

# Mutilation

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A few cases have been seen by Las Vegas medical practitioners, but none reported seeing them locally. Dr. Larry Edwards, a local gynecologist, said he had seen one case (a clitoridectomy) while interning in New York. While Susan Garlow, a Clark County Health District nurse practitioner, saw a case about four years ago in Los Angeles.

"(The woman) was very pleased about her situation and assumed it was the way it was supposed to be," Garlow said.

But Chicago-based AMA spokesperson Wendy Morphew said, "I would think to the extent there are immigrants coming (to Las Vegas)...I would imagine it

is being done frequently among that segment of the population."

While still shedding tears for herself, Ramsey recalled one friend whose death was caused by FGM.

Circumcised the same day, her friend died from hemorrhaging. Her family told others the friend's death was caused by a headache, Ramsey said.

"They always cover up. They used to bury little girls all the time. I used to wonder why God didn't like little girls. Why didn't they bury little boys?" Ramsey asked, on the verge of tears, while explaining her story.

Her memories drive her work with FORWARD USA.

"Every day I reach five to six

people. That's how I've been successful in my work," Ramsey said. "It's easier to reach the women, because they were deprived themselves."

But the men are a different story. Groups of men have even physically confronted Ramsey insisting mutilation is needed to keep women in line.

After all, "did she want their women to turn out like American women?" they asked her.

Despite current hostilities, Ramsey's diligent efforts have attracted the attention of California state

Assemblywoman Liz Figueroa who recently authored a bill which would make the practice a felony. While experts said current child abuse laws could cover the matter, many feel a more specific law would aide in criminal prosecutions.

Minnesota, North Dakota,

Tennessee and New York have already passed anti-FGM laws. And similar bills are pending in New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Texas, said an aide for U.S. Congresswoman Pat Schroeder, D-Colo.

Shroeder and Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., have attached provisions to pending immigration bills in the both houses of Congress. Shroeder's bill would provide education

about the health and legal consequences of the procedure; while Reid's provision would make the practice criminal punishable by up to five years in prison.

But no matter what happens, Ramsey said to the Saturday crowd, "even if it costs my life, even if it costs my everything, I'm not going to stop until FGM is eradicated from the earth. I'm not going to stop."

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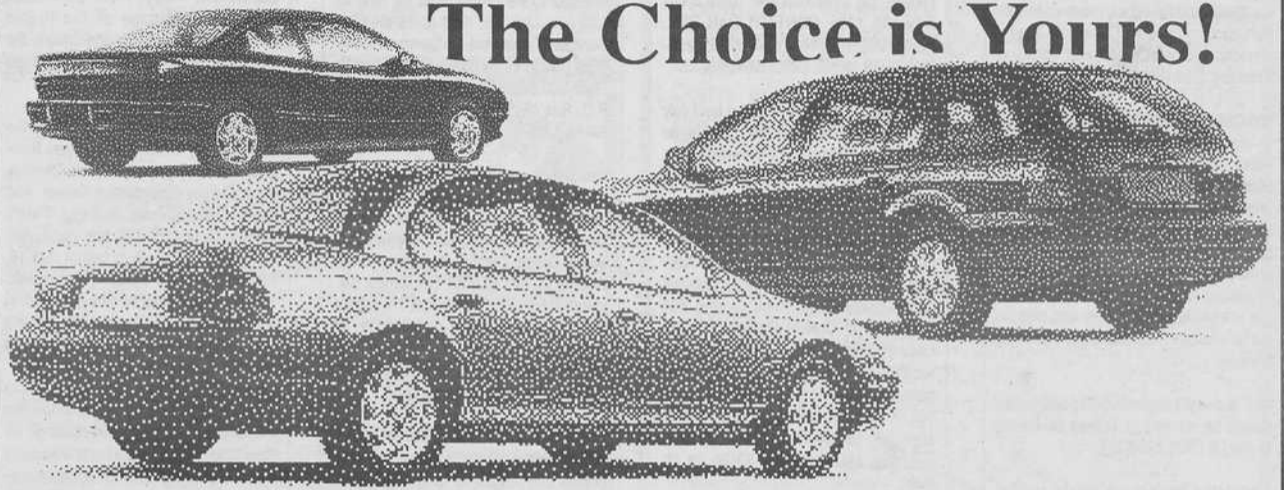
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