the point
Journal of Body Piercing

In this Issue
Our History: Where We Came From

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FROM THE EDITORS

KENDRA JANE B
MARINA PECORINO
The Point Editors

• Kendra Jane B

“You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world’s problems at once, but don’t ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own.”

~ Michelle Obama

I have a personal belief that the piercing industry and community is in a very unique and wonderful position regarding our history. Since piercing as a modern phenomenon began less than a century ago, we have the ability to learn firsthand from the forefathers and mothers that made what we do possible. We can talk to them in person about the failures and successes they have seen to date, and use this to better ourselves and our craft. At the same time, our industry is young enough that each and every one of us has the opportunity and chance to make the same type of impact on our industry going forward. We may mourn the loss of those that have taught us and paved the way, but as they leave vacancies we will need leaders, shamans, healers, and teachers to step up to lead the next generation of piercers.

In this issue we give thanks and look over some of the highlights of our young industry’s history. Please note this is not a full nor extensive anthropology of our history, but merely a highlight reel if you will. It is an issue to make you feel nostalgic, but more importantly it is an issue to make you contemplate the culture of our industry and where we are going. This is a topic we plan to tackle more in depth in our next issue (the first of 2019.)

If history has shown us one thing it is that complacency and apathy will get us nowhere, that a popularity contest is one that no one wins long term. During November and December, the Association of Professional Piercers held our 2018 Board of Directors election to fill three upcoming vacancies. We want to thank our participating Members who let their voices be heard and helped us reach quorum. We are also excited to announce that, as of our 2019 Conference in May, these three Board positions will be filled by Becky Dill, Cale Belford, and Monica Sabin. It will be wonderful to see the direction our organization and industry will take with the help of these strong guiding forces.

• Marina Pecorino

As a teenager I became a piercing enthusiast after a persistent friend convinced me to get pierced with them; soon, I began frequenting my local shop at every opportunity. During my original career as a school teacher, my first stop at the end of each school year was the studio to eagerly get some of my visible piercings back. Then I realized the classroom wasn’t the best fit for me, and as my final school year ended and my existential crisis began, I once again stopped by the studio to get pierced—my favorite form of self-soothing—only to learn that the main piercer was moving and they were looking to hire an apprentice. Now, I have been an industry professional for more than ten years.

In the beginning, I knew very little about most forms of body modification, but was eager to learn. I apprenticed under Bink Williams—a Member of the Association of Professional Piercers since 1996 and close friends with some of the founding Members—so I was fortunate to have an expansive library to peruse and an immediate link to the APP. Among other works, the shop library included A Brief History of the Evolution of Body Adornment in Western Culture: Ancient Origins and Today, ReSearch: Modern Primitives, and The Piercing Bible. We also had three ring binders containing well-loved back issues of PFIQ: Piercing Fans International Quarterly and The Point. During slow times at the shop (of which there were plenty back then) I would read through the library and poke around on BMEzine. We reference some of this influential literature later in this issue, and would encourage you to seek copies for your own edification.

Despite my fortunate start in the industry, until I started attending Conference in 2012 I remained isolated without much contact with other industry professionals outside of my own studio. Now that my main job is as Membership Administrator for the APP, I interact almost constantly with Members, piercers, enthusiasts, and the general public. The last few years have signifies a pretty immense shift in my professional life, so I welcome this opportunity to look back at where I came from and where our modern industry started. We hope you enjoy this issue, taking a stroll with us through body modification and piercing history.
Bink Williams and Elayne Angel c. 1995.

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Welcome to The Point: Journal of Body Piercing—Issue 85, where we celebrate our piercing history. There is so much to consider when we look at the history of piercing: of course, there is the anthropological and historical record. There is also our far more recent piercing “industry” or “community” history.

A knowledge of both is quite rewarding. One of the often overlooked resources for people interested in learning the recent history of piercing, and of the APP, is what you are reading right now—The Point. Our issues are available for free online and provide tremendous insight into the kind of battles piercers had to fight in the 1990s versus the challenges we face today. It is worthwhile to see that things like jewelry standards and safety requirements have been a part of the organization from the very beginning. It is also of no great surprise to see that our industry’s leaders, from piercers to manufacturers, were often active in and supportive of the APP from the very beginning.

It is somewhat expected that two of the people who come to my mind when I think of the production and editing of The Point have also released books. Both Elayne Angel (The Piercing Bible) and Jim Ward (Running the Gauntlet) have produced works that have educated and entertained piercers and the public.

The APP has also benefitted from the extensive and challenging work that has been performed by the Body Piercing Archive. This group of piercing enthusiasts has put thousands of hours into protecting our history and presenting it for us at our Conference. The APP is deeply appreciative of this committee and committee members for all of their hard work.

The APP Conference in May 2019 will feature a Body Piercing Archive exhibit about the life and work of Fakir Musafar. Fakir was a hugely influential figure, to our entire community and to me personally. The Association of Professional Piercers mourns his passing and celebrates his legacy. I encourage all APP Conference Attendees to make time for the Body Piercing Archive’s exhibit at the upcoming Conference.
IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS GAUNTLET

JIM WARD

Yes, humans have been piercing their bodies for millenia, so this title is not literally true. But in 1975 when Gauntlet was born, except for a handful of fetishists, the western world had largely forgotten this part of its history. That year marked the beginning of a revival that has taken the planet by storm. Thanks to Gauntlet, piercing shops have become a staple of the urban landscape.

Many of you have read my book Running the Gauntlet and are familiar with so many of the photos it contains. For this issue of The Point, I’ve dug back into my personal archives and chosen a number of mostly unpublished photos from Gauntlet’s early years to share.

For the first three years of its existence, I conducted business from my dilapidated old home. The shop opened in 1978. I hope you enjoy this stroll down memory lane.

Top to bottom, Doug Malloy in a candid moment; a young chap modeling the first incarnation of a Gauntlet t-shirt. I silk screened the design myself. At one point I attempted to dye some of them purple, but the widely available Rit dye faded rapidly to lavender; poet, performance artist, and out masochist Bob Flanagan in a 1982 video getting a Prince Albert and guiche piercing from Jim Ward. Shot by his mistress Sheree Rose, the video may be seen on the APPThePoint YouTube Channel. It should be viewed as an historical document and in no way considered instructional.
My home on San Vicente Boulevard in West Hollywood where Gauntlet was born and from which I conducted business for three years prior to the opening of the studio.
Top to bottom, exterior view of the shop front; my secretary’s desk and work area. On the stool bottom left is visible a layout board for an issue of PF10; the showcase and my desk and work area. Through the opening at the far right is the jewelry making area. Seeing the ash tray on the display counter, we forget that smoking was acceptable in those days.
Top to bottom, my friend Diane at the jeweler’s bench; in the opposite corner of the room is the piercing area shielded by a folding screen on the right. This studio would not meet today’s APP standards, but was acceptable at that particular time; me wearing a second generation Gauntlet T-shirt. It was purple with a glittery gold design. The peacock wallpaper raised a number of eyebrows, but finding anything featuring our signature purple at that time was a challenge.
If you were not present, it would be hard to imagine how incredibly different "the field" of body piercing was in the 1980s, when I landed my job as a professional piercer and manager at Gauntlet, Inc.

At the time, piercing was some years away from being an actual industry. As far as we know, there was still just that one specialty studio in the country (and possibly the world)! Body piercing was all but unheard of. Literally—most people had simply never heard of it. The general public thought that women's earlobes were the only site for such ornamentation, and maybe some noses in exotic, distant lands. Body piercing, when it was perceived at all, was viewed as underground, radical, and exceedingly deviant.

Even the National Tattoo Association (NTA) did not welcome Gauntlet at their conventions. Despite multiple attempts to rent a booth, they refused to offer the simple courtesy of a reply. They felt that piercing was outlandish and would give tattooing a "bad reputation."

We had a tattoo artist client who used to buy jewelry from Gauntlet and do some piercings on the side. He confided that if his tattoo artist boss knew that he was pierced, and that he was performing piercings on others, he would be fired for being a pervert!

When I first became employed at Gauntlet, the clientele was still primarily gay leathermen (like its owner/founder, Jim Ward himself), and others from the BDSM community. Jim Ward is the person who essentially brought piercing out of the bedroom and dungeon. Initially, "kinky" people who were exploring the limits of their bodies were about the only ones engaging in piercing. We put holes in ears here and there, but mostly we pierced nipples and genitals, and the occasional septum on a willing slave or daring dominant.

At that time, piercing was very much about sex, eroticism, sensation, and enhancement. Piercings were for function, and the aesthetics were somewhat secondary. It used to be more about how a piercing felt than how it looked.

Then piercing got some media attention, including an article in the National Enquirer, with the sensational headline "Bizarre New Fashion Fad Turns Folks into Human Pincushions." As melodramatic as this tabloid fodder was, it caught the attention of a lot of interested parties. That coverage was definitely responsible for putting tongue piercing before the public eye and its popularity soared afterward! Tongue piercing had not been in the repertoire of usual puncture sites in those days. At All.
In addition to the National Enquirer piece and other print articles, we got a fair bit of television coverage too, including CNN, After Hours, MTV, French TV, and Japanese TV. An old syndicated news show called Inside Report filmed a noteworthy segment at Gauntlet in the late 1980s. I find it very illustrative of that era.

I’m rockin’ a piercing-purple skirt suit. The blazer’s padded shoulders set off my long curly, dyed-black Mohawk. As I speak there’s a text overlay on the screen reading, HOLE-EE COW!

Me: One of the other new piercings that is getting very popular, and it is rather painless to have done and very erotic: it’s the tongue piercing!

The poofy-haired anchorwoman, clad in a sassy leopard print dress (with massive shoulder pads), opines: “For most people, even getting their ears pierced is a traumatic experience. But imagine having your nipple or your navel pierced?! Body piercing is becoming a booming business, and not just with rock and rollers or radicals. This painful fad is becoming popular even with the yuppy crowd! Inside Report’s Angela Shelly shows us some folks who have more holes in their bodies than Swiss cheese!”

Cut to a Motley Crue music video with reporter’s voice-over: “It’s kind of your job when you’re a rock star. You’re supposed to shock people. Like Axl Rose of Guns n’ Roses, Nikki Sixx of Motley Crue, these two have a lot in common. No, not music; nipples! [Cut to close up image of a pierced male nipple with a captive ring.] Both of the rockers have recently gotten their nipples pierced at this shop [image of the Gauntlet storefront] in West Hollywood, California.

“But don’t think piercing is just for the raunchy and famous. A lot of regular people…and a few irregulars are pierced in places you never thought of—take navels.” This as they show a preppy short-haired young man getting his eyebrow pierced, then one of the Gauntlet staff strut ting down the street in SM-fashionable leather and chains, sporting septum and navel piercings.

Next, they interview a sincere young pierce
about her new navel piercing as she is bouncing a toddler on her hip. "It's a pretty exotic place, I thought; something out of the normal. Not everybody has one." [Though, of course, some years later, nearly anybody might have one!]

This show actually recorded my very first eyebrow piercing. Once the fixed bead ring was inserted and closed (of course we didn't have any NeoMetal curves back then), I looked over at the client and said—in all seriousness—"You are a wild man!" Yep, piercing was quite different in those days.

Soon piercing started to catch on with entertainers, artists, musicians, and others. Being located in Southern California, Gauntlet was well positioned to handle that clientele. In the late 1980s (coinciding with the release of the Re/Search book Modern Primitives), more varied types of people became interested in body art and modification. They wanted to decorate different areas including more ear and facial work, and surface piercings. There simply was no existing body of knowledge to draw from to fulfill many of these new requests. So, we moved forward as best we could, applying principles from our stock of "traditional" piercings whenever possible. It was an era of experimentation, informal research, and trial and error. And, yes...there were errors. Some piercings didn’t heal well and left scars. Fortunately, I have no real catastrophes to report (except for the disaster described on page 119 of The Piercing Bible, called "The Worst Piercing Story," which is about my own cheek piercings).

We were always honest about our experience (or lack thereof) for any atypical requests. But when the customers were up for trying, we did our utmost. It was acceptable to just... attempt something new—nearly anything. We didn’t yet know what the boundaries and possibilities were, so we had to feel for them. We pushed, to find out what worked. Compared to today, there was relatively little expected by our clients, which facilitated this process. If they were willing to ultimately walk away with a scar for the chance at a new piercing, we gave it a go.

The truth is, we did some foolish stuff. And once that initial period of exploration ran its course, I pretty much stuck to the piercings that routinely healed successfully and let go of the rest. I suppose it is ironic that I’m now viewed as a “conservative” piercer, given these origins.

Top to bottom, Elayne’s experimental wrist piercing; two photos of Joe Ruby of Borneo Joe and Flaming Bones jewelry. Many of his facial piercing placements were totally pioneering (and wildly attention-getting) at the time. It is fantastic to see that he still wears them to this day.
But my current attitude springs from having experimented a lot in my formative years.

Some of our early efforts come to mind. A number of them turned into very popular piercings; others, not so much.

In the 1970s, the first piercing I’d done on myself (other than an ear) was through a pinch of tissue just below the prominent bone on the outside of my left wrist. I was in high school at the time and was afraid someone would see it and send me to the looney bin, so I kept it in for just a few weeks before abandoning it. After joining the Gauntlet team, I thought it would be fun to reprise this piercing, so I had a colleague hold the forceps while I pushed the needle through. Then they did the jewelry insertion for me: a 14 ga 1/2″ gold captive bead ring. I wore it for some months and it healed quite well given the minimal tissue, and the frequent handwashing and glove wearing required by my work. Ultimately, I found it impractical and gave it up.

I also thought it would be neat to have a hand-web piercing, which I’d seen in issue #23 of Jim Ward’s Piercing Fans International Quarterly Magazine (PFIQ). Somehow that settled in my head, and I proceeded to do one for a visitor in the studio, and he also got one. Many of his facial piercing placements were totally pioneering (and wildly attention-getting) at the time. It is fantastic to see that he still wears them to this day.

In addition to performing experimental piercings, some of the circumstances surrounding them were unusual as well. I recall a few topless after-hours, invitation-only piercing parties. In fact, my forward helix—the first of its kind, as far as we know—was done at one such event. It was performed by Crystal (now Clayton) Cross, pierced from the interior, into a cork on the front. A small bead ring was the initial jewelry.

I also have very fond memories of a “first cleaning” party that took place in my large home shower, only a mile from Gauntlet’s door. About half a dozen of us bathed together and washed our tender new piercings with Hibiclens surgical scrub. Believe me when I tell you, that harsh soap was actually a big improvement from the agonizing rubbing-alcohol-on-cotton-swabs aftercare method I used for my nipple piercings back in 1981!

Stretching cartilage (or any large gauge hole in that tissue) was also pretty revolutionary at that time; most enlarged piercings at that point were Prince Alberts. For my conch piercing, a 10-gauge matte-finish charcoal ring was selected as the initial jewelry (ever so unwise). What agony! But it healed, and within nine months I’d somehow stretched it enough to fit in a 4-gauge double-flared eyelet without damaging the tissue.

An employee from the jewelry division wanted to get an ear cartilage placement that “not everyone has,” so I evaluated his anatomy. I decided to frame the prominent horizontal ridge near his face, toward the upper region of his ear. We called it a “Niler” as his last name was Niles. Later, Erik Dakota would dub this placement a “rook” piercing.

Then there were other inventive things to be done with piercings. I thought it would be cool to have a vampire bite scar on the side of my neck. So, I took a long straight barbell (12 gauge, about 1 1/2″ in length) and while a colleague held the tissue in some forceps, I pierced it myself, and inserted the jewelry. The intention was to leave it in temporarily, and for it to not heal at all well. Somehow, minimal scarring resulted, which is probably for the best.

Believe it or not, I wasn’t the only one to try this “vampire piercing.” Joe Ruby of Borneo Joe/Flaming Bones jewelry was an early frequent visitor in the studio, and he also got one. Many of his facial piercing placements were totally pioneering (and wildly attention-getting) at the time. It is fantastic to see that he still wears them to this day.

In the 1980s, a number of them turned into very popular piercings, and some of the circumstances surrounding them were unusual as well. I recall a few topless after-hours, invitation-only piercing parties. In fact, my forward helix—the first of its kind, as far as we know—was done at one such event. It was performed by Crystal (now Clayton) Cross, pierced from the interior, into a cork on the front. A small bead ring was the initial jewelry.

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A memorable and unique man came to Gauntlet in the ’80s with a number of highly unusual requests for the times. He went by the name Erl Van Aken (RIP), and he got the...
first bridge piercing, which we dubbed an “Erl.” He also got the first neck surface piercing (nape). He wore both of these for many, many years. Less well known was his foray into axillary piercings. Though he was a very physically active man, Erl thought it would be a good idea to pierce the folds at the front and rear of his underarm creases. Though I tried to discourage him, Erl was a very persistent and persuasive person. I eventually placed 14ga 5⁄8” rings there, front and back, bilaterally. Although he didn’t wear those piercings for as long as his others, they healed despite his inventive care regimen: twice daily applications of Bacardi 151 rum!

An adorable and effervescent young gal named Madison was the first to come in requesting a surface piercing at the front of her neck, which we labeled accordingly. We placed a ring in it and she wore the piercing for years, stating that she never had problems with it. Amazing!

I also recall a gent named Chet, who requested a single cheek piercing. He brought in a spent Magnum .357 bullet shell casing, and we had the jewelry department slice off the inscribed back portion of it to make a threaded end for the front of his piercing. Once the project was complete, he thought it looked like he had a bullet in his face. That was creative and…different. (I want to take this opportunity to clarify a common misconception: we did use internally threaded jewelry, even in those early days, for everything 14 gauge and thicker.)

I remember Dr. Jack Ward teaching a class on anatomy for piercers at an APP Conference in the 1990s. He entitled it: “Are We Good or Are We Lucky?” and frankly, I would have to say we were pretty lucky indeed. We didn’t use needles larger than 10 gauge (I still don’t), and generally pierced smaller than that. But we stuck them through some places that could have had less fortunate outcomes. I did a piercing on one of the staff members (Crystal) at the juncture of her face and earlobe, but have since learned that there is an artery present there that is usually quite large. That could have gone badly!

When I wasn’t at the shop or at home, I was out proselytizing about the joys of piercing to anyone who would listen. They often heard my message, as I made countless “converts.” My passion and enthusiasm were boundless, and the role of educator/liaison was one I undertook zealously. I still do….

During that period, the energy was electric, palpable, and intense, and it was evident that the era was somehow significant. My memories of that extraordinary time are incredibly fond, but frankly I’m relieved that my experimenting days are behind me. I’m so grateful to have been there, and happy to have returned to my roots, specializing in the piercings that were Gauntlet’s original stock in trade.

Disclaimer: This article is intended to accurately describe my personal recollections and professional experiences from many years ago. It is my sincere intention to be truthful, though we all know that human memory is sometimes fallible. Any errors are my own (and are inadvertent). Also, it is not my aim to seek credit for any particular piercings—just to relate some early history as I remember it.

Elayne, right, with Crystal (now Clayton) Cross
An Intimate History of the Modern Body Piercing Movement by Jim Ward

In this revealing autobiography, Jim Ward, considered by many to be the father of the modern piercing industry, tells the engaging and candid story of discovering his own fascination with body piercing, his founding of Gauntlet, the world’s first body piercing studio, and how he transformed a personal fetish and backroom, amateur pursuit into a respected profession and spearheaded a world-wide social phenomenon.

Essential reading for everyone with an interest in body piercing; you, your shop staff, and your customers will treasure this book.

For more information and to order a copy of Running the Gauntlet signed especially for you by the author, visit runningthegauntlet-book.com. Also available wholesale and retail at safepiercing.org/publications/running-the-gauntlet.

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A FEW DAYS AFTER FAKIR’S SPIRIT LEFT HIS BELOVED BODY, I went to a salon in a mall in Syracuse, New York, to get my hair dyed. Every one of the six stylists, all in their twenties and thirties, had multiple facial piercings, visible tattoos, and brightly colored hair. I marveled at how things had changed since the 1970s and 1980s, when the only kind of piercings one saw in the US were in women’s ears—and even those were rare, and tattooing was illegal in many places. I asked each of the colorfully adorned stylists if they knew anything about the history of modern-day body modification. Not one of them did, nor had they heard of Fakir Musafar. I was amazed, as they were obviously living it wholeheartedly. In the realm of body art, Fakir is legend.

At eleven years old, Roland Loomis had an irresistible urge to mimic things he saw in National Geographic. He stretched his neck with metal coils, bound his feet, reshaped his arms and legs with tight leather straps, painted his body, made and wore masks, and more. As a teen in the 1940s, he began tattooing and piercing himself, documenting his experiments in beautiful black-and-white self-portraits with a camera given to him by his uncle, who had used it in World War I. Roland was a really good photographer right from the start and taught himself to be a master darkroom printer.

As an adult, Roland worked as an advertising executive and lived in Menlo Park, California, with his first wife and stepson, whom he supported. Roland was straight as an arrow, a
total nerd before nerds were cool, with thick corduroy pants, suburban-style plaid cotton shirts with ink-stained pockets, and thick, bug-eyed glasses. But beneath his clothes lay a completely different story.

Gradually, Roland started to put some of his self-portraits out into the world for others to see. In 1977, the first magazine dedicated to body piercing, *Piercing Fans International Quarterly (PFIQ)*, trickled into the underground. *PFIQ* printed some of Roland’s self-portraits, one showing his full-back-and-buttocks tattoo, which he had designed himself, drawn in all-black ink and referencing tribal styles. He was way ahead of the times, as most tattoos at that time were cartoono. People immediately started copying Roland’s ideas.

One day, I wrote Roland a letter of appreciation with photos of my tattoos and invited him to visit me. He accepted. In 1981, I organized a visiting-artist lecture for Fakir in my Manhattan apartment for my friends and colleagues. He narrated an intriguing slideshow, after which the event morphed into a body-piercing party, likely the first mixed-gender piercing party on the East Coast (gay men did it first).

We had a ball together and even went ballroom dancing at Roseland. Roland told me he was happy to meet a woman who not only accepted his kinky side but appreciated it and was thrilled by it! He had mostly lived his kinky life in the closet, lest he’d been judged as crazy and sick. He’d had his struggles: He had been shunned by some of his family, his ex-wife didn’t approve of his proclivities, and even some folks in the BDSM world found him way too extreme.

Over the years, Fakir and I did what he called “body play” together, sometimes documenting it with each other’s cameras. He pierced my labia, I pierced his foreskin, I tattooed a diamond on his toe, and so on. He took some of the best photos of me ever-in a tight lace-up corset he had designed and made for me, and me standing in a pair of black-leather-fetish, six-inch high heels he gave me, from the 1940s. Over the years, he did a lot of photos of many other kinky people, mostly in his home, and everyone loved posing for him. A collection of these and many other photos is beautifully reproduced in his book *Spirit & Flesh*, by Arena Editions.

Eventually, Roland quit his advertising-executive job and became a full-time freelance Fakir, coming out into the public sphere as “Fakir Musafar,” kind of like Clark Kent becoming and staying Superman. Two projects catapulted Fakir into the spotlight: the publication of the book *Modern Primitives* by RE/Search and the documentary film *Dances Sacred and Profane*, by Mark and Dan Jury, in which Fakir steals the show with his transcendent outdoor flesh-hook-pulling scene.

Roland/Fakir finally met his perfect match in 1987, when he got together with Cléo Dubois, a French-born, San Francisco-based professional dominatrix and BDSM-lifestyle goddess. She was also a belly dancer and performance artist. They married in a redwood forest in 1990 and lived a life filled with creativity and artmaking, cofacilitating many group-piercing rituals in both private and public spaces. Sometimes I would cross paths with Fakir and Cléo at art venues in Europe and the US when we were booked into the same body-based performance-art festivals. Fakir and Cléo gathered a deeply devoted fan base that followed them and their work. The art world welcomed them. Eventually, Fakir and Cléo both moved into mentoring roles: She created the Academy for SM Arts, and he created the first accredited body-piercing school, which has been very successful and will continue, led by his longtime protégées and collaborators.

When word got out that Fakir had terminal lung cancer, he received hundreds of love letters from around the world. He had dedicated his life to helping people explore the boundaries between spirit and flesh, and people adored him for it. Body-art royalty came to pay their respects, such as performance artist Ron Athey, who credits Fakir as an early inspiration. Fakir’s life is a testament to how following one’s creative impulses—even when eXXXtreme, even when other people don’t understand them, and even if people are completely freaked out by them—can still change the culture significantly, manifest one’s unique vision, and leave one in death a really satisfied, happy camper surrounded by love. Roland had a vision of a society where people were free to explore and decorate their bodies without the stigma and limitations he had experienced. Today, in many countries, we have that freedom. Tattooing is now legal almost everywhere in the US, and there are body piercers and lots of body-piercing jewelry to choose from that can be found in most mainstream shopping malls.

I hope the young beauty-salon stylists I encountered at the mall in Syracuse will read one or two of the many obituaries and tributes for Fakir, and that these will pique their interest in his life and work. Perhaps some will want to go and visit Fakir’s bountiful archive and photography collection at the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley, where they can be studied, enjoyed, and a source of inspiration for generations to come.

Annie Sprinkle is proud to have been an official artist for *Documenta 14*, where she showed visual art and performed with her partner/collaborator Beth Stephens.
April 13, 1994—The first APP meeting participants (Listed as “founders” in The Point 1): (standing l-r) Irwin Kane (Gauntlet, Inc.), Raelyn Gallina, Vaughn (Body Manipulations), Michaela Grey and Jim Ward (Gauntlet, Inc.), Melissa Kaye (Body Manipulations), Richard White (Carter) (Primeval Body), Joann Wyman (Body Manipulations), Elizabeth Brassil (Body Manipulations), Drew Ward (Gauntlet, Inc.) -(kneeling l-r) Blake Perlingieri (Nomad), Kristian White (Nomad) at Gauntlet corporate offices in San Francisco.

APP BOARD MEMBERS & OFFICERS HISTORY

2017–2020
• Luis Garcia—International Liaison
• Ryan Ouellette—Outreach
• Brian Skellie—Medical Liaison
• Kendra Jane—Vice President
• Jef Saunders—President

2014–2017
• Cody Vaughn—Vice President
• Christopher Glunt—Medical Liaison
• Steve Joyner—Legislation Liaison
• Miro Hernandez—Public Relations Director
• Jef Saunders—Membership Liaison
• Aaron Pollack—Secretary (Board Appointed)

2013–2016
• Brian Skellie—Global Media
  Transitioned to President Q2 2014
• Ashley Misako—Outreach

2011–2014
• Elayne Angel—President
• John Johnson—Vice President
• Richard Frueh—Medical Liaison
• Mike Martin—Legislation Liaison
  Stepped down April 2013
• Steve Joyner—Legislation Liaison
  Appointed Legislative Chair June 2013
• Sarvas Berry—Membership Liaison 2010–2013
• Brian Skellie—International Liaison
• Dana Dinius—Outreach Coordinator
  Stepped down Q1 2012
• Ashley Misako—Outreach
  Appointed Q1 2012

2008–2011
• James Weber—President
• Didier Suarez—Vice-President
• Elayne Angel—Medical Liaison
• Eduardo Chavarria—Membership Liaison
• Bethrah Szumski—Secretary
  Stepped down Q2 2010
• Paul King—Treasurer (Board Appointed Officer)

2007–2010
• Danny Yerna—International Outreach Coordinator
• Eric “Squeez” Anderson—Outreach Coordinator

2005–2008
• Alicia Cardenas—President
• April Johnson—Vice President
• James Weber—Medical Liaison
• Luis Garcia—International Liaison

2005–2007
• Christina Shull—Secretary
  Stepped down Q3 2007

2005–2006
• Jeffrey “Phish” Goldblatt—Outreach Coordinator
  Stepped down Q2 2006
• Schane Gross—Treasurer
  Stepped down Q1 2006

2002–2005
• Bethrah Szumski—President
• Jason King—Vice-President
• Crystal Sims—Secretary
• Paul King—Treasurer
• Elayne Angel—Medical Coordinator
• Megg Mass—Outreach Coordinator
• Alicia Cardenas—International Liaison

• Patrick McCarthy—President
  Elected to replace Gahdi Elias after he finished his Board term
• April Williams-Warner—International Liaison
  Elected to replace Al D. after he finished his Board term
• Scott Brewer—Treasurer
  Appointed by Pat McCarthy as interim Treasurer after Brian Skellie finished Board term June 1999. Later duly elected and stepped down Q1 2002

From The Point—Issue 16:
Many changes took place to the APP over the last year; one of the most important things was the election of a new Board.
In September a new Vice President, Secretary, and Outreach Coordinator were elected.
Then, in April a new President and International Liaison were introduced.
During the meeting the new Board members were introduced to the membership.

APP Board Members as of October, 1999
• Pat McCarthy—President

1999–2001 First APP Elected Board
[The Point—Issue 14, April]
• Steve Joyner—Vice President 1999
• Bethrah Szumski—Secretary
• Elayne Angel—Outreach Coordinator
• Jeff Martin—Outreach Coordinator
Stepped down December 1999

From The Point—Issue 14:
The past year has seen Board member installment go from an appointment to an electoral process.
The first such election installed: Steve Joyner as Vice Chair, Elayne Angel as Outreach Coordinator, Bethrah Szumski as Secretary
As people come so do they go: Dave Vidra served as OSHA Liaison until Nov 1998, Derek Lowe served as Secretary until Nov 1998.
Jeff Martin served as Outreach Coordinator until Dec 1999.

1998 [The Point—Issue 13, Summer]
Stepped down:
David Vidra resigned November 1998 after multiple Board terms
Derek Lowe resigned November 1998

1998 Board of Directors [The Point—Issue 12, First Quarter]
• Gahdi Elias (Mastodon)—Chair
  Brian Skellie appointed to serve the duties of Chair while Gahdi traveled abroad
• Kent Fazekas—Chair
  Stepped down
• Elizabeth Getschal—appointed Board Liaison under Chair

1997 Transitions [The Point—Issue 11, Fall]
• David Vidra (BodyWork Productions)—OSHA /Legislative Liaison
  Exchanged positions with Al D. Sowers
• Al D. Sowers (Playspace Ltd./Sin)—International Liaison
  Michaela Grey finished her Board term and continued as a Business Member in good standing
• Dr. John Ward—Medical Liaison

1997–1999 [The Point—Issue 10, June]
• Kent Fazekas—Chair
  Transitioned from Treasurer
• Brian Skellie—Treasurer
Michaela Grey—International Liaison
*Transitions from Chair*

Crystal Cross
*Stepped down*

Curt Warren (Koi)—Coordinator

Rob Petroff
*Stepped down*

Jeff Martin (Obscurities)—Outreach coordinator

Tracy Faraca
*Stepped down*

Derek Lowe (Steve’s Tattoo and Body Piercing)—Secretary

Allen Falkner
*Stepped down*

1996 Two new Board Members [The Point—Issue 8, August]
David Vidra (BodyWork Productions)—Medical Liaison
AI D. Sowers (Playspace Ltd./ Sin)—OSHA /Legislative Liaison
Crystal Cross (Primeval Body)—New Title: International Liaison
Blake Perlingieri and Maria Tashjian finish their Board terms and continue as Business Members in good standing
Rev. Drew Lewis started APP archives [Not Board Member (Media Committee)]

1995 Initial Appointed Board [The Point—Issue 6, November]
Crystal Cross & Richard White (Primeval Body)
Ahna Edwards (Attitudes, Inc.)—Outreach Coordinator
Position taken over by Tracy Faraca (Attitudes, Inc.)
Kent Fazekas (Body Accents)—Treasurer
Gahdi (Mastodon)—Vice Chair
Michaela Grey (Gauntlet, Inc.)—Chair
Blake Perlingieri & Kristian White (Nomad)
Rob Petroff (Insane Creations)—Coordinating Board Member
Maria Tashjian (Venus Modern Body Arts)
Allen Falkner (Obscurities)—Secretary

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**Longest Standing Currently Active APP Members**

The following is a list of longest standing APP Members who are still currently active. Listed beside their names, you’ll find their original join date. This list reflects consecutive membership; according to current membership policy, original join dates can be reinstated after no more than two years, as long as there has not been a lapse in membership dues.

We’re honored to have these 20 people continuing to support the Association of Professional Piercers and the body piercing industry.

- Sky Renfro—July 1994
- David Vidra—October 1995
- Adam Block—January 1996
- Allen Falkner—January 1996
- Patrick McCarthy—February 1996
- Bink Williams—March 1996
- Elayne Angel—March 1996
- Brian Skellie—May 1996
- Derek Lowe—June 1996
- Darrin Walters—August 1996
- Gus Diamond—October 1996
- Steve Joyner—July 1997
- Bethrah Szumski—August 1997
- Marc J. Williams—September 1997
- Jason King—October 1997
- David Kelso—January 1999
- Sarah Wooten—May 1999
- James Weber—May 1999
- Luis Garcia—May 1999
- Shawn Taylor—July 1999
Hello piercing community!!!

I had an idea at Camp APP to create a piercing family tree. I started to put it out there and have gotten a great response! With the help of Gene Gowen, we will continue collecting everybody’s history!!

What we need from you:

We would like information about the people that helped bring you into the community. This includes what shops you have worked at (no guest spots please) and anybody you helped get into the industry. If you have worked as a trainer at any education seminars or training groups we would like that as well.

For some of this it can be difficult to list people that also had a negative effect on our fledgling careers, and if there are people you don’t want to list, that is cool. Please remember that we are using this to get a sense of our history and how and through whom this wonderful craft has evolved. This will include some people that we do not care for, but without them we may have not gotten our start!

My vision for this will include an interactive display, so you can find those who came before you. I am hoping to modify this to include a class and video as we move forward. It will be a blast putting all the pieces together and to see how this skill has moved from one community to another.

Please send all submissions to mic4559@hotmail.com

Thanks for everybody’s help. I can’t wait to see how this will bloom!!!
## THE APP BOARD TIMELINE

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As an organization built by volunteers, we feel so fortunate to have had so many people serve our mission. As you can see from this chart, many of our Board Members have been serving the APP for upwards of a decade. We would like to thank not only the people you see listed, but all of our volunteers that have served our committees.

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APP CONFERENCE...THEN & NOW

THEN

Taken from The Official Newsletter of The Association of Professional Piercers, Spring, 2005 • Issue 32

The 10th Annual Association of Professional Piercers Conference & Exposition: The Largest Gathering of Piercers & Jewelry Vendors in the World. May 1–6, 2005 At the Las Vegas Riviera Hotel & Casino

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The Conference is a must for every piercing studio, tattoo studio that does piercing, health official, and health inspector. Because many important and informative courses are offered concurrently it is advisable that you send at least two representatives so that your facility or organization can get the most out of the conference. As in the past, the APP is offering courses to help piercers to achieve APP membership, comply with local and state regulations, have a say in piercing regulations, enhance business, improve customer relations and much more. You do not need to be an APP member to attend the conference.

Of the nearly 30 courses offered, only two are restricted to members only. Although all are welcome to attend classes, the Expo is not open to members of the general public. A business card from your establishment and proof of retail license will be necessary to enter. In addition, to maintain space in our host hotel and comply with insurance requirements, absolutely no piercing from hotel rooms will be tolerated.

CLASSES

• Employee Management
• Customer Service & Marketing
• Phuket Vegetarian Festival (Documentary)
• Aftercare
• Basic Accounting
• Jewelry 1
• Jewelry 2
• Indigenous Piercing Techniques
• Studio Setup & Inspection
• Scars
• Medical Risk Assessment
• CPR First Aid
• Aseptic Technique & Equipment Management
• Anatomy (Body)
• Anatomy (Oral & Facial)
• OSHA/Bloodborne Pathogens Certification
• Stretching
• Fraud Prevention
• Surface Piercing (Members only)
• Grounding & Bedside Manner
• Non-Member Techniques

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

In order to make the APP Conference a venture allowing EVERYONE to contribute, we have scheduled round table discussions on the following proposed topics: Extreme Piercing, Suspension (Members only), Jewelry Display, Building a Portfolio, Anthropology, and Body Modification in the Mass Media. There is no charge to attend these workshops.

EXPOSITION

This is the largest gathering of piercers and piercing related vendors in the world. Manufacturers often utilize this event to present new products and services to the piercing community. In addition, many vendors offer their goods and services at a discount to conference attendees. As a reminder, a vendor’s presence at the expo does NOT constitute APP endorsement. Review all products thoughtfully and remember that, in many cases, the Conference and Expo are a learning experience for vendors as well.

For the first time the APP invites Health Inspectors to attend the Conference free of charge. The only requirement is that the person(s) attending reserves and stays in a room in the host hotel within the APP room block set aside for Conference attendees. Book early to get your room. If you need documentation confirming this offer, contact info@safepiercing.org.

PROM NIGHT/THE AWARDS DINNER

This will be held Thursday evening at the Top of the Riv North. The theme will be ‘Prom Night’ with a buffet style dinner (with vegan options) and dance music! You can come as you are or dust off your favorite suit or dress. The drawing for the top ten raffle prizes will be held during this event.

NOW

Our 24th Annual Conference and Exposition will be in Las Vegas, Nevada from May 12-17, 2019 at Planet Hollywood. During this week, ballrooms become classrooms, filling with attendees from all over the world. Piercers, Apprentices, Counter Staff, Studio Owners, Vendors, and Health Inspectors come together for a week of education and peer-to-peer sharing. Whether you are new to our industry or an experienced practitioner there are classes and events for everyone. Our classes range in topic covering everything from the fundamentals of our trade to complex analysis of topics for those who are interested in furthering their existing knowledge.

In addition to the education available, the APP Conference is also home to The Exposition, the only one of its kind in this country. Nowhere else can you find this range of body jewelry and body piercing related products all in one spot.
You do not have to be an APP Member to attend the Conference, but some Restrictions apply to the Exposition and Members Only & Piercing Technique courses/round tables. It is suggested that if you are new to the Conference or are an apprentice piercer that you start with the core classes. Many of these courses provide the foundation for the information provided in our advanced and elective courses.

For example before taking Strategic Marking or other piercing technique courses you will want to make sure you have taken our anatomy courses.

At this time the APP doesn’t require any prerequisites for any of its classes. It is advisable to have taken at least an online Bloodborne Pathogens course prior to attending our Conference.

Want to start planning out your schedule? Please feel free to use this 2019 Schedule to assist you!

CORE CLASSES
• What Every Piercer Should Know about Below-the-Neck Anatomy
• Above the Neck (“Oro-Facial) Anatomy
• Body Piercing Complications and Considerations
• Safe Practices in the Sterilization Room
• Wound Care/Aftercare
• Initial Jewelry
• Basics of “Safe” Materials for Body Jewelry
• Studio Documentation
• The Magic of Grounding and Bedside Manner

TECHNIQUE CLASSES (PIERCER ONLY)
• Essential Body Piercing Concepts
• Nipple Piercings: Basic & Advanced Theory
• Modern Techniques: Vulva Piercings
• Learning Bites: Lip Piercings
• Industrial Piercings: Keeping it Simple
• Septums Make Me Sweaty
• Honing In on High Nostrils
• Advanced Fundamentals: Helix Piercings
• Needle Improvements
• Strategic Marking

MEMBERS ONLY
• Open Techniques Workshop

ELECTIVES
• Working with Your Health Inspector
• Current Piercer Tech Workshop
• Microbiology For Piercers
• Ergonomics in the Piercing Room
• Mentoring and Apprenticeships and How to Inspire the Next Generation of Piercers
• Utilizing your Phone
• Giving and Receiving Feedback: Communication 102
• Social Media Management
• How to Win Clients and Influence Piercers
• Fakir & Me (Jim Ward)
• Annie Sprinkle on Fakir
• The History of Glass

• Cultural Competence and Inclusion: Where You Fit In
• Trauma Informed Body Modification
• Special: Fakir Musafar: An Evening of Remembrance & Celebration

WORKSHOPS
• Control of Cross Contamination Through the Use of UV Reactive Powder
• Safe Practices in the Piercing Room

TALK APP GROUP
• Talk APP: Professionalism
• Confidence and Cockiness In and Outside the Piercing Room
• Professionalism with Genital Piercings
• Ethics
• Talk APP: Artistic Expression
• Artistic Studio Design
• Living with an Artist’s Eye
• Creativity, Inspiration, and Artistic Expression in Jewelry Design
• Talk APP: The “Arts”
• The Art of Ritual
• The Art of Skepticism
• The Art of Nothing
• Talk APP: Adulting
• Acting Like a Boss
• Self Care as an Adult
• Talk APP: Different Perspectives
• This is All Bigger than Us
• It’s Not You, It’s Me

ROUND TABLES
• Disorders in the Industry
• APP Membership
• Regulatory Affairs
• POC: the Power of Color and Representation
• Reducing Waste in Your Studio
• Piercing Outside the U.S. and the Reality of the Rest of the World

MEETINGS
• Orientation
• Mentor Program
• New Attendees & Mentors Meeting
• Members Meeting
• Committee Meeting
• Vendor Meeting
• Health Inspectors Meeting
• Friends of Bill W
• International Meeting
• Canadian Meeting
• International Suspension Alliance

ATTB (Alternative to the Bar) OFFERINGS
• Harm Reduction, Overdose Prevention, & Response Training
• Anodizing Open Workshop
• Needle Bending Open Workshop
• Game Night
MEET THE BPA

PAUL KING

“The mission of the Body Piercing Archive is to select, collect, document, preserve, exhibit, and interpret the personal, social, and material evolving histories of Body Piercing to ensure these artifacts are available to present and successive generations.”

PAUL R. KING—BPA FOUNDER & COMMITTEE CHAIR, APP TREASURER

Let’s start with our founder, Paul King. Paul has been a professional body piercer since 1991 and an enthusiast before that. Paul has a BA in Anthropology from UC Berkeley and has lectured in universities, community groups, and conferences on various aspects of body modification since 1993. In 1999, Paul partnered to create Cold Steel America in San Francisco, CA. He is an active Business Member of the Association of Professional Piercers. In 2005, he successfully completed a three year elected Board position as Treasurer for the APP. In 2007, he received the APP’s President’s Award for contributions to the piercing industry. He has served as a Board-appointed Treasurer and Officer of the APP since 2008. In 2014, with the support of the APP Board, Paul King created the Body Piercing Archive.

BRIAN SKELLIE—BPA COMMITTEE MEMBER, APP MEDICAL LIAISON

Brian founded Piercing Experience in 1992 as a piercer inspired to research and evolve safe body modification and share the results with the community. He is a frequent APP contributor ever since the first Conference, an active Business Member since 1996, an educator who has presented many seminars and workshops at conferences in North and South America and Europe, former Editor of The Point, former chair of the Media Committee, and completed his third term Board Member as President, now serving as Medical Liaison.

BECKY DILL—BPA COMMITTEE MEMBER, INCOMING APP BOARD MEMBER

Becky Dill has been piercing professionally since 2003. She has been a part of the Cold Steel America family since 2009 and the Body Piercing Archive since its inception.

Becky is a Business Member of the Association of Professional Piercers; since becoming a Member she has participated in the APP Mentor Program and led roundtable discussions during the annual Conference & Exposition in Las Vegas. Additionally, she is also a founding member of the Bay Area Piercers Group.

DANNY GREENWOOD—DESIGN GURU, APP ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Danny Greenwood started working counter in 2007, and has been a member of the Cold Steel Piercing family since 2008. Danny is an Associate Member of the Association of Professional Piercers. Danny is the Phantom to our Opera: working behind the scenes on our website and various graphic design needs (and hiding away from the daylight as much as possible.)

When she isn’t busy handling the ordering and photographing of fancy jewelry for Cold Steel America, you can expect Danny to be watching too much TV with her fat cat and thinking about snacks.
DEVIN RUIZ-ALTAMURA—BPA COMMITTEE MEMBER
Devon began working counter at Cold Steel Piercing in 2014 and is an Associate Member of the Association of Professional Piercers. Devon is the newest addition to the BPA and excited to bring you insights into the inner workings via social media. As a native San Franciscan, a body piercing enthusiast, and student of the Paul King School of Being a Big ol’ History Nerd, she is honored to be preserving and sharing history that is near and dear to her heart.

When Devon isn’t archiving or obsessing over body jewelry she is probably planting things, reading comics, or telling her dogs how much she loves them. (She is also responsible for the majority of the bios you are currently enjoying originally posted on The Body Piercing Archive Instagram.)

MATTE ERICKSON—BPA COMMITTEE MEMBER, APP BUSINESS MEMBER
Matte began piercing in 1994 in Colorado Springs, Co and re-located to Fairfield, Ca in 1998 and since then, has become the prevalent piercer in Solano and Napa counties. Since 2002, He has attended the Association of Professional Piercers Conference to continue his education and stay up on the latest advancements and techniques.

I am sure there are more for each list, but, I think you get the idea. One of my motto’s is, “just because you can pierce something, doesn’t mean you should”.

Now a committee member for the Body Piercing Archive Committee. History has always been very important to him. He is also a member of the Bay Area and Sacramento piercers groups, The International Suspension Alliance And is also responsible for many of the Photographs The Point uses throughout its publications.

GENE GOWEN—BPA COMMITTEE MEMBER AND FUNDRAISING COORDINATOR
Gene Gowen is owner of and piercer at Cold River Piercing in Albany, NY. He had always wanted to get involved with the APP, but didn’t think he’d be much good at any of the usual ways people volunteer with the organization. Paul started the BPA and needed some help raising funds for the work the archive was doing. So he asked if Gene could be responsible for generating sellable items at Conference, to raise funds for the BPA. Like any other staunch New Englander, Gene has a mother who makes and gives away quilts for everyone’s big life events. So the idea came to him that maybe we could make some quilted projects from old shop shirts, which everyone has in abundance.

That’s really all it came down to. He saw a place where someone needed some help and thought he might be able to be of some use.

OLIVIA THERIAULT—BPA COMMITTEE MEMBER
Olivia began her professional piercing journey in 2012, on the quiet coast of Nova Scotia. She is a permanent fixture at her hometown studio, Skin Decision. When she is home in the woods, you will often find her transcribing audio files for the BPA or outside playing with bugs!

Olivia is a proud Business Member of the Association of Professional Piercers and has attended a variety of seminars, conferences, and retreats to further her understanding of our industry.
A LOOK INSIDE MY PERSONAL LIBRARY

KENDRA JANE B.
REFERENCES

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Dear Momma Duck,

This week has been a blur! Piercer Camp is so much fun. I’ve met so many new people and had a lot of fun with my friends from last year. Unfortunately most of the “Boat Bois” couldn’t make it this year, but that hasn’t stopped John Robberson and me from recruiting some new ones. I got the same cabin as last year and everything was still set up the way we left it. My cabin-mates were John (of course), Frankie “3 Pens” (aka Frankie Diamonds), Pauly “Slippaz” from Staten Island, Sosa (he’s from Venezuela, but now lives in Ohio), and Barron from Illinois. Barron and Sosa didn’t end up sleeping in our cabin though as they joined Hammock City in the Activity building. Hammock City is comprised of about 30 or 40 hammocks that are hanging from the rafters all over the place. It’s pretty rad! Everyone hangs out in their hammock during class, then hangs out in their hammocks at night until they just fall asleep.

The weather has been so all over the place. The week started off hot and humid, then rainy and dreary. Then, overnight, we had Hurricane Michael blow by us about 2 hours south. It wasn’t bad except the power went out at 3 am; I woke up and my air conditioner was off. I know, I know, Momma... you know I’m a bit of a Princess. I need my air conditioning at night or I can’t sleep. It wasn’t all that bad though, the wind blew my window shutters open so I had a constant misty rain blowing across me which kind of kept me cool until the power came back on around 8 am. Beside the rain and some gusty winds, it was pretty much a non-event which lead to the most gorgeous weather for the rest of the week!
I've been learning so much great stuff from all these really cool instructors. We had a class all about finances and money stuff. I know, sounds kind of boring right? It really wasn't! Chrissy Shull, the instructor, had a lot of great tips on how to make credit cards and loans work for you and actually save money while getting lots of free stuff. Pretty cool, I mean who doesn't like free stuff?

Also there was this guy, Rob Hill (funny story: I actually thought he was a shaved sasquatch when I first saw him, because we're in the middle of the woods and this dude is huge) who talked to us about security. I'm pretty sure he's a ninja! He actually showed how easy it was to bypass common security protocols by breaking into another camper's shop right before he got to Camp, with her permission and knowledge of course! He gave us so much good information and so much to think about. Momma, we've got to tighten things up a bit more at the shop when I get home.

Cale Belford did a bang up job on her social media class; she's always so good to listen to. Jef Saunders taught about how to teach. This was especially great and funny at the same time because after his class all the other instructors were instantly questioning their own classes and presentations -- even though they were all excellent, it still made them squirm a bit. I definitely enjoyed Ryan Ouellette's Thunderdome class, it was a buffet of quality information on some wide ranging topics. There was a ton of interaction and it seemed like all the campers really loved this class style and the topics he presented.

Beside classes, there was tons of chill time. Of course you know I spent most of my free time by the lake fishing. I caught soooo many catfish. John and I have a little fishing contest going and he's winning with a score of 26 to 22, but I swear he cheated more than once by catching the same fish twice. We also had a rad game of kickball; I got to be pitcher and my team won! Bethrah Szumski also organized a long walk in the pouring rain. Everyone put on bathing suits (or birthday suits) and they hiked all around in the rain. I skipped this to go fishing, but all the campers that went said it was so nice. We had a huge campfire on the last night and told scary piercing stories. We even roasted marshmallows and made s'mores!

There was a really terrifying moment at the campfire where we heard some growling from the woods. It started kind of far away and slowly got closer and louder. Everyone was swearing there was an actual sasquatch in the woods watching us so Paul, John and I all ran into the woods to look. Turns out there wasn’t a sasquatch, but there was a European Hornet's nest that apparently didn't like us, because all three of us got stung. It was pretty painful, but at least we all can say we got pierced by a hornet at Piercer Camp! There were also very large wolf spiders (some of them looked like baby tarantulas, but were actually like kittens) and this crazy daddy long leg that liked pie and crawling on people randomly. I also saw a cute little millipede in my room that was moving super fast. On the way into Camp, John and I saw a deer run across the road. A few other campers said they saw a sasquatch in the woods just past the Activity building, but I never saw it. We didn't see any armadillos or scorpions this year though.
Cale Belford teaching a class on social media techniques
Jef Saunders sporting a Camp APP 2015 shirt
The food, OMG, Momma, the food is exceptional and there was so much of it! I don’t think I ever eat this much. It seems like all I’ve done is eat. Our Head Chefs, John Johnson and Matt Bavougian, really are talented and did a great job accommodating all of our special diets. A few of the other instructors and campers even jumped in and made some special snacks. Jef made some really yummy pizzas; you know how much I LOVEEEEEEE pizza, so this was extra special!

We had a raffle where everyone is supposed to donate something. It could be anything, a shirt from the shop, a rock from a hike, something silly from back home, something super special, something homemade, pretty much anything. Bethrah put everyone’s names into a bucket and then she pulled names until all the prizes were gone. I won some Professor Phardtpounders Colon Cleaner Hot Sauce and a slingshot! Pat Pierce was the winner of my raffle prize! I was super excited, and apparently he’s a huge fan of it already! Pretty rad.

I’m so sad that everyone will be leaving tomorrow and Camp will be over. This is honestly my favorite trip every year. So much laughing, so much learning, and so much time to just be in the moment. It’s always hard that first day to adjust to “roughing it” with not always being connected, but then it’s actually kind of nice to just be away in the middle of nowhere with a group of really good people. The cool thing though is that I won’t have to wait very long to see everyone again since APP Conference 2019 is in May. We will be doing our closing talks here in a few minutes and then I have to pack up. Tomorrow we clean up our cabins and turn in our bedding and then we’re done. I think we’re driving the Pauls to the airport early in the morning too, so it’ll be an early night for me.

Whelp Momma, I hear the meeting whistle now, so I’ve gotta run! I’ll be seeing you real soon though!

Shorty
Erika Gomez looking fancy in the forest
Top to bottom, Brian Skellie enthusiastically explaining techniques; Elayne Angel and Sara Johnson enjoying conversation and engagement in the great outdoors; The main classroom becomes a hammock city during the week as piercers kick back during the learning process.
While driving to work, listening to NPR and sipping coffee, I heard an interview that drew parallels to some things I see in our industry. The interview was with a classically trained musician who was releasing new work. She was explaining how her process has changed, and how she has found a new joy and connection to music. It was a connection she hadn’t realized she was even missing.

The woman in the interview explained how her training shaped how she approaches her work. Being classically trained, you are taught to replicate something, look at your work, and look for mistakes. Do this over and over until you can say, “I replicated this; it is perfect with no mistakes.” This type of training can make you very good at replication, but she realized that just looking for mistakes all the time held her back. She didn’t see the opportunities for growth that those mistakes can lead to, for developing her own style.

This is something I see far too often in this industry, especially with what I would call the younger generation of piercers. In the age of the internet, seeing peers posting photos and videos of their work can lead to people trying to emulate that work. While I don’t think this is inherently bad, I think it misses a lot of the opportunity available for personal growth and learning what works best for you as an individual. Today, it is possible to watch a video, emulate that video, and then even watch a video of the emulation,
critique what was done differently, then redo it until you are doing it the same way as whoever posted the original video. What I think is missing here is connecting with the client, and the moment of seeing and feeling what works best for you. The way the person in the video is doing something may not be the most comfortable way for you to do it. Rather than straight replication, what if we paid close attention to what felt uncomfortable about an experience, which will likely lead to a way that works better for you. When you are just looking for mistakes and trying to replicate what the person in the video did, you are missing an opportunity. I believe that one of the defining characteristics of our industry was that it was born of hands on learning.

Your hands might not be the same size as the person in the video. You might have different levels of dexterity. The configuration/height/angle of the equipment in your environment may be different. Trying things the way someone else does them is fine, but pay attention to what works for you and what is comfortable for you, instead of forcing someone else’s technique on yourself. Tools, no tools, 2” needle, 3” needle, etc… what connects with you? What clicks?

The woman in the article went on to say how after spending time and playing with musicians in New Orleans, they changed her perspective on performing and appreciating music. After playing and working with them, she was taught that mistakes are part of the process; those mistakes are what make the music feel alive and continues the personal growth of the musician. Don’t be afraid to make the mistake, roll with it, and still come out with something great. Be in the moment, make that connection with your audience, your client. If it didn’t go as well as hoped, ask why and what you could have done differently? Don’t just attempt to do it the same way over and over.

This also hits on the second thing I see in our industry. Make that connection. Don’t forget you are working on a whole person. I see so many videos being posted looking for critiques from peers, that might as well be a demonstration on a silicone body part. Again look to the roots of our industry and see that those personal connections are what made the industry as we see it today. When you are piercing an ear, or a nostril, or whatever, you are also piercing the person sitting in front of you. Include them; this is their experience. I understand that the experience now is a lot different than it was 20 years ago, that the clients are different, but you are still the facilitator of their experience.

When you draped half their upper body for that simple helix piercing, they didn’t disappear. Just because you no longer have eye contact with them, doesn’t mean they can’t feel what is happening, feel your nervous energy, or your excitement. Include them in that. So many of the videos I see focus on the wrong things: “Look at this great jewelry.” “Look at this crazy needle bend.” “Look at my drape level 900.” “Look at my fly freehand technique.” “Look how fast I was.” This all screams, “Look at me, other piercers. Am I worthy yet?”

All that is great: you should absolutely strive to be as aseptic as possible, want to try new techniques that might work better for you, and push yourself to be more technically sound. My current worry is, a lot of piercers seem so focused on the task at hand, so worried about doing the perfect piercing, that they miss out on the perfect experience. It is important not to miss out on the connection with the client, and the bond that can come from that interaction. In that moment, the client should be the piercer’s best friend, the only person that matters. Yes, you should absolutely be giving them the best nostril, helix, navel, or whatever piercing you have ever done, each and every time, but if all they are getting is a perfect piercing and not the perfect experience, you are both missing out. For them, the initial excitement is probably enough not to realize they missed out on anything. For you though, over time, without that connection, just piercing nostrils gets old after a few years. It becomes a job. Each time, you care a little less, and each day becomes a little harder to show up for.

As someone who has been in this industry for just over 20 years, there have been times where I too had lost that connection and many times didn’t even realize it. I used to fall in love about 20 times a day: with the client, with the piercing, with the connection. Granted the experiences were very different when I first started, and it was hard not to feel a great connection when so many of the piercings were very private, personal, and intimate, for a variety of different reasons. Many of those reasons, new piercers won’t understand; it’s a very different industry now. While that doesn’t happen as often anymore, it still happens. I love our clients. I love what we do. I love learning about them. I love that they let me be part of their life experience. That connection and being a part of so many different people’s lives has helped shape who I am, what the industry has been to me. It has filled me with empathy and understanding in a way that I wouldn’t have if I ended up anywhere else. Even though the client/piercer connection has evolved, I still feel it, and I urge you, as you move forward in your career to find it as well.
NEW UKAPP BROCHURES

The UKAPP has created two new informational brochures addressing female genital piercings and national concerns regarding the same. Please read the previous articles in The Point (Issue 70, Issue 74, and Issue 77) regarding the classification of consensual female genital piercings as mutilation in Europe. These UKAPP brochures were written in full cooperation with the APP and are of interest to anyone concerned about issues of body piercing, female health, and human rights.

Print ready PDFs of these may be downloaded from the organization’s website: https://www.ukapp.org.uk/ Please note that the order of the brochure is formatted to allow for tri-folding when printed, much like the brochures available from the Association of Professional Piercers: https://www.safepiercing.org/brochures.php

WHAT TO AVOID

- Avoid cleaning with alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, Dial® or other soaps containing triclosan, iodine, or products with any harsh ingredients, such as Dettol, TCP, surgical spirits, Savalon™, tea tree oil, turmeric, etc., as these can damage cells. Also avoid ointments as they prevent necessary air circulation.
- Avoid Bactine®, pierced ear care solutions, and other products containing Benzalkonium Chloride (BZK). These can be irritating and are not intended for long-term wound care.
- Avoid over-cleaning. This can delay your healing and irritate your piercing.
- Avoid undue trauma such as friction from clothing, excessive motion of the area, playing with the jewellery, and vigorous cleaning. These activities can cause the formation of unsightly and uncomfortable scar tissue, migration, prolonged healing, and other complications.
- Avoid all oral contact, rough play, and contact with others’ bodily fluids on or near your piercing throughout healing.
- Avoid stress and recreational drug use, including excessive caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol.
- Avoid submerging the piercing in unhygienic bodies of water such as lakes, pools, hot tubs, steam rooms, etc.
- Avoid all beauty and personal care products on or around the piercing including cosmetics, lotions, and sprays, etc.
- Don’t hang charms or any object from your jewellery until the piercing is fully healed.

HEALING TIMES

- Healing times for FGP generally fall into the two categories below. Remember, everyone heals differently. These examples are given as general guides; your healing time may be faster or slower.
- The most common FGP, such as clitoral hood and inner labia are the fastest, often healing in 8 weeks (2 months) or less.
- The less common FGP, such as triangle and outer labia are a bit slower, sometimes taking 16 weeks (4 months).

1 Although this brochure uses the common vernacular “Female Genital Piercing” or “FGP” as found in scientific literature, it’s important to remember that over time language and understandings change. Currently, there are strong cultural shifts among many to remove implied genitocranic biases and assumptions of the secondary sexual characteristics. As such, many professionals are dropping the “male” and “female” from their vocabulary when referencing genitals, preferring instead to only reference the anatomical structures, such as “vulva piercings” or the general area. The UKAPP supports both approaches depending on the context and situation.
2 To date, there have been no large, long-term scientific studies of body piercing. As such, this estimate is extrapolated from individual shop statistics as well as opinions from industry experts.
5 See the APP brochure Preparing for Medical and Dental Procedures for more information. https://www.safepiercing.org/docs/APP_StdProdPrepPrint.pdf
6 For further information, visit the UKAPP’s website: https://www.ukapp.org.uk/
UKAPP stands for the United Kingdom’s Association of Professional Piercers. We are a not-for-profit health and safety organisation dedicated to spreading safe piercing practice through the use of education, made available to both industry professionals and the public. We are creating a peer review network for piercers to protect clients and the industry as a whole.

OTHER BROCHURES INCLUDE:

Choosing Your Piercer
Understanding Body Jewellery
Suggested Aftercare for Body Piercings
Suggested Aftercare for Oral Piercings
Problematic Piercings

This brochure is not intended to endorse only UKAPP member piercers and its use does not imply membership in the UKAPP. A current list of UKAPP members can be found at:

WWW.UKAPP.ORG.UK

Disclaimer: These guidelines are based on a combination of vast professional experience, common sense, research, and clinical practice. These suggestions are not to be considered a substitute for medical advice from a doctor.

The UKAPP logo is the trademark of the United Kingdom’s Association of Professional Piercers.

PIERCINGS OF THE VULVA
“FEMALE GENITAL PIERCING”

2018 Edition
Choosing to pierce your body for adornment is an important decision. Care should be taken in selecting a professional piercer whether you’re piercing an earlobe or clitoral hood.

Performing body piercing is not easy; it takes time and dedication to acquire the ability to safely and skillfully perform the procedure. Piercing is a hands-on profession that must be learned through practical experience. Sound instruction ideally involves a lengthy apprenticeship with a qualified mentor (though many piercers are self-taught). The industry is minimally regulated in many areas so it’s important to take your time and do your research.

It is advisable to inquire how long your piercer has been in the field, how they learned, and what they do to update their knowledge - such as taking continuing education courses on anatomy, aftercare, aseptic technique, etc.

A potential piercer should earn your trust by demonstrating knowledge and competency. Before taking your money, a piercer should be willing to provide a consultation to inspect your anatomy, discuss jewellery selection, the complete procedure, potential risks and complications, the healing process, and aftercare guidelines. Aftercare information should also be provided in writing. If you are not impressed with their qualifications and customer service, keep looking.

Piercing for adornment usually provides positive results when performed by a qualified piercer. Hundreds of thousands of vulva piercings have been safely performed since gaining popularity in the 1990s. While there are scientific studies that show female Genital Piercing “FGP” may increase sensation, a professional piercer will never make such promises.

Professional piercers pierce genitalia only on informed and consenting adults who present government-issued proof-of-age photo ID (such as a Driver’s license or passport). A signed release form is required as well.

**ANSWERS TO COMMON FGP QUESTIONS:**

- **Genital Piercings** can bleed freely for the first few days. Be prepared with liners or pads.
- **Additional cleaning after urination** is not necessary.
- In most cases you can engage in sexual activity as soon as you feel ready, but maintaining hygiene and avoiding trauma are vital; all sexual activities must be gentle during the healing period.
- Barriers such as condoms, dental dams, and waterproof bandages, etc. must be used to avoid contact with your partners’ body fluids, even in long-term monogamous relationships.
- **After sex**, an additional saline soak or clean water rinse is suggested.
- **You and your sex partner** should wash your hands before touching on (or near) a healing piercing.
- **Use clean, disposable barriers** on insertable sex toys.
- Use a new container of water-based lubricant; do not use saliva.

**CLEANING SOLUTIONS:**

- Packaged sterile saline (with no additives, read the label) is a gentle choice for piercing aftercare. It is produced as a spray, wipe, or liquid. If sterile saline is not available in your region, a sea salt solution mixture can be a viable alternative. Dissolve 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon (.75 to 1.42 grams) of non-iodized iodine free, fine-grain sea salt into one cup (8 oz. / 250mL) of warm distilled or bottled water. A stronger mixture is not better; salt solution that is too strong can irritate the piercing.

**CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS FOR FEMALE GENITAL PIERCINGS**

- WASH your hands thoroughly prior to cleaning or touching your piercing for any reason.
- **SALINE** rinse as needed while healing. For certain piercings it may be easier to apply using clean gauze saturated with saline solution. If your piercer suggests using soap, gently lather around the piercing and rinse well. Use mild liquid soap and avoid harsh products, and soaps with dyes or fragrances.
- **RINSE** site as needed to remove cleaning solution residue. Moving or rotating jewellery is not necessary during cleaning or rinsing.
- **DRY** by gently patting with clean, disposable paper products. Cloth towels can harbor bacteria and snag on jewellery causing injury.

**JEWELLERY HINTS AND TIPS:**

- Unless there is a problem with the size, style, or material of the initial jewellery, leave it in the place for the entire healing period. See a qualified piercer to perform any jewellery change that becomes necessary during healing. (See the UKAPP website to locate a member, or to request a copy of our Picking Your Piercer brochure.)
- **Currently in the UK, healthcare workers are compelled by law to anonymously (and inaccurately) record female genital piercings as a type of Female Genital Mutilation. If you would rather not have your piercing mislabeled (which skews important statistics), talk to your professional piercer about whether the piercing might be safe to temporarily remove prior to a check-up or procedure.**
- **If you are unable to get a Female Genital Piercing, AND you have an upcoming NHS appointment, you may want to consider postponing your piercing until after your medical visit.**
- **Contact your piercer for a non-metallic jewellery alternative (retainer)** if your metal jewellery must be temporarily removed (such as for a medical procedure). Review the APP brochure Preparing for Medical and Dental Procedures prior to your medical appointments.
- **Leave jewellery in all times.** Even healed piercings that you have had for years can shrink or close in minutes! If removed, reinsertion can be difficult or impossible. This varies from person to person; if you like your piercing, keep jewellery in - do not leave the hole empty.
• With clean hands or paper product, be sure to regularly check threaded ends on your jewellery for tightness ("righty-tighty, lefty-loosey").

• Should you decide you no longer want the piercing, simply remove the jewellery (or have a professional piercer remove it) and continue cleaning the piercing until the hole closes. In most cases only a small mark should remain.

• In the event an infection is suspected, quality jewellery or an inert alternative should be left in place to allow for drainage of the infection. If the jewellery is removed, the surface cells can close up, which can seal the infection inside the piercing channel and result in an abscess. Until an infection is cleared up, leave in quality jewellery or an appropriate substitute.

**WHAT IS NORMAL?**

• Initially: some bleeding, localized swelling, tenderness, and/or bruising.

• During healing: some discoloration, itching, secretion of a whitish-yellow fluid (not pus) that will form some crust on the jewellery. The tissue may tighten around the jewellery as it heals.

• Once healed: the jewellery may not move freely in the piercing; do not force it. If you fail to include cleaning your piercing as part of your daily hygiene routine, normal but small bodily secretions may accumulate.

• A piercing might seem healed before the healing process is complete. This is because tissue heals from the outside in, and although it feels fine, the interior remains fragile. Be patient, and keep cleaning throughout the entire initial healing period.

**WHAT TO DO**

• Exercise during healing is fine; listen to your body.

• Make sure your bedding is washed and changed regularly. Wear clean, comfortable, breathable clothing that protects your piercing while you are sleeping.

• Taking showers is safer than baths, as bathtubs can harbor bacteria. If you bathe in a tub, clean it well before each use and rinse off your piercing when you get out.

**TO STAY HEALTHY**

• The healthier your lifestyle, the easier it will be for your piercing to heal.

• Get enough sleep.

• To help healing and bolster your ability to fight infection eat a nutritious diet. If you don’t, consider taking nutritional supplements daily.

*(CONTINUED ON BACK)*
SOLUTIONS

IF you are concerned about this mislabeling issue in the UK then you can take action:

• Fact-check articles. If the media is misinforming, notify the website or contact the editorial staff and request corrections.

• Contact your political leaders to request the 2003 Act’s definitions for “piercing,” “harm,” and “mutilation,” are clarified and the definition considering a “woman” as a “girl” or “child” is amended.

• For the 2003 Act as well as eradication campaigns to continue and to make sense, request that allegations of “Female Genital Mutilation” be kept clearly in context with the ethnic populations flagged by the United Nations as “FGM-affected.”

• At the national level as well as face-to-face with your healthcare provider, urge a policy change that the NHS stop identifying adult female genital body piercing as “mutilation.”

• Share this pamphlet and information.

THE UKAPP OFFICIAL RESPONSE ON THE UK CATEGORIZATION OF “PIERCING” AS “FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION.”

The United Kingdom’s Association of Professional Piercers does not consider elective female genital piercing to be mutilation or “Female Genital Mutilation” ("FGM"). **We support the right for all adults to pierce their bodies in a safe, informed, and consensual manner when performed by a qualified practitioner under appropriate asepsis.** We are urging UK government officials to readdress the language of the current laws and regulations to clarify the confusion arising from the existing definitions, including definitional section 6 (1) of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, in which “Girl includes woman,” as well as any “FGM” regulations that include the term “pierce,” such as ISB 1610 of 2014. We are available to assist in this process.
RESOURCES

If you believe a girl is in eminent risk or has recently been a victim of “FGM,” call the police and medical services at 999.

To monitor NHS quarterly reports:

United Kingdom’s Association of Professional Piercers
www.ukapp.org.uk

Association of Professional Piercers (International non-profit, established in 1994)
www.safe piercing.org

If you know a British national who’s already been taken abroad for “FGM,” contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at 020 7008 1500 or for overseas +44 (0)20 7008 1500

Contact the NSPCC anonymously if you’re worried that a girl is at risk or maybe a victim of FGM. Email: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk Telephone: 0800 028 3550. Overseas: +44 (0)800 028 3550

For “FGM” survivor support contact FORWARD at www.forwarduk.org.uk. Email: support@forwarduk.org.uk. Telephone: 020 8960 4000

1 Remember that over time language and understandings change. Currently, there are strong cultural shifts among many to remove implicit gendering biases and assumptions of the secondary sexual characteristics. As such, many professionals are dropping the “male” and “female” from their vocabulary when referencing genitals, preferring instead to only reference the anatomical structures, such as “vulva piercings” for the general area. The UKAPP supports both approaches depending on the context and situation.

2 To date, there have been no large, long-term scientific studies of body piercing. As such, this estimate is extrapolated from individual shops’ statistics as well as opinions from industry experts.


4 Ibid., pp. 4, 11-12.

5 Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, Chapter 31, Parliament, United Kingdom.

6 World Health Organization et al. (2008: 22-28).

7 Ibid., p.4.

8 Ibid., pp.4-7.


11 https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/fgm-detectors_uk_f3a931f13c4b022c68b4e107gscounter=1&gu ce_referer_us=aHR0cHM6Ly9fMDIuYmNvbmRlckRvbWFpb3V0cy8xLmNvbmRlcklzY3JpcHRpb24uY29t&gu ce_referer_csi=ltNaCmiwP0xGib18DIUJPA

The UKAPP logo is the trademark of the United Kingdom’s Association of Professional Piercers.
A complex issue has surfaced in some Western nations, including the United Kingdom, about whether or not Female Genital Piercing (FGP) is “Female Genital Mutilation” (“FGM”).

Most of us have a straightforward notion of what “Female Genital Mutilation” is and what it is not. Except, “FGM” is actually a very complex subject involving passionate and sometimes conflicting beliefs.

Remember, this is a rapidly changing social and legal issue; contact us, check our website and the government agencies listed at the end of this document for the most recent developments and statistics.

**FGP IS...**

Female Genital Piercing or FGP is a term used by some researchers and healthcare professionals to describe the piercing of the vulva (female external sex organs) for the purpose of inserting specifically designed jewellery for adornment and other personal motivations.

Female Genital Piercing falls under the umbrella of other common Western practices of “Female Genital Alteration” that are widely accepted to carry some risk of injury, including various forms of pubic hair removal, trimming, or coloring, as well as the more permanent practices of tattooing and cosmetic surgery.

Western-style genital piercing emerged from underground communities into a widespread professional industry at the beginning of the 1990s.

Ethical female genital piercing services should only be performed by a trained and skilled professional body piercer who is in compliance with all regulations and laws.

The body piercing industry has established various “tried and true” piercing placements of the vulva that have been shown over decades to heal successfully for hundreds of thousands of adult women. Female genital piercings are not appropriate for experimental innovation.

Professional female genital piercing is performed only with the full and informed consent of the adult female recipient. Full and informed consent includes:

- Free from any coercion or pressure by the piercer, friends, partner, or family.
- Documented proof of age as 18 years or older (such as an original passport).
- Signed release form.
- Consultation for suitable anatomy prior to the piercing.

- Current and accurate information provided to the client both verbally and in writing, including healing times, aftercare guidelines, and any individualized considerations.
- Signed documents of consent and photocopies of proof of age should be kept on file at the place of business.

**“FGM” IS...**

**PART 1: THE DEFINITION**

The United Nations’ (UN) and World Health Organization’s (WHO) legal definitions of “Female Genital Mutilation” include three extreme and detailed categories of tissue removal and modification, plus a fourth ambiguous catch-all: “Type IV is a category that subsumes all other harmful, or potentially harmful, practices that are performed on the genitalia of girls and women.” The vague and overarching definition of Type IV “FGM” is the source of confusion for the Western-style body piercing’s miscategorization.

The UN definitions and therefore the UK legislation provided no qualitative or quantitative scale for what constitutes “harmful.” A rash, abrasion, puncture, burn, and/or bruising, etc., any injury that is a result of a deliberate action, no matter how temporary or permanent is technically “harmful.” With such overarching definitions, even the most common Western adult female genital grooming practices of waxing, electrolysis, and pubic hair trimming or shaving fall within the definitions of Type IV “FGM.”

The UN/WHO’s own documents acknowledge their definitions for “female genital mutilation” were deliberately broad to close any feared legal “loopholes” for the practices they were trying to eradicate.

The United Nations found that traditional “FGM” is usually carried out on girls between the ages of 0-15.

**PART 2: “FGM-RISK” FEMALES**

When the United Nations and World Health Organization developed the “FGM” definition, it was understood that these definitions were one part of a two-part system.

The second part of the system was who was being looked at for “FGM risk.” This definition was to be applied only to females who are from “at risk” communities. To separate the definitions from the context of whom they should target, confuses and undermines the anti-FGM campaign.

The UN and WHO have identified “female genital mutilation” as occurring in ethnic groups in or immigrated from 28 African countries as well as Iraq, Israel, Oman, United Arab Emirates, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan.

The UN and WHO never intended to target the Western consensual practices of European and North American origin.
PROBLEMS

The United Nations’ definition of “FGM” was taken out of context.

The UN’s definition of FGM was ONLY intended to be applied to “At-Risk” communities and immigrants from those places. The UN/ World Health Organization never intended for their definitions to be applied to non-immigrant Britons, Europeans, or North Americans.

The “Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003,” did not clearly define “mutilation” or “harm.”

The UK’s usage of the UN’s term “piercing” without clarification that this was referring to non-Western traditions, practiced by clearly identified ethnic groups confused the meaning among regulators and healthcare workers who knew only of Western-style “body piercing.”

RECORDING AND REPORTING

Under increasing political pressure, such as the Serious Crime Act 2015, National Health Service (NHS) mandated healthcare workers to document for NHS’ quarterly reports all known observances of potentially altered vulvas. This mandate included reporting adult females’ Western-style body piercing, a practice never targeted by the UN/WHO.

The summaries of these reports mention large numbers as “newly recorded cases.” Out of context, “newly recorded cases” misleads casual readers into believing that there is an ongoing epidemic of “FGM” in the UK. However, if a reader studies the reports they’ll find, these are just newly identified healthcare clients that may or may not have had something done to their genitals at some time in their lives.

The few incidents recorded as happening recently AND in the UK are adult female Western-style body piercings and not traditional “FGM.”

So why the misinformation in the UK media? This journalism error usually falls within four categories:

- Not actually reading the entire NHS report past the summary
- Not understanding statistical reporting
- Choosing to sensationalize headlines to grab attention and boost readership
- Deliberately fueling political outrage, particularly among anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim groups.

Despite years of ongoing trainings, programs, and investigations by NHS and Crown Prosecution Service, to date, there have been NO prosecutions in the UK. That is because “FGM” is not regularly happening in the UK. Yes, many of the anti-“FGM” safeguards should be continued, but the “FGM” issue doesn’t need to be a national panic.

(CONTINUED ON BACK)
While things have come a long way in the United States, in many places all over the world the professional piercing industry is only at the beginning. Russia is one of them. Traditionally, Russians are kept away from American community. Why? Well, it is not a big secret that there is political tension between the United States and Russia, so for common citizens it isn’t easy to get a visa to travel to the US.

I think in the whole history of the APP, only two or three piercers from Russia have attended an APP Conference, this is likely due to a combination of low Russian economy, language barriers, expensive flights, and poor industry standards (in Russia) that all play a part.

So, this year we are so excited that we were able to hold the first and second of what we hope to be many of our own conferences, read on to find out more about the RuAPP and our Conference!

I would like to give credit to fellow piercer Ruben Lew, and his article about LBP as I used it as a template for my article.

RuAPP was officially established in November of 2017, but was conceived long before that date. We currently stand at 24 members. Requirements are significantly different than for the APP, but RuAPP has a 3-year member requirement rising plan (like the UKAPP has - hi, fellows!), which is going to bring RuAPP to APP standards (slow and steady wins the race).

Our first RuAPP conference was held in Moscow in January of 2018, where 60 Russian-speaking piercers gathered from all over Europe. The second RuAPP conference was held only 7 months later due to overwhelming interest form local piercers so eager to learn. Hosted once again in Moscow, attendance nearly doubled to 110 people, 95 of which were piercers, including APP Board Members, Cody Vaughn and Brian Skellie, APP Business Members, Sergi Tinaut from Spain and Javier Retamal from Chile, who all taught 2-3 classes at our Conference. Overall, 25 classes and several live demonstrations were taught over the three day period of RuAPP #2. Eight vendors were present in the conference expo area, including companies such as Industrial Strength and Auris Jewel-
Also there we saw other crucial things as Katana Needles and even Statims!

We would like to show thankfulness to the APP for all of their help in ensuring we had a successful Conference.

Both conferences to date have been predominantly Russian-speaking, and lectures have had translations, but the next one is to become international in a fuller sense and have at least half of the classes taught in English with no translation. From now on we plan to have annual conferences and you can visit RuAPP #3 from June 18-22th, 2019 in Saint Petersburg, Russia. So save the date!

From the very beginning of the first conference, I realised that we had changed the game in Russia. Lots of old piercers who were “enemies” before were sitting at one table together right in front of me with no drama, no fights, no insults. Lots of new piercers who were unknown before the Conference and a bit shy to come out from the shadows showed themselves. I had no idea we have so many piercers interested learning! At that moment I understood that we’re doing our work correctly. There is no better motivation in this world than seeing a result that was supposed to be impossible!

I was really happy to have our first foreign speakers - it was a totally new organizing experience to me! I think you all understand that for many of us, conference is not only a temple of Forever Learning, but a social hub full of friends and dedicated inspiring people! Lots of attendees found a huge source of motivation and inspiration and I could read it on their faces!

My personal view on our industry is that piercers are the kind of people who are not just making holes in a safe manner; we are more than that. What I intend to do within my piercing career is to solve clients’ troubles, and inspire them to change their lives for the better! The feeling of thankfulness I receive back is an unbelievable source of my inner motivation. During the conference, I think of all the piercers as my clients who I want to inspire. What we did gives me inspirational feedback and huge motivation to do it even better. After conference I have no post-conference depression, I’m running around full of projects and ideas along with energy as do a lot of other piercers and RuAPP organizers!

Of course, not everything goes according to plan and we make mistakes. There were issues
Top to bottom, High-end jewelry on the expo floor; Arseniy Andersson makes marking on Andrey Safonov before freehand microdermal live demonstration; Industrial Strength Russia and their beautiful Marta Vagner; Did you already buy all the rest raffle tickets? If not, you have the last chance!; Sergi Tinaut (Spain) gives his class about anatomy together with Dmitry Sizov (Russia), who helps with translation.
with translations, issues with sound system; but no critical mistakes happened. We can analyse and improve our event planning to make the next one even better, same as we all analyse and learn how to do each piercing better.

I can’t as we start preparing the third RuAPP. For now I will have to do with the warm feelings I get while thinking of all those friends I met at APP, GEP, LBP, BMXNet, YouModify and UKAPP, who wished us luck and who want to come to Russia in 2019!

As know my opinions about the success of our Conference are likely biased so please read what some of our attendees had to say:

Cody Vaughn: Having the opportunity to attend and teach at RuAPP this year was an absolute pleasure and an honor.

The attendees and other speakers were incredibly nice and very eager to learn. The classes I attended were very insightful and it was great to see where Russia was at with their current piercing techniques and practices. Seeing and hearing so many similarities to what I have encountered at conferences such as APP and LBP popping up at RuAPP really made me proud to see how far and wide the piercing industry has become.

I sincerely thank everybody I got to meet and interact with. The RuAPP attendees and speakers were a pleasure to spend the week with, both teaching and learning. I wish you many more successful conferences in the future.

Brian Skellie: Thanks to the RuAPP for an enthusiastic and curious experience as a speaker and participant. I would be pleased to return in 2019 if you’ll have me. Overall, the conference seemed well put together with a balance of educational and social interaction.

I arrived to the St. Scalpelburg shop in Moscow to the lovely view of Yuri Gagarin’s golden statue who welcomed me along with the smiles of friendly fellow speakers, organizers, and participants. The uncertainty that preceded about my visa, my travel arrangements, and my unfamiliarity with the language faded quickly. By the time we got to the event location, many productive conversations were started, and the group was dynamic and involved.

The presentations were a high quality and seemed well received despite a few complexities with translation. The questions and feedback addressed felt useful and impactful on many levels, towards a shiny future.

The vendors brought an impressive quantity of attractive jewelry designs, quite aware of the industry trends in precious metals and minerals. Their generosity to the raffle was greatly appreciated. APP Board Members, Cody Vaughn and I, were able to donate two of our full conference passes for 2019 in Las Vegas for two fortunate piercers Lala and Yuliana.

Javier Retamal: I had the great honor of being invited to do classes in Russia for the first time in my life. I felt completely happy to meet many people with the same passion that I can find every time I go to Brazil or Mexico; people looking to grow as professionals and at the same time as human beings. I always felt very welcome and with certainty RuAPP is going to be one of the best conferences in this part of the world!

Postscriptum: If you ever want to explore a new exotic destination and combine it with shopping or selling jewelry, taking or teaching classes, feel free to contact RuAPP international liaison, Arseniy Andersson, and remember: it is bad manners to keep an adventure waiting!
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