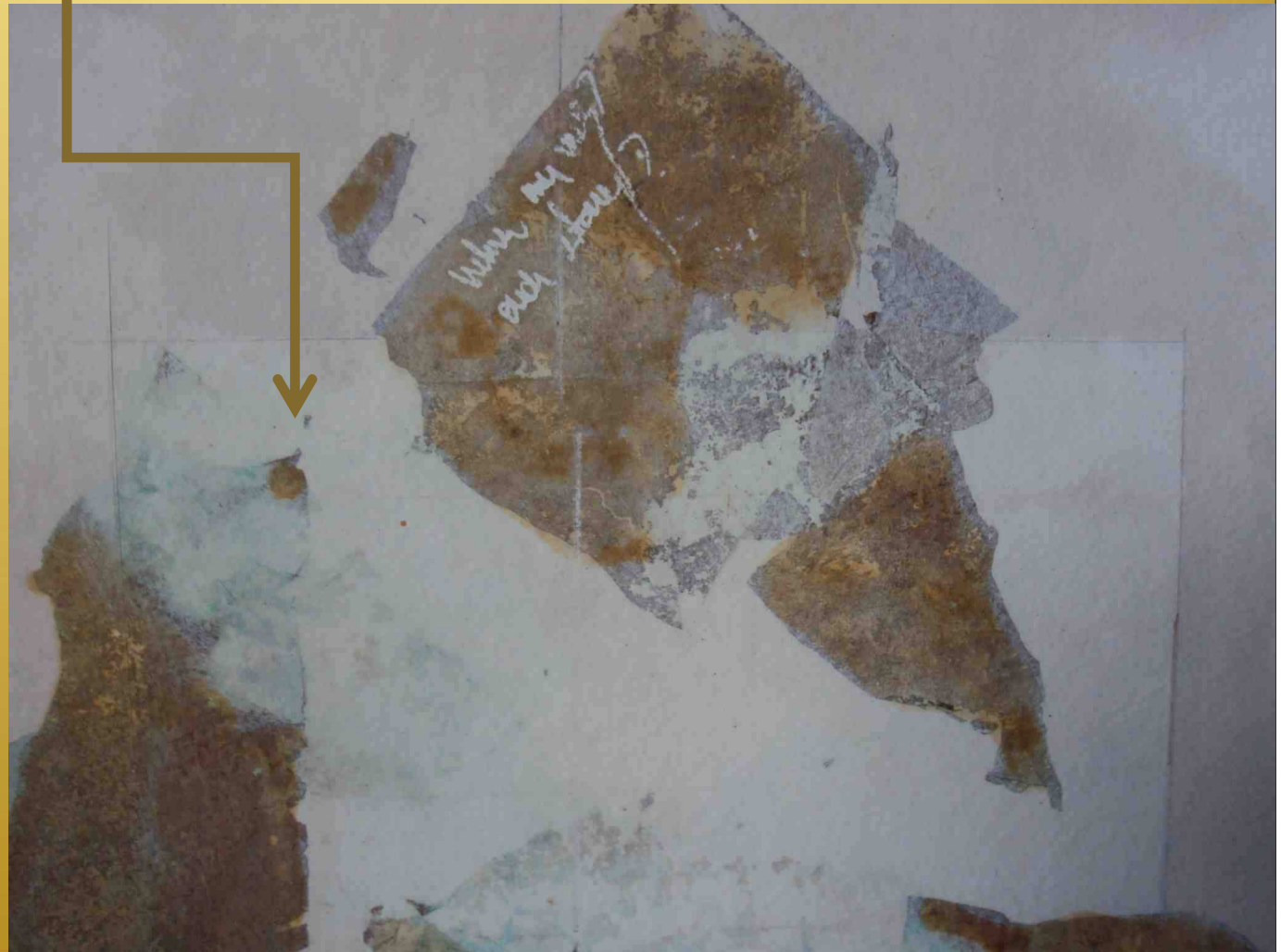


**Sexual politics and the “science of sex”:  
Common threads, fractures and potentially  
virtuous liaisons in the 21st century**



20<sup>th</sup> World Congress for Sexual Health, June 2011

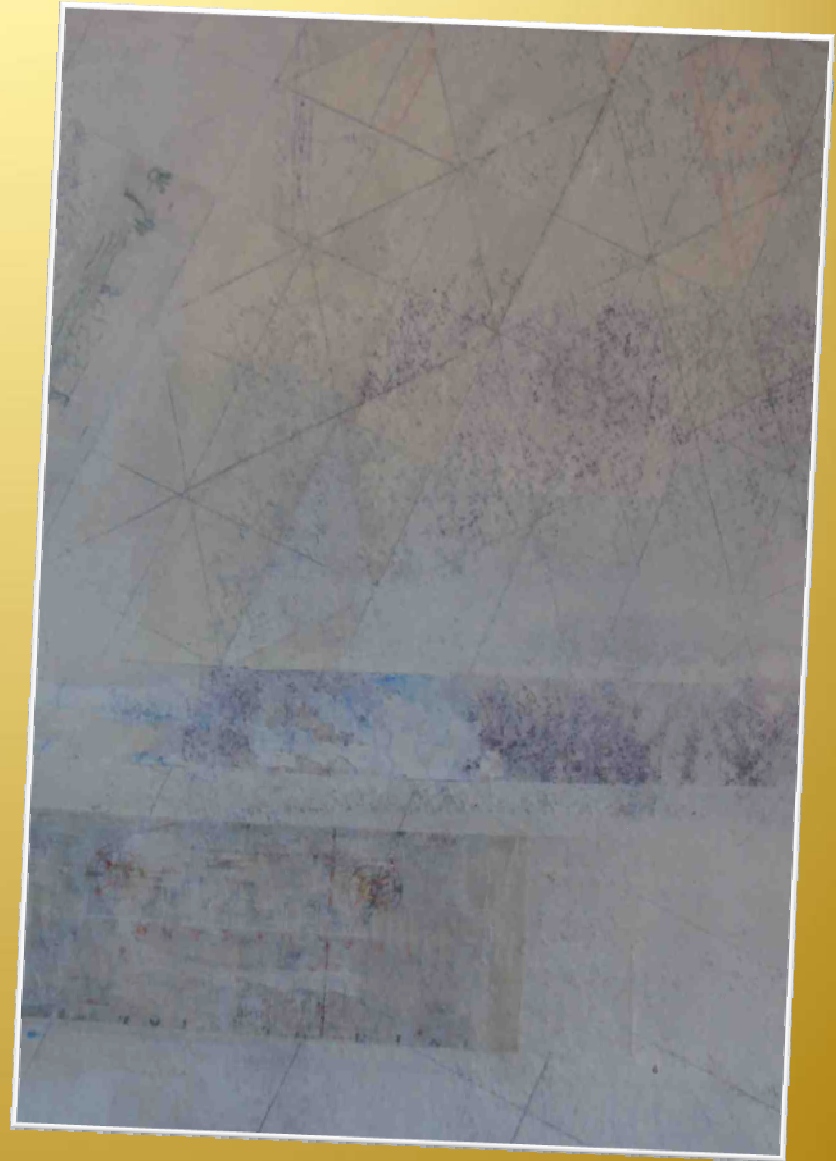
it is a pleasure to be here  
speaking from a border line

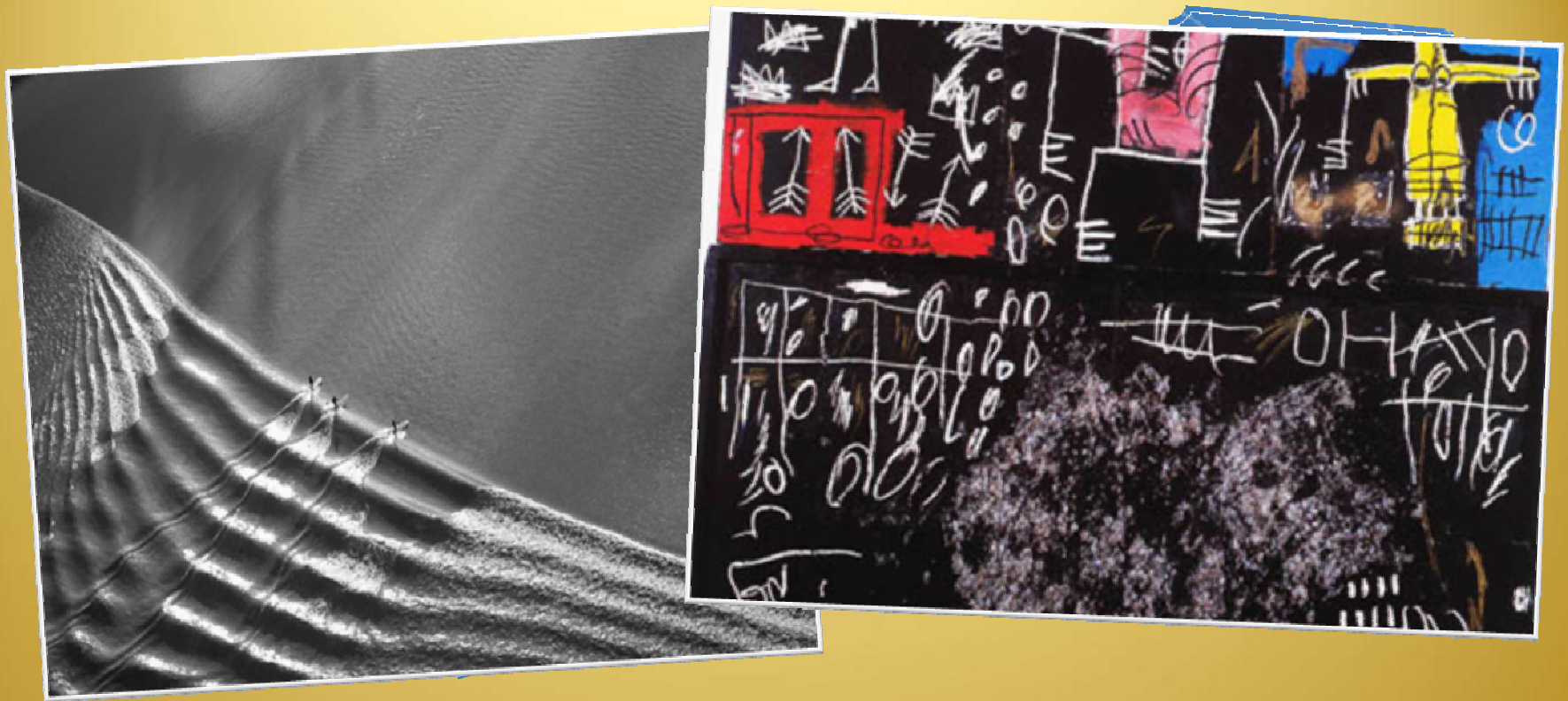


# cartographies



The term conjures ancient navigation maps, whose distorted descriptions of territories, geographies and creatures tell more about the minds of those who have drawn them, than of the environments and beings they describe.





## sexualitiescapes

structural trends, the biopolitical maze, the [said] sad return  
of the religious” as dogmatism, waves of rights claims.



# “sex thinking” across cultures and histories



Descriptions of and prescriptions on sex are found across kinship systems, philosophical inquiries, religious doctrines and medical knowledge, throughout cultures and histories.

The Sambia sex rules, analyzed by Gilbert's Herdt; Plato's Symposium; the Leviticus, tantric yoga doctrines, Yin and Yang; the “discovery of the clitoris” by Mateo Colombo in the Renaissance...



**the chorus line of sex thinking is long...**  
**it is both symphonic**

Freud, Hirshfeld, Ulrichs,  
Craft – Ebbing, Ellis, Kinsey,  
Master and Johnson, Money,  
contemporary demographers  
and epidemiologists who  
research fertility, reproductive  
health and HIV/AIDS, sexual  
medicine investigators and  
practitioners, sexuality  
educators, sex therapists



## and atonal



Fourier, Engels, Mills, Goldman,  
Kollontai, Salomé, Mead,  
Malinowski, Reich, Beauvoir,  
Beauvoir, Millet. Mitchell, Greer,  
Rubin, Foucault, Gagnon, Deleuze  
and Guatari, Weeks, Plummer, Butler,  
Grosz, Sedwick, Preciado, Hubbard,  
Elredge, Fausto – Sterling



## CONTESTATIONS

Hirschfeld's gathered over 5,000 signatures for a petition to overturn Paragraph 175 of the German Penal Code. Signatories included : Albert Einstein, Hermann Hesse, Käthe Kollwitz, Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann

Freud' overarching critique of Western culture departing from “sexuality” was not exactly trivial  
(even when we may disagree with many of his other ideas).



# the pioneers' environment

Europe was stricken by civil strives, wars and poverty, expelling millions of migrants to the new worlds. Politics was plagued by terrorism. Religious dogmatisms arose in reaction to Darwinism and increasing secularization. Anti-Semitism gradually became a gran ideology

**Imperialism and colonial tentacles expanded, provoking wars, stemming rebellions and also transplanting Western racial, gender and sex orders.**

These trends culminating in the 20<sup>th</sup> century World Wars, the so called “Era of Extremes”



# specters

British Penal Code, sex slavery and prostitution,  
abortion the hermaphrodite British Penal Code,  
sex slavery and prostitution, abortion, the  
hermaphrodite British Penal Code, sex slavery  
and prostitution, abortion, the hermaphrodite  
British Penal, sex slavery and prostitution, abortion  
the hermaphrodite, British Penal Code, sex slavery and  
prostitution, the hermaphrodite , British Penal Code,  
sex slavery and prostitution, the hermaphrodite



# shifts

from 19<sup>th</sup> manufactures to 21<sup>st</sup> century finance,  
services, science and technology.  
boundaries between natural and artificial have  
been blurred  
connections spread across the globe  
societies have been deeply transformed and  
keep changing  
effects on sexuality, gender, generations and  
kinship structures were glaring and continue to  
evolve.

While discriminatory and criminal legislation is still on place in many countries, laws have changed and, when not, they are being contested practically everywhere

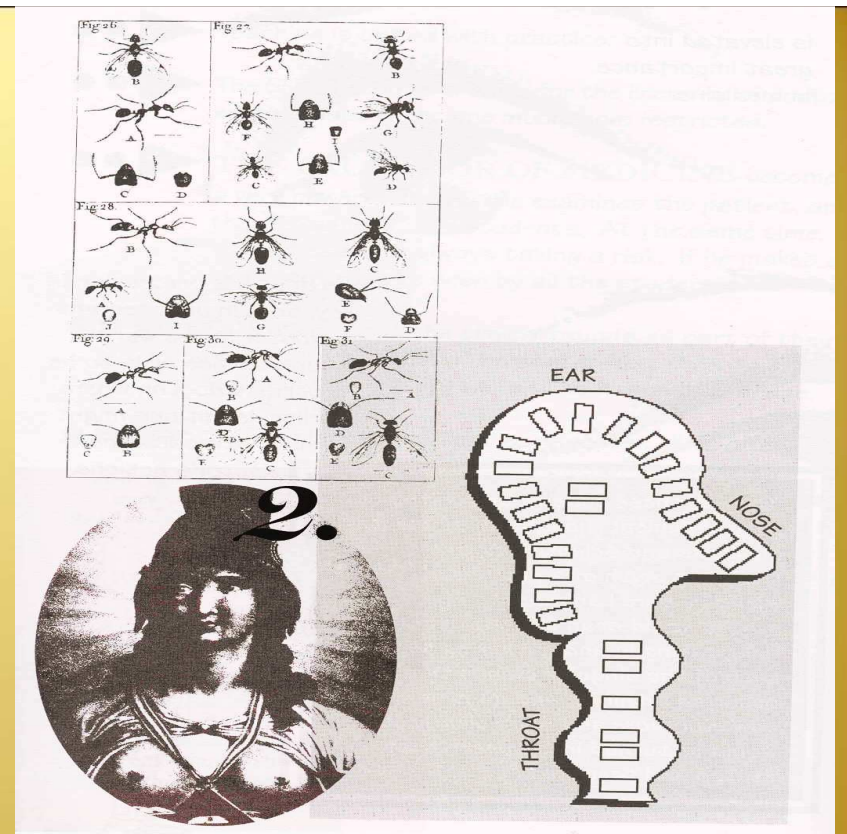


Since 1995, when sexual rights and sexual orientation, as a non justifiable basis of discrimination, were debated in the Beijing Women's Conference as consensus has been gradually emerging.

The principles of existing human rights instruments must be applied to all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity, as spelled out by the Yogyakarta Principles (2007).

In fact a discussion on the subject is evolving these days at the level of the UN Human Rights Council.

**Contemporary sexual politics is “classical” . It involves organizing, protesting, public debates, law and policy reforms, judicial litigation.**



**It is biopolitical. It contests demographic and census categories, of sexual pedagogies, scientific paradigms and medical protocols and classifications**

Those bodies which do not anatomically correspond to the current western medical classifications are classified under the label of intersexuality, a condition that by itself is considered pathological, **whereas the medical classification is nowadays not yet questioned.** Transsexuality is also conceived as a problematical reality by itself. **However, the gender ideology which psychiatry develops, is still not questioned**

## **MANIFESTO OF THE STOP TRANSPATHOLOGIZATION CAMPAIGN**



## SHADOWS AND THREATS



inequalities and poverty: not all can  
access sexual rights and health through  
markets

dogmatic religious forces, operating in in  
both “real politics” and biopolitics.



## SHADOWS AND THREATS



rights do not automatically translate into  
realities

rights to protect against harm are not yet  
positively framed sexual rights


states as violators and the shifting targets  
of criminal laws

*“There should be as little restriction as possible to the flow of information via the Internet, except in few, exceptional, and limited circumstances prescribed by international human rights law. The full guarantee of the right to freedom of expression must be the norm, and any limitation considered as an exception”* (Frank de la Rue, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, 2011)



*Another reason to mourn the normalization of a surveillance society lies in the link between sexual privacy and other kinds of liberation. That is why closed societies monitor their citizens' sexual lives* (Naomi Wolf, 2011)





states of exception,  
surveillance, public security,  
societies of control

human rights are indispensable  
and insufficient

is it possible to build bridges and enhance joint efforts to preserve gains and curtail the forces and threats that hover over the landscape?





wandering in rocky terrains

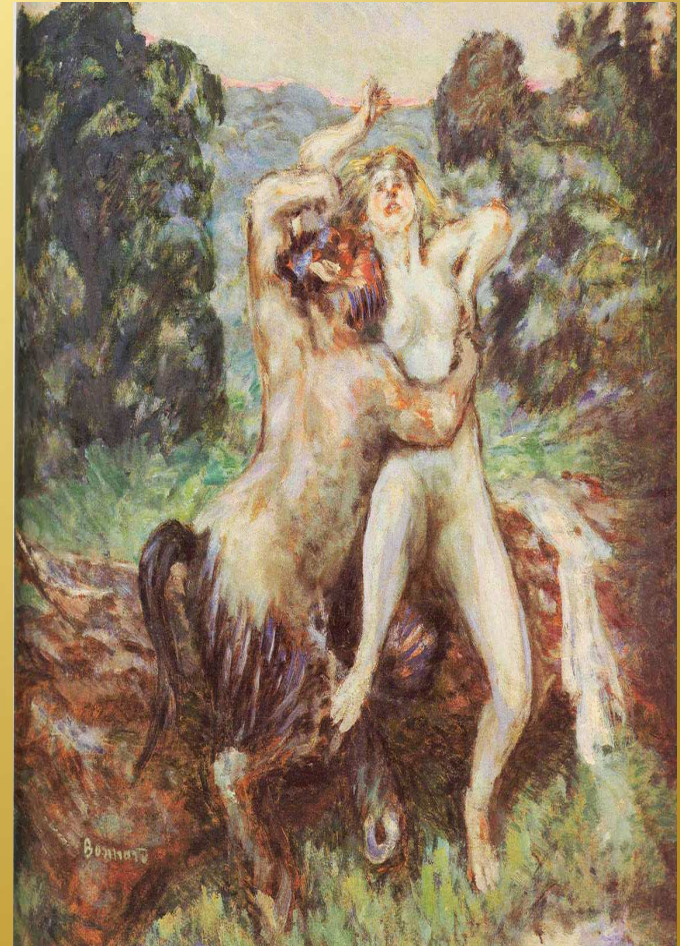


No mention heteronormativity or  
intersexuality. Why so?

## heteronormativity and its effects :

Sexual dismorphity = gender inequalities (brains, muscles, hormones, behavior, sexual drives and practices).

In its extreme manifestations: the rape of women is explained by the drive of the selfish gene to perpetuate itself (Elredge, 2005)

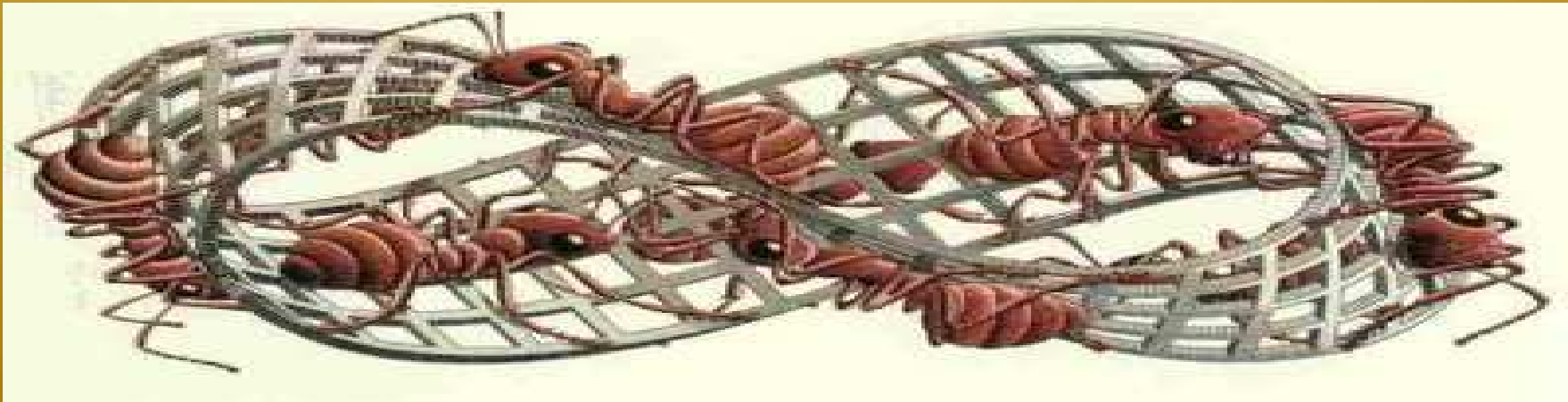


**the silence on intersexuality prevent us  
from hear the voices of intersex persons**

*Talking of mutilation has a stronger ethical political impact and allows to connect the intervention aimed at fixing intersex bodies with other practices such as female genital mutilation. Mutilation refers to something that cuts not only each person's possibilities but also the possibilities that each culture has to recognize the body diversity of its members. (Mauro Cabral, Global Action for Trans Equality)*



*“Sex and nature, are thought to be real, while gender and culture as seen as constructed. These are false dichotomies. Complex and subtle interaction exists between the biological and the social/political that must be understood and reexamined. We still do not know enough about bodies pliability. Can we envisage ourselves being at the same time natural and unnatural/artificial, to conceive the body as a system that simultaneously produces and is produced by social meanings, just any other biological organism results from the combined and simultaneous actions on nature and its processes “ (Anne Fausto-Sterling, 2000)*





At the OAS  
assembly last  
week



Is it reasonable or  
ethical to merely  
qualify these trans  
persons who were there  
fighting as bearers of  
pathologies or victims?



The conditions prevailing in sexual politics today may provide a privileged opportunity for those not so easy dialogues to prosper, paving, perhaps, novel ways of producing prudential knowledge for a decent, just and freer society.



Thank you !

