem jest nie tylko aktywne wspieranie osób z zespołem Mayera-Rokitansky'ego-Küsterera-Hausera, ale także podnoszenie świadomości i edukacja społeczeństwa. Nazwa odnosi się do nasienia owocu i porównuje je do macicy—owoc pestkowy różni się od owocu bez pestek tylko tym, że ma nasienie, które przecież niczego nie definiuje. bezpestkowe.pl/

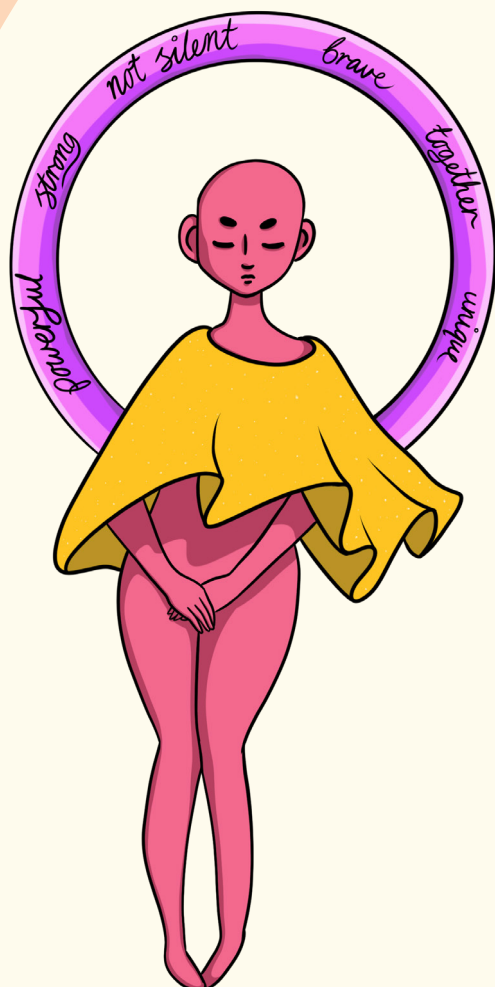
You're so close you can't hear me

ZUZA PIONTKE

Three years ago, I came out for the first time and shared my story of living with MRKH (Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser syndrome). It was one of the most difficult and important moments in my life, which sometimes still has unpleasant consequences, affects my relationships and the way I am perceived. However, I do not regret choosing to share this about myself as it has been able to support people who need it. Quite quickly though, the label 'intersex' was imposed on me without any explanation of what it meant and I was invited into a community I didn't want to be a part of. It was all completely incomprehensible to me at the time. My reluctance was caused by ignorance, uncertainty, and fear because it was a completely new experience. I guess I was just scared. This was not clear to everyone because, if you speak up and share your story, there is an assumption that you are brave, that you have worked everything out, and that you can deal with anything. But I didn't feel that way.

It wasn't until a few months ago that I began to define myself as an intersex woman. How I defined myself was challenged once again. During an interview, one of the journalists started to question whether being seedless* (having MRKH) meant being intersex. Then some people I told about my experience said that it was nothing new and my coming out as seedless was synonymous with defining myself as inter (intersex). It seems that because I have MRKH, I'm considered somewhere between being a woman and being queer, always inadequate and mismatched. At least, this is the most common narrative about people with MRKH. Some people think we do not deserve to belong in women's circles due to our absence of menstruation and inability to get pregnant. Yet because heteronormative ideas are forced upon most of us, it is also difficult to become part of the queer community, where some of us want to belong but find it challenging to fit in.

Seedless people are silenced. In Poland, very few doctors are able to help us. We still have to educate them, pretend and adjust, and when we speak we must fit in to a space predefined for us. Over the past three years, I have realised that giving someone space to speak is very important but also challenging. Allies can't force someone to share their story or define themselves in a specific way. It seems pretty logical and straightforward, but in all of this, it is easy to get lost and get so close that we stop hearing the person who we invited to express themselves in the first place.



Being an ally requires not only a willingness to act but also a large dose of empathy and willingness to listen, which not everyone has or is able to do. If you want to be a good ally, you must remember that someone is sharing their experience with you and that you become responsible for that person's message.

I just wish I could act without thinking about how others will perceive me and how they will interpret what I say or do. I wish I could act without feeling like I need to comply with someone else's rules. I wish I could stop always thinking about how my activism impacts my daily life. I am constantly afraid of all these things and I'm tired of this fear. I want to finally be able to think about myself and not blame myself for it.

* Bezpestkowe (Seedless) is a project founded in 2018 that aims not only to actively support people with Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser syndrome, but also to raise awareness and educate the public. The name refers to the seed of fruit and compares it to the uterus—stone fruit differs from seedless fruit only by having a seed, which after all does not define anything. bezpestkowe.pl/

Mientras tanto seré nómade

OTTO ETRAUD



In this life, given the way others told us it was, I didn't know where my place was or where I belonged



Inhabiting this body I have been many, I was so many



Who am I in this middle space? What am I?
Is this really being in the middle?

In the meantime, I'll be a nomad



I'm waiting to see the fall of the gender-sex system



In the meantime, I'll be a nomad

My experience of being intersex and pregnant

SAM

As an intersex non-binary person, I want to share parts of my personal experiences with pregnancy and parenthood. Gender identity is independent from being intersex. Not all intersex people are non-binary, though I am. I can sometimes relate in some way to the experience of trans fathers or non-binary parents, but not entirely. While their stories with parenthood need to gain visibility, the stories of intersex people and parenthood need to be more visible too. There are many ways for intersex people to become parents!

The moment I had the positive pregnancy test in my hand, I was overwhelmed with emotion. I was shocked, I was afraid, I was happily surprised but felt stupid and ashamed. I didn't expect that this test would turn out to be positive. I even felt stupid to do a test in the first place as it felt unnecessary and ridiculously absurd. At first I just sat in the bathroom staring at the plastic stick with two stripes in my hand. I felt like I was in a movie—it seemed like a joke to me. Then I lay down on my bed and stared at the ceiling. I lay there for a while

thinking, 'What? What?! No! This can't be really happening!' Later, I called my best friend. Saying 'I am pregnant' felt wrong. Instead, I said, 'I just took a pregnancy test and it is positive.' We were both shocked. It seemed so absurd, so unreal. We were in shock but laughing. When we hung up, I sat thinking on the sofa. Two or three hours later, the reality broke over me like a cold wave and I couldn't stop crying. I felt so afraid and ashamed.

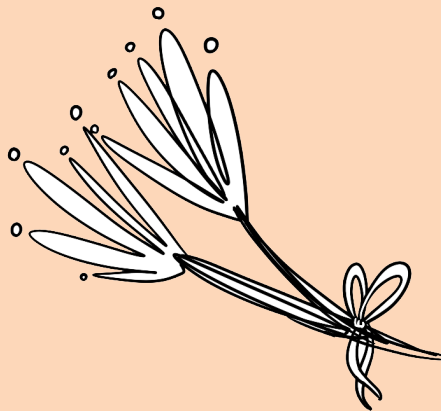
One doctor once told me that if I ever want to get pregnant, I should directly come to see her and not to bother trying. Another gynaecologist claimed that winning the lottery was more likely. I thought I would probably never be pregnant and told myself, 'I am fine with that'. I didn't want to get my hopes up. At the time, I didn't want kids anyway. I thought about co-parenting with queer friends or having a child with a girlfriend who could become pregnant, but later adoption also crossed my mind. This was a hypothetical option and not urgent. Even though I really like kids, I knew this was not the only life-fulfilling plan.

I tried not to worry about never having a child. I thought that becoming pregnant, if even possible, was going to be a complicated procedure and I disliked the thought of taking even more hormonal treatments than what I used to take. In the past I had stopped taking hormones several times despite my doctors' disapproval since they didn't make me feel good. So, you can imagine my surprise at finding out I was pregnant.

At the time, I was a 25-year-old student. I used to have depressive episodes sometimes and I was in therapy. I had only just met the intersex community and learned about this aspect of my life. Connecting with intersex people was essential for me. I am so lucky to have met these amazing people who empowered me. I was also in the process of figuring out more about my gender identity which I was struggling with. I assumed that being more open about my non-binary identity and taking some steps to transition in a more 'masculine' direction, like having a mastectomy, would be my next life-altering experience. My boyfriend and I were also in a one-year

long relationship. He was 23 and lived abroad. As we didn't want to be apart, he came for a few months to where I lived. It was the first time I had a good and healthy relationship with a cis guy, but we were young and hadn't known each other for a long time.

I discovered I was pregnant because one day I started feeling weird. At first, I didn't really worry about it. I was convinced I couldn't get pregnant and we were mostly using protection. After a while I realised I felt even worse than usual about my breasts. I couldn't get the thought out of my head, 'What if I get pregnant without realising it, because I am convinced it's impossible?' I decided to do a test. I was convinced it would turn out to be negative and I just wanted to stop worrying. When I saw the result, I first felt shame that I wasn't careful enough about contraception. I felt I had behaved irresponsibly. I felt guilty for ending up in this situation. I thought everybody would judge me for being pregnant in my situation. I felt dumb to have trusted the doctors.



I thought I probably misunderstood the risk and should have known better. I believed I was unable to raise a child due to my mental health, my struggles with my identity and body, my financial instability, my studies, and the uncertainty about my relationship. I thought everybody would judge me unfit to be a parent. I was afraid of all the responsibility and the prospect of raising a child alone. I had contradictory emotions. Sometimes, I was happy and in a weird and illogical way almost proud to be pregnant. I liked the idea of having a child, but there were too many reasons not to keep it.

Two days after the test I went to a new gynaecologist to confirm the pregnancy. I didn't want to go back to my old one. I changed gynaecologists many times in the past as I felt uncomfortable with the way they treated me and talked to me. The pregnancy was confirmed and I was told I was in the 6th week of pregnancy. I was shown the heartbeat, given an ultrasound image and the contact details of the doctor doing the abortions. It took me one month to decide. It was a hard month and probably the most difficult decision in my life. I had to figure out what I really wanted—I was afraid I would regret the abortion. My new doctor told me that it was unbelievably unlikely that I got pregnant. She said, 'You never know, but it might be your only chance.' While I worried I would never get pregnant again, this wasn't the only thing that influenced my decision. It did however influence my perception of the pregnancy. I had three appointments in the abortion clinic and I cancelled the first one a day

after making it. I went to the second one a week later. After talking to the doctor, he gave me a pill to take the day before my third appointment. The evening before the last appointment, when the operation should have happened, I decided to have the baby. The decision felt right for my boyfriend and me. I was lucky that I had the time until the 12th week to make up my mind. I am grateful for the important work the people at the abortion clinic are doing. Thanks to them, I really had a choice. While making my decision I realised how supportive people around me were. I felt like I could overcome all difficulties. I made this decision because it felt right at that moment—the positive feelings overcame the doubts and fears. Everybody should have the option to choose and make an informed decision.

Once I made my decision, I was afraid to lose the pregnancy due to my intersex variation. My gynaecologist and endocrinologist told me not to worry but I didn't trust them. It felt as if they just didn't want me to be afraid. I scrolled through the internet to figure out the risks and read about people with the same variation struggling to get pregnant or losing multiple pregnancies. I also found information online about what disorders or problems children of mothers with my variation might have. I didn't worry about having an intersex child but there were worrisome health issues mentioned. I didn't know which sources to trust. I was worried during pregnancy and on top of all of that I was struggling with my identity.

There has never been a time in my life where I was perceived and addressed as much as a woman, a mother and as feminine. This made me feel uncomfortable. I also felt bad about my breasts. I felt wrong both in medical settings and birth preparation classes. The latter was very cis-heteronormative and binary. It amplified ideological ideas about what was supposedly natural in birth and what was the best and right ways to give birth. It reinforced sexist ideas of the role motherhood entailed. The misogyny in the class and in society was not the only reason I felt uncomfortable. It isn't the reason I don't identify as a woman or mother either. I was uncomfortable in my body, being

continuously addressed as a woman, a mother and called by my wrong name. It made me feel sick. Instead of being empowered and out as an intersex nonbinary person and figuring out the next steps for my transition, I felt like I was stepping back inside the pathologising and cis-heteronormative closet. Generally, I felt out of my body and out of control. I didn't like going to all the doctor appointments. I didn't feel like myself and often felt deeply unhappy and ashamed.

In moments where I was most aware of my body like in the shower or during examinations, I felt a deep disgust and nausea.



But I liked the baby belly and feeling the baby move. And although I was afraid of the birth, I was looking forward to meeting the baby. Therapy helped a lot as well as my supportive friends and boyfriend.

I finally made it through pregnancy. After 21 hours of labor, I could hold my sweet baby in my arms. I felt a lot of pressure from the nurses and midwives in hospital, and from society in general, to breastfeed. Everyone gave me the impression that 'breast is best' no matter what. It was almost like you were harming your child if you do not breastfeed. I tried for the first three days but I felt very uncomfortable. It made me feel sick, sad and so frustrated. It made me want to slip out of my body and disappear. When I went home from the hospital, I stopped breastfeeding. I felt much happier. I loved giving the bottle. As my boyfriend could do it too, we shared the care work more equally.

At home I started feeling better. I was relieved about the birth of my baby. After a while I also felt as if my body was my own again. I tried not to care about the judgemental looks and unsolicited advice and comments. Talking with other feminist mothers was very helpful. I would love to further connect with queer, intersex or trans parents. I love my child and I am very happy about the decision I took. My toddler calls me by my name and not 'mama'. We talked about it to family members and daycare workers. Sometimes it's not easy to navigate the heteronormative and binary expectations of society. As a parent, I am still figuring things out and try to be seen for who I am.

For my child, I am trying to give them the support and love they need so they can find their own way, be strong the way they are and do what they like with pride. This should be the case for every child, whether they are intersex or not.



For when I feel broken, but can't explain it well

MIKAYLA RENEE

I am tired of being broken
but that is often how I feel
with pieces of me
lain in the ground
squandered and chipped
in sections as they were found.
Thought to be this one
but then to be that
of one and of the other
built differently, in fact.

Humble in stature
but not in style or flair
for the metal I am made of
is precious and rare.
People come to see it—
they gawk, they awe
and they stare.

Yet treasured and adorned
as my metal might come
it sits busted
in a garden patch
rusted—at night a shadow
in day collecting dust
mined from the earth
soldered and pressed
glued shut
framed into posture
the foundation removed
where the walls
split in two
and the pillars
even more—
grow rusted
and hollow
sitting twisted
broken, on the floor.



Toxic masculinity

MELYKURUTTA & STEPHAN MILLS

Come on, lift up my skirt
Satisfy your morbid curiosity
See what sex I am

Ambiguous
Can't decide
Why should I have to?

Lift up my skirt,
Have a laugh at me
At my legs

Too hairy
Too muscular
Still mine.

They tried to hurt me
To deflect their insecurity

Toxic.
Messed up.
Theirs.

Yours.

Intersexfobia Intersexphobia

MELYKURUTTA

Li sento in lontananza
Li sento in vicinanza

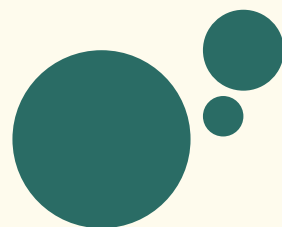
Ridono del mio corpo
Mi parlano di decoro

Quale decoro?
Quello che mi vuole morto.

I hear them from afar
Their words hit closer

They ridicule my body
Talking about decency

What decency?
The one that wants me dead.



¡Rompamos el silencio!

¡Visibilicemos la intersexualidad!

FREE

Cuando era pequeña siempre me pregunté si había algo malo en mí, constantemente pensaba en ello, pero nunca encontré respuesta alguna. Permíteme contarte lo que me sucedió.

Nací con una apariencia típica femenina, es decir genitales típicos femeninos, pero cuando tenía alrededor de los dos o tres años de edad, mi cuerpo comenzó a cambiar. Mi clítoris comenzó a crecer, me empezó a salir vello púbico y corporal, y pasé por el llamado gran estirón. En resumen, inicié la pubertad a esa edad, sin embargo, no era la típica pubertad por la que pasaban las niñas, por el contrario, era una pubertad más bien masculina.

Mis padres me llevaron al hospital, pero el endocrinólogo les dijo que no se preocuparan, que yo estaba perfectamente bien y que lo que me estaba ocurriendo era un proceso completamente normal; por lo que nunca recibí ningún tratamiento médico para

lo que me ocurría, así que mi cuerpo continuó virilizándose cada vez más y más.

Desde que mi cuerpo comenzó a cambiar, mis padres siempre me han insistido en mantener oculta y en silencio mi naturaleza intersexual, siempre me han dicho que no debo hablar de ello con nadie, ni siquiera con mis hermanas. Eso siempre me hizo sentir que había algo malo en mí, algo de lo que debía sentirme avergonzada, pero no lograba entender de qué se trataba y porqué tenía que ocultarlo.

Siempre tuve muchas dudas acerca de mi cuerpo, de mi apariencia, de mis genitales, pero nunca hablé de ello con nadie, no fui capaz de hacerlo porque era algo que me habían prohibido. Siempre me pregunté si era hombre o mujer porque mis genitales no eran del todo femeninos, en realidad yo no lucía femenina, y la gente solía decir — no a mí directamente, pero sí entre

ellos — que yo lucía como un hombre. En realidad, no me importaban mucho sus comentarios, pero siempre supe que era diferente, que lucía diferente, y necesitaba encontrar respuestas.

Años después decidí ir al doctor para saber si había algo malo en mí. Después de meses de revisiones médicas incómodas, a la edad de 15 años, me dijeron que tenía HSC (Hiperplasia Suprarrenal Congénita). Me sentí satisfecha, al fin había obtenido la respuesta que tanto había buscado, la explicación a todo lo que había vivido, aunque los médicos me dijeron que yo no era normal. Me dijeron que mi cuerpo debía ser “corregido” para no sentirme avergonzada cuando tuviera relaciones sexuales, pero yo nunca me había sentido de esa manera, hasta que me dijeron que yo no era una persona normal.

Creo que todas las personas intersexuales hemos tenido que lidiar con una variedad de situaciones difíciles que las personas endosexuales nunca tienen que enfrentar. Tenemos que lidiar incluso con nosotros mismos, con sentimientos y pensamientos horribles

que tenemos acerca de nuestros cuerpos, esos sentimientos y pensamientos provocados por los prejuicios de nuestros médicos. Desde que nacemos, nuestros doctores les dicen a nuestros padres que hay algo malo o incorrecto en nosotros, que por eso nuestros cuerpos deben ser “corregidos”, y que nosotros no necesitamos saber la verdad acerca de nuestra propia corporalidad. Nuestros padres son influenciados por esos prejuicios y deciden mantener nuestra variación intersexual en secreto, incluso nos la ocultan a nosotros mismos.

En mi caso, el médico nunca les dijo a mis padres que mantuvieran mi variación corporal en secreto. Al contrario, él dijo que todo estaba bien y que yo estaba completamente sana, sin embargo, mis padres decidieron mantenerlo todo en las sombras para, creo yo, protegerme del acoso, de la discriminación, de los prejuicios de la gente, de la misma sociedad, pero ya fue suficiente. Es tiempo de decir ¡BASTA! ¡Es tiempo de romper el silencio, de eliminar los prejuicios, de conocer la verdad! ¡Es momento de cambiar la Sociedad y vivir nuestras vidas! ¡Es el momento de vivir la verdad y la naturaleza de nuestros cuerpos!



Break the silence, raise intersex awareness!

FREE

When I was a child, I always wondered if there was something wrong with me. I kept thinking and thinking about it but I never had the answer. Let me tell you what happened.

Well, I was born like a typical female—I mean female genitals—but when I was two or three years old, my body started to change. My clitoris grew, pubic and body hair appeared, and I had a great growth spurt. In short, I entered puberty at that age. However, that puberty wasn't the one that typical girls usually experience but more like a male one.

My parents took me to the hospital but the endocrinologist told them not to worry about my situation. He said everything was perfect with me and the process I was going through was completely normal, so I didn't get any medical care for it and I became increasingly virilised over time.

Since my body started to change, my parents have always insisted on hiding and silencing my intersex nature by telling me not to talk about it to anyone, not even to my sisters. This made me think that there was something wrong with me, that there was something to feel ashamed

about, but I didn't understand what it was and the reason why I had to hide it.

I had a lot of doubts about my body, about my appearance, about my genitals. However, I never talked about it—I wasn't able to, I wasn't allowed to, it was forbidden. I wondered if I was a boy or a girl because my genitals didn't look feminine, I didn't look feminine, and everyone used to say—not to me directly, but they used to gossip—that I looked like a boy. I didn't really care about their comments but I knew I was different. I knew I looked different and I needed to find the answers to my questions.

Years later, I decided to go to the hospital so I could know if there was something wrong with me. After months of uncomfortable check-ups, at the age of 15 I was told that I had CAH (congenital adrenal hyperplasia). I finally felt satisfied because I had the answer I was looking for, something that explained perfectly what I had gone through. Doctors said I was abnormal though. They said that my body needed to be 'fixed' so that I would not feel embarrassed when having sex. I'd never felt ashamed about my body until I was told I wasn't a normal person.

I think all intersex people have to deal with different difficult situations that endosex people don't deal with and we have to deal with ourselves, with those horrible feelings and thoughts we have about our bodies, those thoughts and feelings caused by our doctors' prejudices. From the time we are born, doctors tell our parents that there's something wrong with us, that our bodies need to get 'fixed', and that we shouldn't know the truth about ourselves. Therefore, our parents get influenced by those prejudices and keep our intersex variation secret from everyone, including us.

In my case, the doctor never told my parents to keep my body variation a secret. On the contrary, he said everything was fine and I was completely healthy, but my parents decided to keep it in the shadows. I think they wanted to protect me from bullying and discrimination, from people's prejudices and from society. But that's enough. It's time to say 'STOP IT!'. It's time to stop the silence, it's time to get rid of prejudices, it's time to know the truth! This is the moment to change society and live our lives. It's the moment to live the truth and nature of our bodies!



Intertwined are the moon and sun

AUDE NASR



Until one of them found what was to be blamed.

Some wanted to look, and then one offered to fix.

And one step after the other, they found themselves in the right office.

In this office, they knew how to make you normal, how to make you like the others.



With the magic pills, all would
be solved, they promised.

Yet little by little, it started
feeling different,

as if there was a monster living within, ready
to reveal the shared secret to the world.



Dale sentido a tu vida, a pesar de todo

PALOMA

Soy Paloma, tengo 30 años y soy del estado de Sinaloa, México. Soy hija única de una madre soltera, la cual es una mujer extraordinaria que, a pesar de sus escasos estudios, me sacó adelante. Siempre he dicho que mi madre es uno de los regalos más bellos que me ha dado Dios, y espero tenerla por muchos años más. Nací con un cuerpo intersexual—en mi caso nací con diferencias genitales y tengo hiperplasia suprarrenal congénita (HSC). Afortunadamente, no me operaron y mi cuerpo está intacto. En la pubertad no me llegó la menstruación, mis pechos no se desarrollaron y mi voz se hizo más grave que la de la mayoría de las mujeres, por lo que siempre he sufrido discriminación.

Hace aproximadamente 10 años me encontraba un poco desorientada por la apariencia de mi cuerpo, mi forma de ver la vida y por mi orientación sexual. ¿Por qué soy así? ¿Por qué yo? Me preguntaba cuál era la finalidad de seguir existiendo en un mundo tan cruel con las personas como yo, o con cualquier otra persona considerada diferente. En ese tiempo, me sentía como un bicho raro, sentía que no tenía valor para la sociedad y que la única que me valoraba era mi madre. Anhelaba con todo mi ser tener a mi lado a una persona que me amara tal cuál soy, y que me tratara con el mismo respeto y dignidad con el que se debería tratar a cualquier ser humano. Deseaba saber que era el amor.

Soy una persona muy reservada, y no es común que comparta con otras personas que nací con un cuerpo intersexual. En mi familia, solo lo sabe mi madre y algunos tíos y primos. Afortunadamente, ellos no me cuestionan sobre eso, tampoco sobre mi orientación sexual. Solo observan y callan, y mi variación intersexual nunca es un tema de conversación familiar. Esto ha sido bueno para mí, porque no tengo que dar explicaciones a nadie.

Hace aproximadamente 7 años, mientras buscaba en internet respuestas sobre mi cuerpo intersexual, encontré una página web llamada Brújula Intersexual e inmediatamente comencé a leer toda la información e historias que ahí se encontraban publicadas, me sentí identificada con todo lo que leí. Decidí enviar algunas preguntas a Laura Inter, la fundadora de Brújula Intersexual. Ella me respondió, así que le hice otra pregunta, luego otra y otra.

Le hice bastantes preguntas. Luego hablamos por teléfono y le comenté sobre mis experiencias para que ella me orientara y me explicara, con sus propias palabras, porqué mi cuerpo era tan diferente. Ella respondió todas mis preguntas y, con el tiempo, Laura se convirtió en mi confidente, la persona en la que más confiaba. Hablar con ella me ayudó a entenderme a mí misma de una forma distinta y a responder muchas interrogantes que yo misma no había podido responder.

Gracias a Brújula Intersexual, he llegado a conocer a otras personas intersexuales a través de las redes sociales, y he conversado con ellas por teléfono y por mensajes de texto. También tengo contacto con aliadas de la comunidad intersexual. Todas estas conversaciones me han ayudado a ver la vida de manera distinta, y ya no me siento sola—hay muchas personas como yo que diariamente luchan por sentirse bien y por ser la mejor versión de sí mismas.

Gran parte de la sociedad mexicana es muy conservadora y de mentalidad muy cerrada. En la actualidad, sufro discriminación laboral debido a mi apariencia, y en ocasiones ha sido muy difícil. Es común que mis compañeros de trabajo hagan comentarios o bromas haciendo referencia a mis características físicas, sin darse cuenta que sus comentarios son molestos y lastiman. A veces siento el impulso de defenderme y hacerles lo mismo, pero no hago nada para evitar problemas en el trabajo. Afortunadamente, en mi trabajo no saben que soy intersexual. Si lo supieran, estoy segura de que sus dudas, comentarios y bromas de mal gusto, serían más constantes. Lo único que saben es mi orientación sexual y que tengo una relación maravillosa con una mujer, y es común que hagan comentarios y preguntas incómodas e invasivas: “¿Cómo tienen relaciones sexuales?”, “¿Te gustaría ser hombre?”, “Pareces hombre”, “¿Has tenido relaciones sexuales con hombres?” Incluso, una compañera de trabajo, al enterarse que mi orientación sexual es hacia las mujeres, me preguntó: “¿Te gustaría tener relaciones sexuales conmigo?” ¡El hecho de que me gusten las mujeres, no quiere decir que me gusten todas!

Esa misma compañera, desde que se enteró de mi orientación sexual, en repetidas ocasiones ha hablado sobre mi con otros compañeros, diciendo que soy un “macho”, que mi forma de vestir no es la apropiada, que debo de vestir más femenina, que no uso un bolso y que no uso maquillaje. Todos estos comentarios me afectan. Me duele darme cuenta que existen este tipo de personas a las que no les importan los sentimientos de los demás, y no saben ponerse en los zapatos de la otra persona. No es nada fácil vivir diariamente estas situaciones, pero siempre intento ser la mejor versión de mí misma.

A pesar de todo lo que me ha tocado vivir, y de la discriminación que sufro diariamente, siento que soy una persona bendecida, porque encontré a otras personas como yo que viven situaciones similares.

Ya no me siento sola, soy parte de una comunidad de personas intersexuales con quienes puedo hablar de mis experiencias y me entienden, porque muchas de ellas pasan por experiencias muy similares y sentimos una gran empatía unas por otras.

Hoy, he decidido no quedarme callada y expresarme cada vez que sea necesario, sin importar lo que digan o piensen de mí. Es hora de quitarnos todas las ataduras con esas personas que opinan, cuestionan y creen que conocen mejor nuestras vidas. Soy una mujer intersexual que tiene el derecho a ser feliz y ser respetada. Ninguna persona tiene derecho a juzgar a otra por ser quien es.

¡Se feliz y disfruta de cada momento de tu vida!



Give meaning to your life, despite everything

PALOMA

My name is Paloma. I'm 30 years old and I'm from the state of Sinaloa, Mexico. I'm the only child of a single mother, an extraordinary woman who, despite her poor education, took good care of me. I have always said that my mother is one of the most beautiful gifts that God has given to me, and I hope to have her with me for many years. I was born with an intersex body—in my case, I was born with genital differences and I have congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH). Fortunately, I didn't have surgery and my body is intact. Unlike most women, at puberty I didn't get my period, my breasts didn't develop, and my voice deepened. Because of all this, I have always suffered discrimination.

About 10 years ago I felt a bit confused by the appearance of my body, my way of seeing life and my sexual orientation. Why am I like this? Why me? I wondered what was the purpose of continuing to exist in a world that is so cruel to people like me or to anyone who is considered different. At that time, I felt like a freak, I felt that I had no value for society, and that the only one who thought I was a valuable person was my mother. I longed with my whole being to have by my side a person who would love me for who I am and who would treat me with respect and dignity, like any human being should be treated. I wanted to know what love was.

I'm a very private person and it is not common for me to share with other people that I was born with an intersex body. In my family, only my mother and some uncles and cousins know about it. Fortunately, they don't question me about it or about my sexual orientation. They just watch and keep quiet and my intersex variation is never a topic of conversation in my family. This has been good for me because I don't have to explain myself to anyone.

About 7 years ago, while I was searching the internet for answers about my intersex body, I found a web page called Brújula Intersexual, and I immediately began to read all the information and intersex stories that were published in it. I identified with everything I read. I decided to send some questions to Laura Inter, the founder of Brújula Intersexual. She answered me and so I asked her another question, then another and another. I asked her so many questions. Then we talked on the phone and I told her about my experiences so that she could guide me and explain to me, in her own words, why my body was so different. She responded to all my questions and, over time, Laura became my confidante, the person I trusted the most. Talking to her helped me understand myself in new ways and answered many questions that I hadn't been able to answer myself.

Thanks to Brújula Intersexual, I have met other intersex people through social media and I have also talked with them by phone and text message. I also have contact with allies of the intersex community. All these conversations have helped me see life in a different way and I no longer feel alone—there are many people like me who face a daily struggle to feel okay and be the best version of themselves.

A large part of Mexican society is very conservative and very closed-minded. Currently, I suffer from job discrimination because of my appearance and at times this has been very difficult. It is common for my co-workers to make comments or jokes referring to my physical characteristics, without realizing that their comments are annoying and hurtful. Sometimes, I feel the urge to defend myself and do the same to them, but I don't do anything in order to avoid having problems at work. Fortunately, in my work they don't know that I am intersex. If they knew, I'm sure their doubts, comments and their bad taste jokes would be more constant. The only thing they know is my sexual orientation and that I have a wonderful relationship with a woman, and it's common for them to make uncomfortable and invasive comments and questions like: 'How do you both have sex?' 'Would you like to be a man?' 'You look like a man.' 'Have you had sex with men?' Even a female co-worker asked me: 'Would you like to have sex with me?' Just because I like some women does not mean that I like all of them!

That same co-worker, since she found out about my sexual orientation, has repeatedly talked about me with other colleagues and tells them that I am 'macho', that my way of dressing is not appropriate, that I should dress more feminine, that I don't carry a purse, and that I don't use makeup. All of these comments affect me. It hurts me to realize that these kinds of people exist who don't care about the feelings of others and who don't know how to put themselves in the shoes of someone else. It is not easy at all to live with this situation every day, but I always try to be the best version of myself.

Despite everything that I have had to live through and the discrimination that I suffer daily, I feel that I am a blessed person because I have found other people like me who experience similar situations. I no longer feel alone because I'm part of the intersex community with whom I can talk to about my experiences. They understand me because many of them go through very similar experiences and we feel empathy for each other.

Today, I have decided to speak up and express myself whenever necessary, regardless of what others say or think about me. It's time to remove all ties with people who comment, question and think they know best about my life. I'm an intersex woman who has the right to be happy and to be respected. No person has the right to judge another for who they are.

Be happy and enjoy every moment of your life!

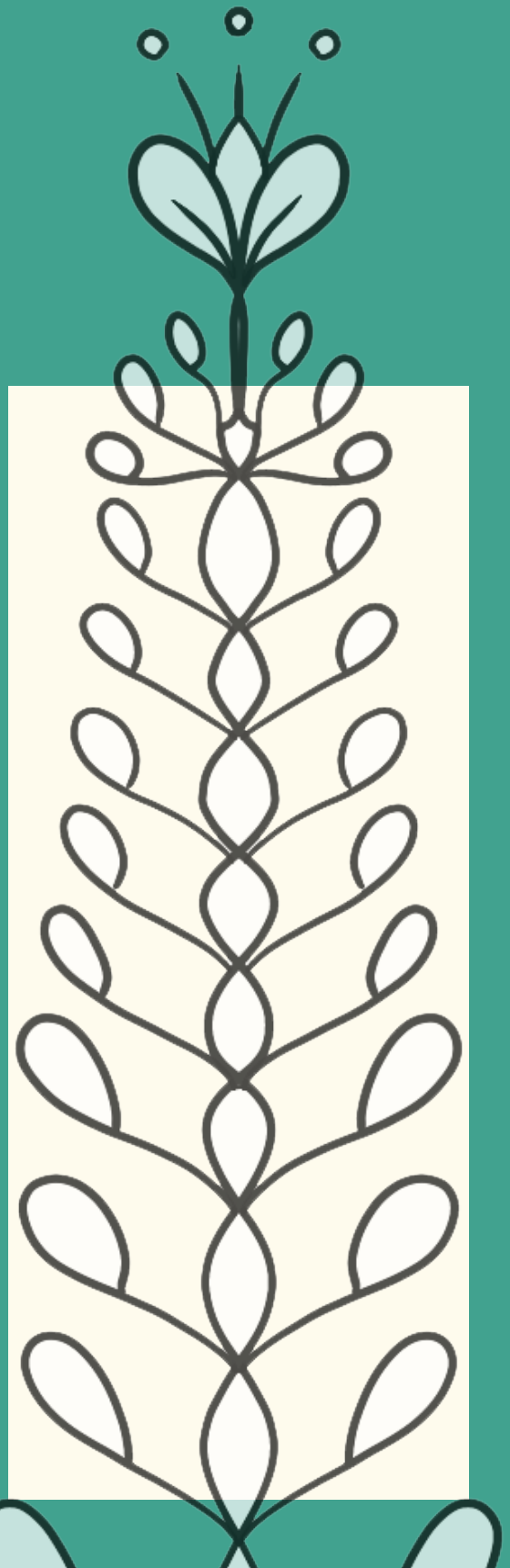
Who we are

NICK

Intersex Intersex Intersex
We are created in the likeness of God
We were born with features
making us unique
We are found everywhere on earth
just like water
We are found in all races
whether black, white or coloured
We can be tall, short and we are proud

Some people fail to understand us
Some label us incorrectly
Some discriminate against us
Some regard us as a taboo
Day and night we fight
for our rights and recognition
Time to time relatives neglect us
Suicidal thoughts are common amongst
us because of the abuses we face daily
Some want to explore our bodies
Sometimes we end up taking drugs
to run from reality
Doctors choose our sexes at birth

But we are survivors
We are proud of who we are
There are more than 46+ versions of us
We use the word ambiguous
with boldness
We are a special group



I'm intersex

CECILIA LOPEZ BEMSCH

I'm an intersex person and my body was tortured and mutilated in the Tucumán province by a perverse system. I (we) have always been treated like sick people with a malformation deemed as urgent to be fixed. I want everyone to know that intersex bodies are beautiful as they are. We exist and we resist everywhere. Here, in Tucumán, as in other Argentinian territory provinces, as in other places worldwide. Now I stand up once again to say 'Enough!' to the ongoing perversities happening in every hospital and private clinic directly financed by the national health services. Together we fight for our bodily autonomy, our personal integrity and we fight for our self-determination.

I am evidence of the diversity that exists in the world. I am a person who has struggled their whole life. I speak for everyone who is not here anymore and died because of this torture and cruel treatment from the medical system towards intersex bodies. I speak for those who suffer poor physical outcomes from their mutilation. I speak for those who suffer poor psychological outcomes due to other people's decisions over our bodies without our consent, abusing us, violating our intimacy, experimenting with us and taking pictures of our beautiful bodies to be reproduced in every lecture in medical schools.

I am an intersex person born with sex characteristics that do not fit into the gender binary of feminine or masculine. I am an intersex person and I am attesting to the wondrous natural bodily diversity as well as to the cruel treatments we receive since the moment we are born. If you are an intersex person, I am here to embrace you. You are not alone. I do not want intersex people to stand alone and to feel alone anymore. We are a very large community and we are here for you. Respect our existence or expect our resistance.

We want no more mutilated children. We want access to our medical records so we can learn what was done to us and what happened to our body parts that were removed without our consent. We want the State to take charge of this issue so nobody is harmed anymore due to their sex characteristics. Intersex rights are human rights and must be respected.

This piece has been edited from a speech delivered on 14 May 2021 in Tucumán province, Argentina, protesting intersex human rights abuses. The speech is called: Manifiesto 1º jornada en contra de la mutilación genital intersex - the 1st manifesto against intersex genital mutilation.

En Chile decimos In Chile we say

OTTO ETRAUD



'End of Circular number 7'

'End genital mutilation of intersex children and adolescents'

Circular 7 is a government policy of the Chilean Health Ministry introduced in 2016. It rescinded an earlier 2015 Circular that instructed the end of normalising surgeries. Circular 7 allows doctors to undertake surgical interventions on intersex children and adolescents.

Temperatures of the intersexed body

MIKAYLA RENEE





NOWAKII



Tiempo en la vida inter

Algun*s de nosotr*s sufrimos intervenciones médicas innecesarias y no consensuadas, que nos causan problemas graves en nuestra salud física y mental. Estas intervenciones también pueden hacernos sentir muy sol*s en muchas situaciones de nuestras vidas.

¡No te rindas, es hora de alzar la voz!

Time in inter life

Some of us suffer unnecessary and non-consensual medical interventions, causing us serious problems in our physical and mental health. These interventions can also cause us to be very lonely in many aspects of our lives.

Do not give up, it's time to raise your voice!

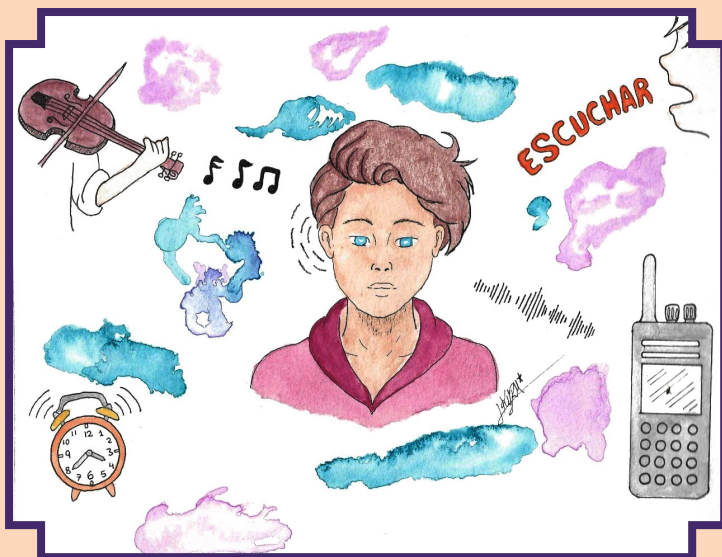


La voz en el tiempo

No esperes más, es tiempo para hacerte escuchar y alzar la voz. Acércate a organizaciones intersexuales en tu país o región. En México y Latinoamérica puedes buscar a Brújula Intersexual.

The voice through time

Wait no more, it's time to make yourself heard and raise your voice. Reach out to intersex organizations in your country or region. In Mexico and Latin America, you can find Brújula Intersexual.



Detalles al tiempo

No estás solo(a), escucha todo a tu alrededor y encontrarás la respuesta.

Details in time

You are not alone—listen to everything around you and you will find the answer.

Hidupku yang berbeda

NARRINDA NIARASSATI

Hai, perkenalkan namaku Narrinda dan aku seorang interseks dari Indonesia. Usiaku kini sudah 26 tahun. Aku akan bercerita mengenai kehidupan sehari-hariku.

Dilahirkan sebagai seorang interseks, banyak sekali sisi buruk yang aku dapatkan daripada sisi baiknya. Sejak kecil aku berbeda dengan teman-teman yang lain. Anak perempuan seharusnya terlihat cantik, memiliki suara yang lembut, dan kulit yang halus. Tapi aku tidak seperti itu. Suaraku yang besar mirip laki-laki membuat aku menjadi bahan ejekan teman yang lain. Tapi aku bisa melewati semua itu karena aku termasuk anak yang galak. Jika ada yang mengejek pasti akan aku lawan mereka, aku pukul mereka. Jadi mereka tidak memiliki keberanian untuk berbuat seperti itu lagi.

Beranjak remaja, tepatnya ketika aku memasuki Sekolah Menengah Pertama, aku yang berasal dari Kampung harus menyesuaikan diri dengan kehidupan kota. Teman baru berasal dari kalangan elit atau bisa kalian sebut dengan orang kaya. Aku termasuk anak yang beruntung karena bisa menjadi salah satu murid di sekolah yang terkenal ini. Aku diterima karena prestasi yang kumiliki. Aku mendaftar ke sekolah tersebut dengan penghargaan sebagai juara pertama cabang olahraga atletik lari dan lompat jauh. Tapi itu tak membuatku banyak memiliki teman di sekolah. Aku menjadi seorang anak yang dikucilkan. Tidak banyak teman yang kukenal. Itu semua tidak terlepas dari penampilanku yang berbeda. Sedih karena aku selalu menjadi bahan ledekan serta ditertawakan oleh teman-teman. Aku menjadi anak yang pendiam dan selalu sendiri. Sempat aku berpikir untuk berhenti sekolah, tapi pikiran tersebut langsung aku buang karena aku ingat dengan orangtua. Walau di sekolah aku selalu mendapat perlakuan yang tidak baik dari teman-teman, tapi aku tidak pernah bercerita kepada orangtua. Semuanya aku simpan sendiri. Aku bisa lalui semuanya dan aku tetap lanjutkan prestasiku. Aku pun masuk dalam klub atletik di kotaku. Disitu aku memiliki teman. Tidak ada yang mengejek dan melihatku berbeda, semuanya baik kepadaku. Maka dari itu, aku senang sekali menjalani aktifitas latihan. Walaupun di sekolah aku menjadi anak yang pendiam dan menyendiri, tapi di klub aku menjadi anak yang periang.

Memasuki Sekolah Menengah Atas tidak banyak perubahan pada diriku. Hanya saja aku mendapatkan beberapa teman dekat yang bisa menerima keadaan aku yang terlihat berbeda. Di awal semester aku masih tidak terima jika ada yang mengejek. Aku akan pukul orang tersebut. Perlahan dan seiringnya waktu aku sudah menganggap semua itu biasa saja dan tidak menghiraukan mereka yang mengejekku. Aku bisa kuat dan bersikap cuek seperti itu karena memiliki teman-teman yang selalu ada serta memberikan aku semangat. Kelulusan tiba. Aku dihadapkan pada dunia baru. Aku takut dan tidak tahu harus bagaimana setelah lulus dari Sekolah Menengah Atas. Terpisah dari teman-teman baikku dan kembali sendiri, apakah aku akan mendapatkan teman yang baik serta dapat menerima aku yang seperti ini kembali? Pertanyaan itu selalu menghantui aku.

Sebelum aku bercerita tentang kehidupan pekerjaan, aku memiliki cerita yang tidak terlupakan semasa Sekolah Menengah Pertama dan Sekolah Menengah Atas. Ketika Sekolah Menengah Pertama aku pernah sakit demam berdarah dan dirawat di rumah sakit. Disana dokter melihat ada yang berbeda dari organ intim aku yang terlihat seperti laki-laki. Mereka menganjurkan agar aku melakukan pemeriksaan lebih lanjut dengan cara di-USG untuk melihat aku seorang perempuan atau laki-laki. Pemeriksaan dilakukan ketika aku sudah sembuh dan akan pulang dari rumah sakit. Ketika di-USG, aku dan orangtuaku yang sama sekali tidak mengerti hanya mengikuti dan mengiyakan apa yang dokter katakan. Dokter menuangkan cairan di tangannya, lalu berkata "Saya akan lihat melalui lubang belakang (anus) karena dia masih kecil jika lewat depan (vagina)". Kami hanya mengangguk saja. Lalu dokter memasukkan jari ke lubang anusku berkali-kali. Aku sudah bilang kalau itu terasa sakit, tapi dokter tersebut hanya bilang "Tahan saja, tenang, jangan tegang". Lalu ia terus melanjutkan pemeriksaan. Setelah selesai, aku diberi semacam foto hasil dari USG tersebut yang menyebutkan aku sebagai perempuan karena memiliki rahim.

Cerita lain yang tidak dapat kulupakan yaitu sewaktu Sekolah Menengah Atas. Aku memiliki seorang guru biologi yang begitu memperhatikan aku. Suatu hari setelah jam pelajaran biologi selesai, aku di panggil oleh guru tersebut untuk menemuinya di ruang guru ketika jam istirahat. Aku kira aku dipanggil karena ada masalah dengan pelajaran tetapi tidak ada masalah dengan pelajaran biologiku. Justru ternyata disana aku ditanya mengenai penampilanku yang berbeda. Dia bertanya mulai dari menstruasiku, suaraku yang besar sampai dia bilang agar aku memeriksakan keadaanku untuk memastikan apakah aku perempuan atau laki-laki. Aku sangat tersinggung dengan perkataannya dan aku jawab bahwa aku sudah pernah melakukan pemeriksaan dan hasilnya adalah aku seorang perempuan. Setelah itu aku pergi. Hari selanjutnya guru tersebut tidak lagi membahas mengenai jati diri aku. Dua kejadian ini tidak akan aku lupakan sampai kapanpun.

Sekarang aku sudah lulus Sekolah Menengah Atas dan aku bekerja di sebuah pabrik sepatu. Dunia baru lagi yang aku hadapi. Aku bekerja seperti biasa dan sesuai dengan apa yang ditugaskan. Aku memiliki beberapa teman seusiaiku walaupun tidak terlalu akrab. Aku senang bisa bekerja dan menghasilkan uang dari hasil keringatku sendiri. Tapi semua itu tidak berjalan mulus. Seorang interseks selalu dianggap berbeda. Aku pernah menjadi bahan tertawaan di bagian tempat aku bekerja. Aku sampai menangis tapi tetap ditertawakan. Atasan yang bertugas di bagian tersebut pun tidak peduli dan seolah tidak terjadi apa-apa. Ia membiarkan semuanya mengejek dan menertawakan aku. Aku mendapatkan perlakuan demikian di tempat kerja dua kali. Pertama ketika aku masih menjadi karyawan baru dan belum memiliki banyak kenalan. Kedua, terjadi beberapa waktu lalu yang membuatku sampai harus memilih mengundurkan diri dari perusahaan. Aku tidak kuat dan menyerah dengan semua perlakuan mereka.

Demikian cerita pengalaman hidup aku sebagai seorang interseks dan perlakuan lingkungan sekitar terhadapku. Tidak banyak sisi positifnya karena orang akan melihat aneh jika ada yang berbeda dengan mereka. Padahal perbedaan bukanlah alasan untuk berperilaku yang tidak baik. Justru seharusnya mereka bisa berperilaku lebih baik terhadap orang yang terlihat berbeda. Rangkul, sayangi dan berikanlah perlakuan yang sama dengan yang lainnya karena mereka pun berhak atas semua itu.



My different life

NARRINDA NIARASSATI

Hi, my name is Narrinda. I am an intersex person from Indonesia and I am 26 years old. I am going to tell you about my different life.

As I was born intersex, I have faced many bad experiences. Since I was a kid, I have felt different from my friends. A girl is supposed to look beautiful, with a soft voice and smooth skin. However, I was not like that. My strong and deep voice made me sound like a man and because of this my friends used to bully me. Yet, I managed to get through it. Whenever someone bullied me, I got angry and resisted. I hit them. They would then be afraid to repeat their actions.

I started my teenage phase when I was in junior high school. Coming from a village, I had to adapt to city life. The other students were elite and rich. I was so fortunate that I was one of the students at this renowned school. I was able to attend this school on a sport scholarship. I came first in athletics, running and long jump. Still, these achievements did not mean I had many friends. I was excluded and I didn't know many people there. My appearance was different and I was sad because my friends laughed at me and made fun of me. I became quiet and alone. I thought about quitting school, but I didn't because I thought of my parents. Although I kept facing bad treatment at school, I never told my parents about what was happening. I kept it to myself. I survived and continued making achievements in athletics.

I became more involved in an athletics club and I had good friends there. No one bullied me or looked at me differently. On the contrary, they were all kind and friendly to me. It made me feel so happy doing the daily exercises. I was a completely different kid. I was quiet at school but a very cheerful kid at the club.

When I moved to senior high school, my situation did not change much. Nevertheless, at that moment, I had several close friends who accepted my condition. Early on in my time there, I could not tolerate people who bullied me. I would punch them right away. But, as time went on, I got used to it and ignored them. I became stronger and didn't care too much because I had friends who supported me and cheered me up.

Then graduation day came and a whole new world was waiting for me. I was afraid and didn't know what to do once I left school. I no longer saw my friends. I was alone again.

Would I ever meet good friends who accepted me the way I am? This question kept haunting me.

Before I talk about my current situation, I have two stories that I want to share which I will never forget. When I was in junior high school, I had dengue fever. I was taken to the hospital. During the treatment, the doctor noticed something different about me: my genitals looked similar to male genitalia. The doctor advised me to have a further examination to determine whether I am male or female. The doctor examined me after I recovered and was ready to check out from the hospital. I had an ultrasonography test. My parents and I didn't understand what was happening. We followed the doctor's suggestion. She poured some liquid on her hand and said, "I will observe from the anal canal because you are too young to have a vaginal observation." My parents and I just nodded. She inserted her finger repeatedly into my anal canal. I said that it was painful but the doctor asked me to bear the feeling and relax. After that, she gave me the sonogram and told me that I was a girl because I had a uterus.

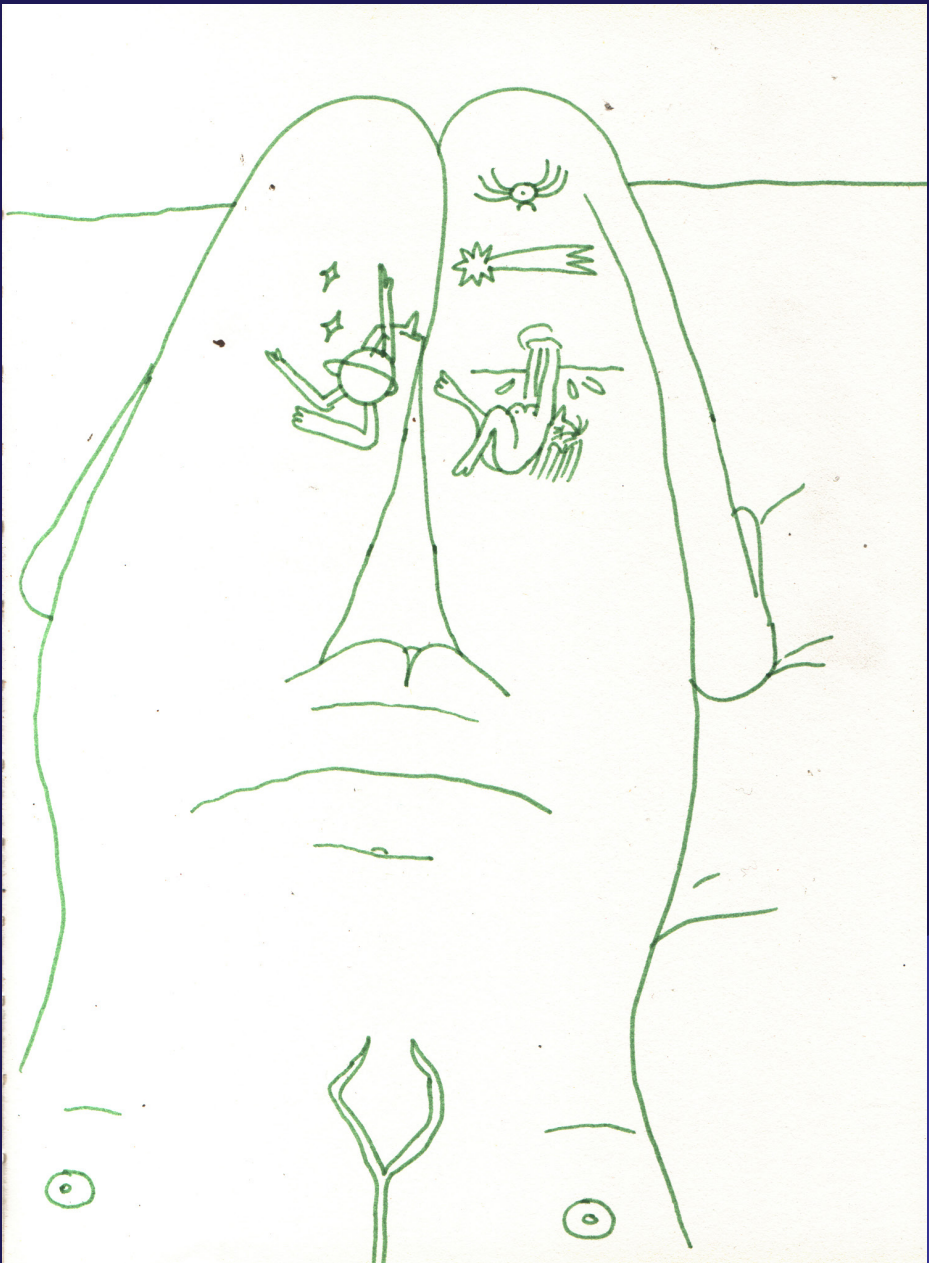
The second event happened during senior high school. I had a biology teacher who noticed my physical difference. One day, after the biology class finished, I was asked to meet her in her office during break time. I thought that I had a problem with my biology lesson. When I came to the teacher's office, she asked about my physical difference. She asked about my menstrual period and my heavy deep voice. She told me to check my condition to ensure whether I was a girl or boy. I was offended by her statement. I said that I already had an examination and the result stated that I was a girl. I immediately left the office and, after that, the teacher never spoke of it again. I will never forget these two experiences.

After I graduated from senior high school, I worked at a shoe factory. It was another new world that I had to face. I did my tasks and had several friends the same age as me. However, we were not close. I was happy enough that I could work and earn money. However, it did not go well—people always see me differently because of my intersex body. I became one of their jokes. I cried but they still bullied me and laughed at me. My supervisor noticed this but didn't care at all, as if nothing was happening. This happened twice. It first happened when I was still a new employee and I didn't know anyone yet, and then it happened again not long ago. I recently decided to resign from the company. I couldn't bear this situation anymore.

That is my life story of living as an intersex person. There are very few positive experiences because people always pull a strange face when they notice something is different about me. Difference is not a reason to mistreat someone. Treat people well no matter how different they are. Embrace, be kind and give equal treatment. Everyone deserves that.

Soy hermoso I'm beautiful

OTTO ETRAUD



maybe this is for you

ITSH

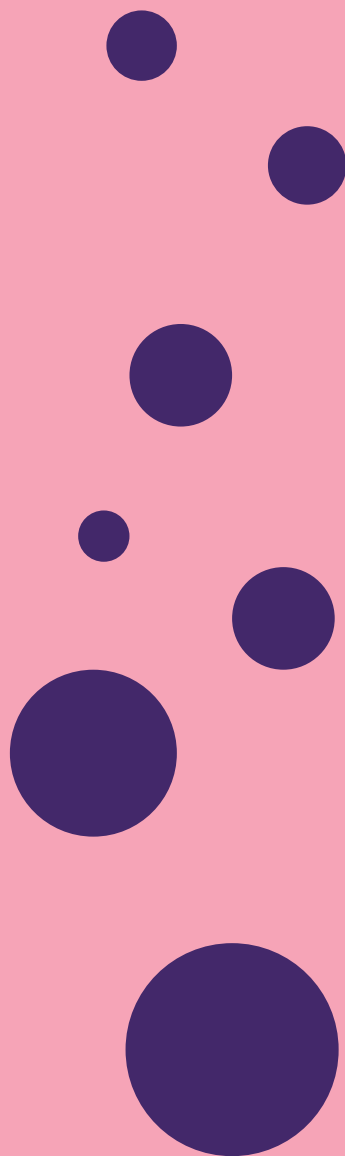
I am holding a portion of the world
It is a firm grasp yet a gentle one
I am master of what I can manipulate
I stand and face the light
I earnestly walk towards it
I am nurturing the innate.

The more I discover the less I know
I control if that scares or comforts me
This giantess, space immemorial,
I decide the outcome of the action
Defeat begets defeat
Growth begets growth.

Healing is a self-sufficient process that you can't do alone
This paradox hugs us
We're a pendulum that needs a push,
or needs a shaking, a resetting
We can ride our broken paths back and forth,
through the same pain and heartache back to fear and regret
And it feels safer because we know it
But the hardest path is the one that pulls us most.

Love is as powerful as we believe it to be
We can water any plant we choose
The love that survives furthest from the sun is the most resilient
Our sun is massive to the ant, and tiny to the galaxy.
I have neglected perspective.
I have neglected to look into the dark.

Life is staring into the darkness
and learning to see.



you are your roots

ITSH

Stockholm Skin

Blood of Lima

An agitation and a quieting

The shiny next link on a chain billions of years taught

My body is a word people are getting familiar with but not using right

Don't mock their effort

Weep the need for it

My roots tangle with yours

Our history of chainmaille

We run on recycled oxygen

The fungus and trees share a meal

The bees and the flowers become each other

A child becomes their parent or the opposite

I am a machine

Or just a part

Evolution and Extinction are dancing again.

Dear intersex body

STEPHAN MILLS

Dear intersex body,

I just wanted to say thank you. Thank you for never giving up on me.

I know it has been hard all these years, with all the pain and stuff.

You were hard to understand. You were weird. I still don't understand you entirely. Nobody really does, not even the 'experts'. Well, the 'experts' entirely gave up on you when they realized you weren't as simple as a routine blood test.

Dear intersex body,

I know I hated you a few times, blaming other people's crimes on your uniqueness. But I now know that none of that was your fault.

I know I wanted to hurt you a few times, but now I love you. I mean it. I really do.

You made me realize a few things during these years. It took me a while, maybe too long, and I'm sorry you had to deal with me all this time. But I finally realized that you are perfect the way you are. I finally realized that my true happiness does not come from being what I called a 'normal 100% male'. Yes, I now understand that being 'normal' is not the secret ingredient to being happy. Because guess what? I am happy just the way I am. And I am following my biggest dream right now—studying medicine. That is thanks to you, my friend. You made me love medicine; with all your 'weirdness' and uniqueness, you forced me to spend hours and hours reading about the wonders of the human body and its peculiarities. You are kind of like my muse.

Dear intersex body,

You're a body. Everyone has a body. Some are tall, some are short, some are hairy, some are thin, some are chubby, some are muscular, some have one leg, some have eleven fingers, and whatnot. Bodies are awesome. I guess that's rich, coming from a medical student.

Each body is a bit 'weird'. Humans are weird. You just happen to be a bit 'weirder'. Statistically, of course.

Everyone has a body. And I have you.

Dear intersex body,

I'm going to take care of you in the best way I can. I will never give up on you.

I will fix your pain just like you fixed mine by doing the best that you could.

About that, thank you for all you have done for me—thank you for all the testosterone, for all the body hair, the deeper voice, the 'ambiguous genitalia'. Thank you for not making me a 'normal girl'. You know I never wanted to be a girl.

Now it's my turn to help you. It's teamwork, buddy. You just give me the curiosity to study you, and I will study you. We've been doing this for years, you and I.

Dear intersex body,

I know they tried to hurt you. They were scared of you. They wanted to fix you by destroying your beauty. But little did they know, you were stronger than they could ever imagine.

Dear intersex body,

You're cool. No, you're awesome.

Numéro invalide

LOSTMEMORY



Disabled one

LOSTMEMORY








About the contributors



Some contributors have chosen to remain anonymous. We respect their wishes and have not published biographies of all contributors.

Paloma 

Paloma is from the Municipality of Fuerte in the state of Sinaloa, Mexico and currently lives in the Municipality of Sinaloa. She has a degree in Social Work and is currently a third semester student at law school. Paloma has been a collaborator of Brújula Intersexual since 2015 and her hobbies are listening to music, reading, exercising and taking care of her pets (two little dogs).

Cecilia Lopez Bensch 

Cecilia Lopez Bensch is an intersex person from the province of Tucumán, Argentina. They are the founder of the organisation Argentina Intersex (a disability-intersex organisation). They are studying to be a geography teacher at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, Universidad Nacional de Tucumán (National University of Tucumán).

Nowakii 

Nowakii is from Mexico. Nowakii's partner was the one who started looking for answers about Nowakii's body variations. Together they connected with Brújula Intersexual through Facebook who gave them support. Today, they continue to support Brújula's projects.

Nick 

Nick is a 25-year-old Zimbabwean national. Early years were very difficult and abusive for Nick but later Nick connected with various organisations in Zimbabwe which support intersex people. Since then, Nick has appeared on virtual platforms several times fighting for intersex people's rights and legal recognition.

Free 

Free, originally from Oaxaca, Mexico, has a degree in Language Teaching (Spanish, English, French, and Zapotec). She met Brújula Intersexual in 2014, and one year later she became a collaborator of the same organisation. She has participated in various talks and events about intersex in Mexico, and her testimony 'An Orchid in a Rose Garden' was published on the website of Brújula Intersexual.

Zuza Piontko 

Zuza Piontko is a 23-year-old intersex activist and emerging producer from Warsaw, Poland. Zuza loves to take on small activities all the time, including her favourite hobbies which are lying in water and eating cookies.

Macarena Muru 

Macarena Muru is an intersex activist from Córdoba, Argentina and is one of the founders of the organisation Potencia Intersex. She studies literature and lives in a house with two friends and two cats.

Narrinda Niarassati 

Narrinda Niarassati is a 26-year-old from Bogor, a small city in Indonesia. Narrinda has worked as a labourer at a shoe factory and has also worked as a food seller and fast-food waiter.

Aude Nasr  

Aude Nasr (Aboul-Nasr) is an illustrator and photographer currently based in Paris. She works both in the Arab region and within its diasporas, exploring nocturnal imageries that express her melancholy and speak of her people, of the communities she belongs to, and of communities she stands in solidarity with. Aude's work can be found at audenasr.com.

Irene Kuzemko  

Irene Kuzemko is a 28-year-old from Russia and Ukraine. Irene is a proud intersex person and activist and has been active in the movement since 2015. Irene is part of Intersex Russia/OII Russia, OII Europe and interACT Youth.

Mikayla Renee 

Mikayla Renee is an intersex advocate, activist, poet, writer, researcher and young professional. Her poetry focuses on developing the musicality of language, framing sounds and phrases in a way that tempers the reader's experience. Her visual and conceptual art practice is built on philosophical thinking and uses critical methodologies of autoethnography and self-reflection to construct both feeling and meaning through an empathic gaze.

Stephan Mills   

Stephan Mills is a 20-year-old intersex activist in Intersexioni and a first-year medical student. Stephan is also the co-founder of a new Facebook/Instagram/Twitter page, Angry&Intersexy. (Stephan also happens to be intersex)

Gabriel Filpi 

Gabriel Filpi is a queer, intersex and transgender advocate, creative, and young professional working with the LGBTIQA+ community in the Australian Capital Territory, Australia. He loves making art, cooking and spending time with his loved ones.

Otto Etraud 

Otto Etraud is an illustrator, graphic designer, editor, prop maker, set dresser and intersex activist based in Valparaíso, Chile. Otto is one of the general coordinators and the graphic designer of Comunidad Intersex Pacífico Sur, a local organisation that makes visible, investigates and works for the rights of intersex people. Otto's work can be found at www.ottoetraud.com.

MelyKurutta 

MelyKurutta is an intersex artist and activist of Intersexioni's intersex youth group. He is also a co-founder of Angry&Intersexy and a communist militant in Giovani Comunisti/e Milano.

Intersex support organisations

This anthology includes themes of coerced medical intervention and IGM (intersex genital mutilation), trauma, suicidality and nudity.

There are many fantastic intersex organisations that do incredible work. Below is a short list of some regional intersex support organisations. They may be able to refer you on to more local and intersex variation-specific groups.

OCEANIA

Intersex Trust Aotearoa New Zealand
Intersex Peer Support Australia

ASIA

Intersex Asia

AFRICA

Intersex South Africa
SIPD - Uganda
Intersex Society of Zambia

EUROPE

OII Europe

LATIN AMERICA

Brújula Intersexual

NORTH AMERICA

InterACT
InterConnect



ISPA image created by Phoebe Hart

