

1. Mark your confusion by highlighting or underlining anything you don't understand.
2. Show evidence of a close reading (connections, predictions, questions, clarifying, summarizing, challenging, etc.).
3. Write a 1+ page reflection.

Advocates Say Female Genital Mutilation Is On Rise In U.S., Call On Government To Act

Eleanor Goldberg, HuffingtonPost, 5/18/2014

Available reports make it seem as though the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is happening only in far-off places -- like rural parts of Africa and the Middle East. But the brutal tradition is actually growing right here in America, and advocates are pushing for more updated research to prove it.

The U.S. officially banned FGM -- procedures that involve partial or total removal of female genitalia or damage to other female organs for non-medical reasons -- back in 1996. But advocates say that the U.S. has been lagging in implementing those laws and in keeping accurate FGM records.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) researched the prevalence of the FGM in 1997 and hasn't updated its records since, making its current estimates tenuous at best.

According to the CDC, at least 150,000 to 200,000 girls in the U.S. are at risk of being subjected to FGM.

But in its exhaustive report released last year, Sanctuary for Families, a nonprofit that works with domestic abuse victims -- concluded that FGM is on the rise in the United States. It found that the number of girls and women at risk for FGM in the U.S. increased by 35 percent between 1990 and 2000, according to an analysis from the 2000 U.S. Census.

Experts say the rise in cases can be partially attributed to the increasing number of immigrants to the U.S. from places where FGM is widely practiced.

To put an end to the cruel practice -- one that has such dire consequences as organ damage, recurring urinary tract infections and birth complications -- victims and advocates are pushing for a basic solution. They want the U.S. government to first commission a report that details the number of women who have been affected by FGM and the number of girls and women who are at risk.

Jaha Dukureh, 24, currently lives in Atlanta, and was forced to undergo FGM when she was a child living in Gambia. Dukureh continues to suffer the excruciating effects of the procedure, which was why she agreed to be the face of a Change.org petition that is pushing President Obama to take more meaningful action in collecting FGM data.

"Many in the U.S. hear about FGM and think it only happens in far away lands. Unfortunately, this is far from reality," Dukureh said in a video posted to Change.org. "I hear from girls

everyday that were born here in the United States who have been through FGM. These young women are your average American teenagers -- some of them you know, some of them you went or go to school with."

Advocates say collecting data is key in order to make members of the medical and law enforcement fields aware that the issue should be on their radar. Exposing the figures could also show that the U.S. isn't willing to ignore the practice any longer.

"Parents are afraid to do anything that will get them deported," Dr. Nawal Nour, founder of the African Women's Health Practice at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, told NBC News.

Experts say that penalizing people who carry out FGM is critical, especially considering that the U.S. has only successfully prosecuted one person who violated the law, according to NBC.

Khalid Adam, an Ethiopian immigrant, was found guilty of aggravated battery and cruelty to children in 2006 for removing his daughter's clitoris with scissors when she was 2 years old, USA Today reported.

The U.S. government has shown some commitment recently to cracking down on the practice of FGM.

While some families perform FGM in covert and illegal ceremonies in the U.S., many take their children out of the country to get the procedure done in what has been dubbed "vacation cutting," according to Sanctuary for Families.

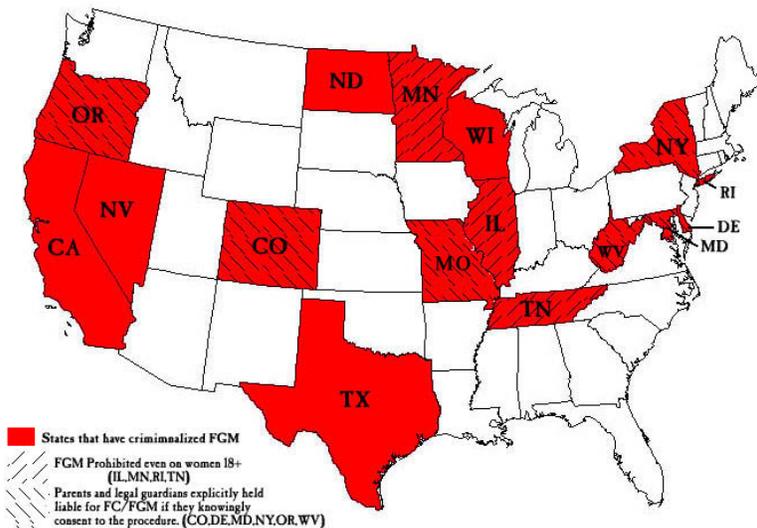
Last year, Obama signed the Transport for Female Genital Mutilation Act, making it illegal to take a girl out of the U.S. to get subjected to FGM.

While advocates have lauded such progress, they still say that the critical first step right now is uncovering and revealing just how many girls and women are at risk in the U.S.

"The numbers need to be updated," Nour told NBC, "but this needs funding and no one is interested."

United States Legislation for Female Circumcision/Female Genital Mutilation

Source: [Female Genital Mutilation: A Guide to Laws and Policies Worldwide](#) by Nahid Touba



(Last updated 2/7/2007)