

Skip the snip? Anti-circumcision group stages Stamford protest

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Non-profit group Bloodstained Men member David Atkinson of Boston, center, holds anti-circumcision signs while protesting at the intersection of Washington Blvd. and Tresser Blvd. in downtown Stamford, Conn. on Tuesday, Aug. 7, 2018. The group, which is currently in the middle of a 21 city tour, calls the process unnecessary and destructive while attempting to raise awareness and educate the public on the issue.

STAMFORD — A traveling troupe of anti-circumcision activists — “intactivists” as they call themselves — made their first stop to the Lock City on a 21-city Northeast tour Tuesday morning.

They promptly got a Stamford welcome.

“I’m circumcised and I love it,” yelled a man pumping his fists as he rolled through Tresser and Washington boulevards in his car.

“I’m sorry for your loss,” replied a woman dressed in the standard group uniform of shirts, pants and cowboy hats — all white, except for the red-paint-splattered crotch that is the the calling card of the Bloodstained Men and Their Friends.

The nonprofit group, while grotesquely marked, had a less sinister message. They advocate that circumcision is akin to any other body modification including tattoos and piercings.

Such procedures should only be done on consenting adults, not infants, they say.

“There is no need for corrective surgery for perfectly healthy boys,” said Harry Guiremand, the group’s road spokesman, and often the driver of the large SUV that takes the “bloodied” band from city to city.

“Amputation should be a last resort,” he said. “And it’s a basic human rights issue.”

The group was in the Hartford area Monday, where local families joined the protest.

In Stamford, only one Greenwich woman briefly joined the group during its five-

hour visit – which included a trip to see the giant Marilyn Monroe statue on display in Latham Park.

Brian Brown, of Ellington, who runs Intact Connecticut, another grassroots group, said much of the activism on the issue is near him on eastern side of the state.

He tried, he said, to reach out to some liberal groups in Fairfield County, but found little interest. The taboo topic is so divisive that groups you would think would also “be against cutting babies” don’t sign on.

Some city residents seemed keen to the group’s message, honking and waving them over for more information. But others were more interested in the oddity of it all.

It’s not everyday a red-crotched ensemble walks around City Hall with signs reading “Peace, Love, Foreskin” and “It’s not your mother’s penis.”

Circumcision, which has roots in ancient civilizations and is enshrined in some holy scriptures – thus generally required by those in Islamic and Jewish faiths – is having something of a falling out in other countries, but remains prevalent in the U.S.

Guiremand said the group has many Jewish members, but generally “circumvents” the religious undertones of banning the ritual. There are movements within the Jewish faith to recast the ritual bris for young boys into a naming ceremony, he said.

Laurie Evans, a Westchester-based “intactivist,” who is Jewish, said her message is starting to get out, but it’s hard to change minds when up against more than 5,000 years of history.

“How do you interrupt customs?” she said.

It is still popular in the United States, studies show, with some 71 percent of boys getting the snip.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has said the benefits of the procedure outweigh the risks, but doesn't recommend it for all newborns, leaving the decision to parents.

The Mayo Clinic advises that the procedure could make for easier hygiene, a decreased risk of urinary tract infections, a decreased risk of sexually transmitted infections and the potential prevention of other problems, including a lower risk of penis cancer.

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