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NEWS

'Bloodstained' Ann Arbor protest takes aim at circumcision

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Story Highlights

Some protesters Saturday will use fake blood on their pants to symbolize the procedure.

Some say circumcision cuts risk of disease; others say it causes long-term damage.

Cutting off another part of the body would be considered "crazy," says Michigan leader of effort.

A national group called Bloodstained Men and Their Friends is planning a peaceful protest against circumcision Saturday in Ann Arbor — one that might prompt some double takes or shudders from passersby.

Some protesters will use fake blood — really acrylic paint — on their pants, symbolizing what the group calls "the damage and trauma from genital cutting."

Norm Cohen, Michigan director of the National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers, said cutting off another part of the body would be considered "crazy."

"It's not meant to frighten people, but to educate them about the harm" of circumcision, he said.

The protest will be on the University of Michigan campus.

Many men are circumcised because of religious identity, but circumcision — according to Cohen and others — violates a child's "right to bodily integrity."

"You own your body and nobody has a right to take something away from that physical being," said Cohen, a Birmingham software engineer. "These boys become men and a lot of men are upset about the surgery, the circumcision that was done without their permission. And a lot of mothers are shocked by what is done with their babies."

Cohen said the group is more focused on educating.

"Protesting isn't our main thing," he said. "Our main thing is education."

According to a 2007 World Health Organization report, about three in four American males are circumcised for nonreligious reasons.

The same report echoes medical experts who suggest there's evidence that circumcision protects against some disease, such as urinary tract infections, invasive penile cancer, syphilis and HIV. But there are risks, too, because it's a surgical procedure.

NOCIRC says the damage can be long-term and include scarring and less sexual sensitivity.

For information on the Ann Arbor protest, go to NOCIRC's Michigan Facebook event page. Search for "Michigan NOCIRC."

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