



- Intersex Awareness
- Volunteering
- Events

Intersex Awareness Month

“We're a group of people whose misunderstanding of each other
is only topped by people's misunderstanding of us.

— Thea Hillman, Author/Intersex Activist

❖ What is Intersex?

The term intersex is an umbrella term that refers to people who have one or more of a range of variations in sex characteristics that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies. For example, intersex people may have variations in their chromosomes, genitals, or internal organs like testes or ovaries. Some intersex characteristics are identified at birth, while other people may not discover they have intersex traits until puberty or later in life.¹

“ I've been using the women's restroom for my entire life. So, I know many people who have peed next to me. They actually peed next to a girl who had balls — and nothing happened to them.

— Georgiann Davis
Intersex advocate



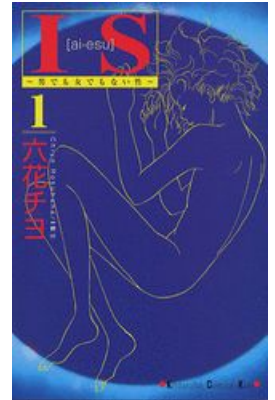
¹ <https://interactadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/INTERSEX101.pdf>

² <http://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2016/04/intersex-conditions-pose-unique-challenges-for-unc-duke-doctors>

❖ Intersex in Japan?

IS, Chiyo Rokuhana

Published in 2013, *IS* (pronounced アイエス) is a manga inspired by the lives of intersex people by Chiyo Rokuhana.³ This manga explores the pain intersex people go through, the troubles they confront, their ability to reproduce, find a partner etc. The series is consisted of cases, each dealing with different people - although some cases are much longer and more dramatic than others.⁴ The series eventually ends up being about Haru, an intersex child, in a touching coming-of-age story. It won the Kodansha Manga Award for Shoujo ('female' readers) in 2007.⁵



Intersex Initiative Japan

If you're looking for information about the intersex community in Japanese have a look into the Intersex Initiative Japan is a non-profit organisation that translates developments of intersex communities into Japanese. They are in collaboration with a sister organisation in the USA. The website seems a little outdated, but still may have some useful information!

W: www.intersexinitiative.org/japan/index.html

Resources include a list of books in Japanese related to intersex, (www.intersexinitiative.org/japan/books.html) and a list of intersex vocabulary in Japanese/English (www.intersexinitiative.org/japan/translation.html).

Twitter

There is a Twitter page which is dedicated to tweeting about intersex news in Japanese, and their handle is **@DSD_info**. The site is updated quite regularly with both Japanese-related and international content. If you're looking for information about intersex developments and want to practice your Japanese, check this Twitter Profile: https://twitter.com/dsd_info



³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IS_\(manga\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IS_(manga))

⁴ <https://www.mangaupdates.com/series.html?id=3344>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kodansha_Manga_Award

❖ Intersex Awareness Day

October 26th is *International Intersex Awareness Day*. On this day organisations around the world raise awareness for the community, ongoing discrimination, and ways one can support intersex people. Continuously, InterACT works together with over twenty international intersex-led organizations, calling for intersex people to have control over their medical decisions, to be free from medically unnecessary interventions, and to have access to psychological and peer support. The 3 things they have sought for since 2013 are:

- 1) **All intersex people have the right to make their own decisions affecting their bodily integrity, physical autonomy, and self-determination.**
- 2) **Medically unnecessary treatment, surgeries, and sterilizations of intersex people should not occur without said intersex person's full informed consent.**
- 3) **Intersex people and the families of children born with intersex traits should have access to non-pathologizing psychosocial and peer support.**

For more information, visit <https://interactadvocates.org/intersex-awareness-day/>. Or, to see all the full *Resolution on the 20th Anniversary of the First Intersex Protest Now Commemorated as Intersex Awareness Day*, please click below: https://docs.google.com/document/u/1/d/16skW1o_ISP5pjdq9WUVcttJNgndO88W5cMZw3YwB3qc/pub?embedded=true

Another good resource to find more about Intersex Awareness Day and other groups is the website of OII Intersex International (Organisation Internationale des Intersexués – Organization Intersex International): <https://oii.org.au/31635/intersex-awareness-day-2017/>

A graphic with a yellow background featuring a large, stylized heart shape in a darker yellow. The text "Intersex Awareness Day 26 October" is written in a bold, purple, sans-serif font, centered within the heart.

**Intersex
Awareness Day
26 October**

OII also started *Intersex Solidarity Day*, a day to support the ongoing battle for intersex human rights. “This day is also known as the Intersex Day of Remembrance: It marks the birthday of Herculine Barbin, who was born 178 years ago, on November 8th, 1838 in France and whose memoirs were made public by Michel Foucault.”

For some positive videos celebrating intersex persons, please watch the series that OII Intersex International produced: <https://vimeo.com/oii europe>. For a more educational video, please watch a recording of the "Human Rights of Intersex People" seminar that took place on Sept. 8th 2015 in the European Parliament, Strasbourg, France, facilitated by the European Parliament's LGBTI Intergroup: <https://vimeo.com/139434295>

❖ 5 Intersex Misconceptions

1. Is a person who is intersex a hermaphrodite?

No. The mythological term “hermaphrodite” implies that a person is both fully male and fully female. This is a physiologic impossibility. The words “hermaphrodite” and “pseudo-hermaphrodite” are stigmatizing and misleading words.⁶

2. ‘Same-sex marriage’ and intersex are unrelated!

For the majority of the world, only those legally defined as ‘a man’ or ‘a woman’ can get married. So intersex people, especially those who don’t identify within this binary, are currently forced to legally be a man or a woman in order to marry. There’s even an Australian court case in the 80s whereby a marriage was annulled because the “husband” in the marriage was intersex and found to not really be a “male” by the judge. More details of the case can be found here: <https://oii.org.au/21183/intersex-people-and-marriage-analysis/>
<http://www.thestirrer.com.au/leave-no-one-behind-intersex-marriage/>

3. All intersex people are born with penises and vaginas.

No. The term intersex covers a spectrum of medical conditions and chromosomal differences⁷ ranging from hypospadias (when someone’s pee hole isn’t where it’s supposed to be), to conditions where people have one testis and one ovary. In the case of people with AIS, they have XY chromosomes and look female on the outside, but don’t have uteruses and have testes instead of ovaries.⁸



There are even some types of intersex that haven’t been fully diagnosed, in that they don’t fit into the exact cluster of characteristics that match a known syndrome. These people are literally one of a kind! More important than there being a range of biological expressions of intersex is that people *experience* intersex differently.⁹

⁶ http://www.isna.org/fag/what_is_intersex

⁷ <http://www.isna.org/fag/conditions>

⁸ <http://www.thestirrer.com.au/leave-no-one-behind-intersex-marriage/>

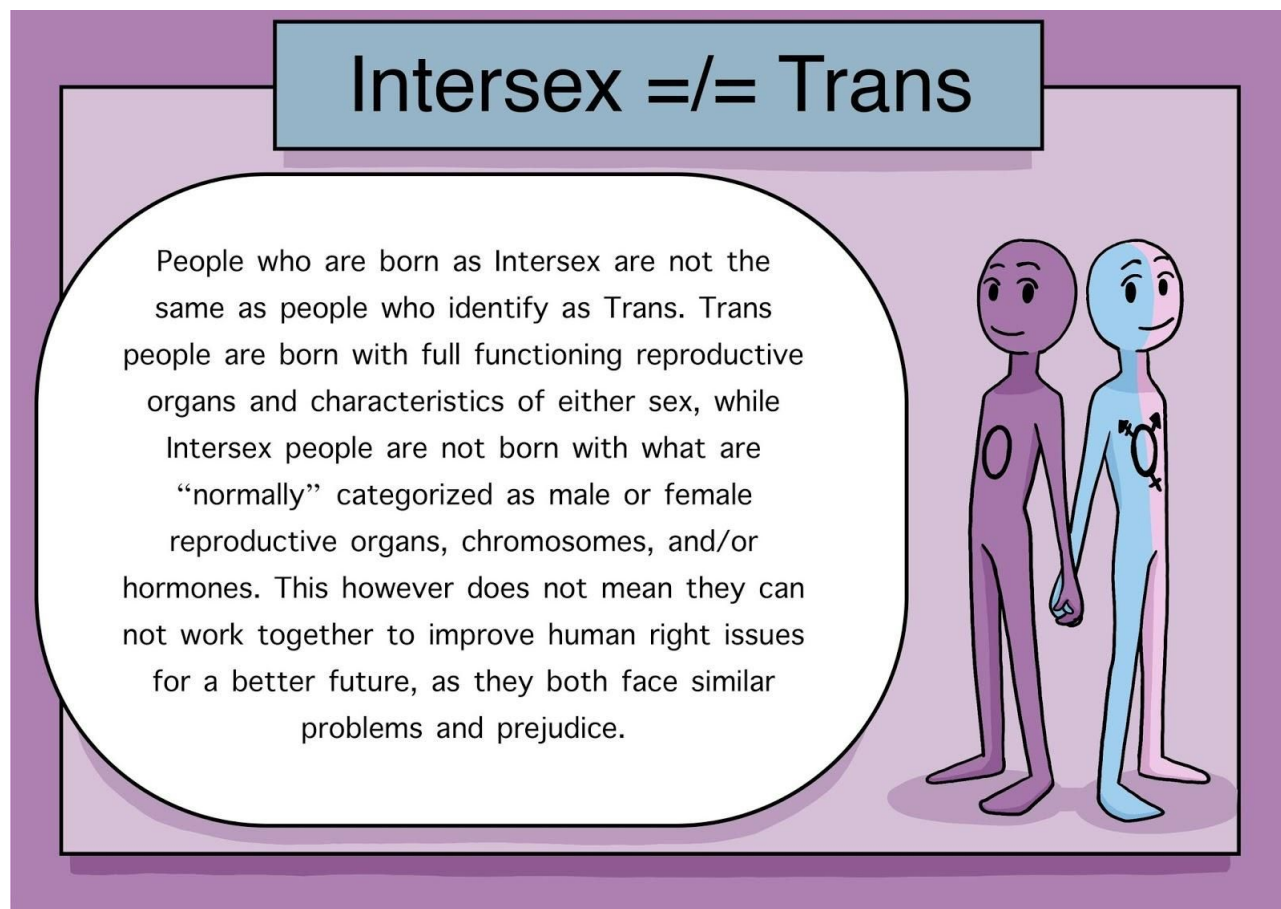
⁹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/intersex-celebrating-the-beauty-in-difference-a7339656.html>

4. Intersex is the same as transgender, right?

“Intersex is about sex, and transgender is about gender. It’s [as] easy as that”¹⁰

Dennis Van Der Veur, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

People who identify as transgender are usually people who are born with “typical” male or female anatomies, but their gender identity does not align with their sex. This is where the well-intended, yet problematic, expression “born into the wrong body” comes from. People who are intersex, however, have an anatomy that is not considered typically male or female. As the two groups are different and not dependent of each other, a person can be both intersex and transgender. In spite of any similarities though, these two groups should not be and cannot be thought of as one.¹¹



This amazing artwork is by Jun Collins: <https://collinsjun.carbonmade.com/>

5. Intersex people are extremely rare.

Depending on how wide your definition of intersex and rare is, the prevalence of intersex conditions ranges from 1 out of 100 people, to 1 in every 2,000. Even if you take the 1 in 2,000 number, that means that intersex individuals are as common as redheads. I wouldn't say that's so rare, as to uncommon. Like redheads, it is extremely normal though!¹²

For some more myths, check out this: <http://www.iwgregorio.com/2014/09/13/5-myths-about-intersex-debunked/>

¹⁰ <https://vimeo.com/139434295>

¹¹ <http://interactyouth.org/post/100048044990/laverne-cox-is-on-this-weeks-faking-it-in-honor>
<http://www.isna.org/faq/transgender>

¹² <http://www.iwgregorio.com/2014/09/13/5-myths-about-intersex-debunked/>



Intersex Discrimination

Passports

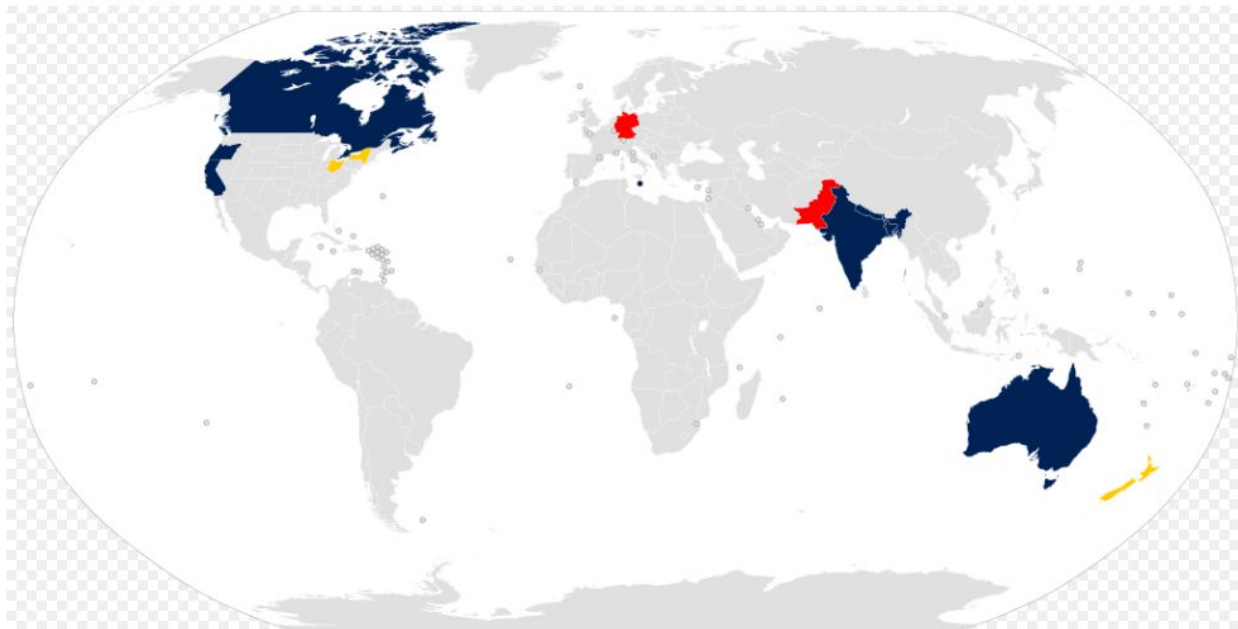
In 2015, Olivia Nyland wrote a good, easy-to-digest case study and breakdown of how intersex persons are discriminated against when trying to get a passport. Although some progression may have taken place in some countries/states since then, discrimination still largely remains:

<http://mashable.com/2015/11/07/intersex-passports/#TfgOL9K.mZq1>

World map showing legal recognition of nonbinary / third gender by country

Official sources (legislation / court orders / executive orders):

2007 Nepal, 2009 Pakistan, 2013 Germany, 2013 Bangladesh, 2013 New Zealand, 2013 Oregon, 2013 Australia, 2014 India, 2015 Malta, 2017 California, 2017 Canada



■ Nonbinary / third gender available as voluntary opt-in ■ Opt-in for intersex people only ■ Mandatory for some born intersex ■ Nonbinary / third gender not legally recognized / no data

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Sports

VICE produced an informative article in 2015 about intersex discrimination in sports, *The Battle Between Professional Sports and the Intersex Community*¹⁴. Some highlights include:

“Nowhere else is the divide between male and female so clearly defined than in professional sport. Here our understanding of gender is at its simplest.”

“sport is completely built on a dimorphic understanding of sex.”



¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_recognition_of_non-binary_gender#/media/File:World_map_nonbinary_gender_recognition.svg

¹⁴ https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/5gjzeq/the-battle-between-professional-sports-and-the-intersex-community.

“For some background, intersex variations affect men and women, but it's primarily an issue in sports when female athletes are concerned.”

“[...]The system of removing women from competition based on their testosterone levels is a product of fear and a lack of understanding.”

“[...] Issues for intersex athletes in sport begin before they get near the need for genetic testing—and the first issue is basic inclusivity.”

“Sadly, many athletes have been excluded and removed from competition before turning pro.”

Another recommended read is the journal article *Intersex and the Olympic Games* by Ritchie, Reynard and Lewis. Although a little dated, and uses medical rather than personal terminology in its description of the intersex community, it is an easy read. It reviews the historical impact of intersex in the area of international sports and discuss current thinking with regard to determination of sex in sports:

<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1258/jrsm.2008.080086>

Registration of Sex at Birth

Many countries legally require births to be certified and registered as male or female. This puts pressure on parents and health professionals to choose the sex of the new-born child and to intervene medically. Nevertheless, some countries allow birth certificates to be registered as sex neutral or issue it without a sex identifier. Gender markers in identity documents and birth registries should therefore be reviewed to better protect intersex people.¹⁵



Also, it is important to clarify that recognition before the law for intersex people is not about creating a third, separate category for the registration of people born with an intersex trait. To do so would risk segregating and potentially stigmatising intersex people. It would also remove their right to determine their own sex or gender. The third *International Intersex Forum* advocated that

¹⁵ <http://fra.europa.eu/en/press-release/2015/rights-intersex-people-are-too-often-overlooked>

intersex infants should be registered as either female or male with the awareness that, like all people, they may grow up to identify with a different sex or gender. At that future point, they should be able to choose from the full range of sex and/or gender options on official documents, including those outside binary, male and female classifications. Like the population as a whole, most intersex people will choose to identify simply as male or as female. For many, that may be a hard fought choice, as either they have been assigned an incorrect sex at birth or they are assumed to be a third sex. The decision to have one's sex listed as a non-binary or third sex must be entirely voluntary for any individual.¹⁶



In some parts of Asia, intersex people have been allowed to amend sex details on birth certificates or other official documents. However, this is not typically based on principles of self-determination. Instead it is linked to medical requirements to 'normalise' any physical gender ambiguity. Requiring all intersex people to undergo medical or surgical procedures to gain legal recognition undermines the right to recognition before the law and to protection from medical abuses, as well as the right to physical integrity.¹⁷

For more information please see page 77, of *Promoting and Protecting Human Rights in relation to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristics*:

http://www.asiapacificforum.net/media/resource_file/SOGI_and_Sex_Characteristics_Manual_86Y1pVM.pdf

¹⁶ http://www.asiapacificforum.net/media/resource_file/SOGI_and_Sex_Characteristics_Manual_86Y1pVM.pdf

¹⁷ http://www.asiapacificforum.net/media/resource_file/SOGI_and_Sex_Characteristics_Manual_86Y1pVM.pdf

Genital Mutilation

Since *Vogue* model Hanne Gaby Odiele came out as intersex in January 2017, *Vogue* has been vocal in its advocacy against intersexphobia. Vera Papisova and Evaan Kheraj writes an easy to digest article on how doctors perform unnecessary surgeries on intersex children without consent and it's still legal. The rationality of parents and health professionals is to try and form a child's genitalia into binary forms. This is growing opposition as it perpetuates cosmetic surgery in children without consent among other reasons:

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/intersex-genital-mutilation>



Another article which is enlightening by The Independent explains how genital mutilation for intersex children differs from children that are male/female and religious-oriented mutilation.¹⁸

“ It's really time for
(doctors) to answer the
question: Why should
parents have a right to
cut kids' genitals?

— Alice Dreger



Former Intersex Society of North America chairperson



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❖ What can I do?

Read up!

Among all the information here. These are 2 fantastic, yet brief, guides to intersex by the UN and InterACT respectively:

1. https://unfe.org/system/unfe-65-Intersex_Factsheet_ENGLISH.pdf
2. <https://interactadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/INTERSEX101.pdf>



¹⁸ <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/how-different-are-female-male-and-intersex-genital-cutting-fgm-circumcision-a7738016.html>

¹⁹ <http://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2016/04/intersex-conditions-pose-unique-challenges-for-unc-duke-doctors>

Watch Videos

If you prefer to watch a video, here are a few:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onRPZEPDoPs> [Pink Saltire] A great intro to intersex as a whole.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAUDKEI4QKI> [Boldy] Interviews with intersex people.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9q7ic533Vk> [Pidgeon] Fab Youtuber who is intersex, pictured below.²⁰

Watch Your Language

How to describe the fact that someone is intersex:

- Susan is an intersex person.
- Susan is intersex.
- Intersex people are ...
- People who are intersex...



Raise awareness!

- Bring up intersex issues with people.
- Instagram, facebook, tweet intersex information that supports and celebrates intersex persons.
- Don't share information that sensationalizes the intersex community.
- Be a voice when intersex people can't be heard.
- Confront notions that perpetuate binaries of sex, and intersex people's inexistence in society.
- Listen to intersex people, and share their experiences, struggles and requests (with consent).



Joseph Muscat ✓
@JosephMuscat_JM

Bodily diversity should be as insignificant as
the colour of one's eyes -JM #FreeAndEqual
#UNGA2017

11:39 PM - 20 Sep 2017

²⁰ <http://stop.genitalmutilation.org/post/Intersex-Protest-2-DSDnet-Belgium-Pidgeon-Pagonis>

²¹ <https://twitter.com/silvanagius>



Support Resources

InterACT

Although American-centred, this wonderful organisation, InterACT has an abundance of great resources in English: <https://interactadvocates.org/resources/intersex-brochures/>

They also provide a great list of other organisations (here are a few which may be relevant):

[Accord Alliance](#)

[Bodies Like Ours](#)

[CARES Foundation](#)

[DSD Families](#)

[HelpUsAdopt.org](#)

[ILGA Europe](#)

[ILGA World](#)

[Intersex Initiative](#)

[Intersex & Genderqueer Recognition Project](#)

[Intersex Trust Aotearoa New Zealand](#)

[Intersex UK](#)

[Klinefelter's Syndrome Association \(UK\)](#)

[Beautiful You MRKH Foundation](#)

[Organisation Intersex International Australia](#)

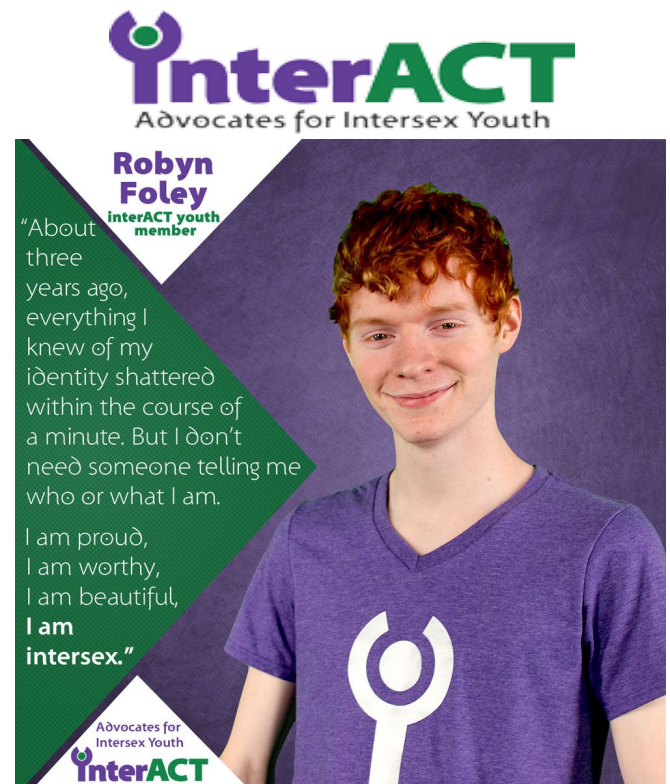
[Organisation Intersex International Germany](#)

[Organisation Intersex International USA](#)

[The Interface Project](#)

For the full list, please visit:

<https://interactadvocates.org/resources/intersex-organizations/>



Intersex Society of North America

Although now closed, and dated in its terminology regarding trans people, the *Intersex Society of North America* has many resources: http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex



OII

The United States affiliate of the Organization Intersex International (OII) has a wonderful list of resources too: <http://oii-usa.org/intersex-links/>

²² <https://interactadvocates.org/intersex-awareness-day/>

