



Bloodstained Men (and their friends) protest against circumcision outside of City Hall on Thursday.  
Photo: Max Marin/AL DÍA News

## 'Bloodstained' circumcision protestors are not here for the Pope

"I love my uncircumcised penis!" is one of the more colorful comments the group often hears while protesting in cities across the U.S.

By Max Marin

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"I love my circumcised penis!"

This is one of the more colorful things David Atkinson, 27, often hears while protesting male circumcision across the country. Passers-by outside City Hall on Thursday were more curious than crude towards the group of a dozen men, who wear all-white clothing with fake bloodstains splattered on the crotch. Their signs carry messages like "Stop cutting baby penis", "Foreskin theft" and "His body, his choice."

Atkinson belongs to **Bloodstained Men**, a California-based organization raising awareness about male genital mutilation. They're not religiously

affiliated, though they note that circumcision is “a freedom of religion issue.” Moreover, the group says it doesn't do any political lobbying for their cause.

“It's not really very effective in the current legislative climate,” Atkinson said. “What's more effective is public awareness, because parents are the ones who decide whether or not their child gets to keep his whole penis.”

Why do this now during the World Meeting of Families and so close to the Pope's visit, the largest event the city has ever seen?

The Bloodstained Men say it was coincidence. Philly is but one stop on a two-week tour of over dozen northeastern cities. They were in New York City two days ago, Princeton yesterday, and tomorrow they'll be heading to Scranton well before [Center City turns into a traffic-free zone](#).

“We got lots of thumbs up,” Atkinson said of Bloodstained Men's reception in other cities. “Lots of people say thanks for doing this, I'm glad somebody is finally speaking out. But we do get a few heckles and jeers as well.”

While many circumcised men don't understand the cause, Atkinson says it's not about them, but rather “about the babies, whose rights are being violated.” He got behind the cause while he was in college. A few years later, he attended a “genital integrity awareness” conference in Washington D.C., and soon after that he joined Bloodstained Men.

Though legal in all 50 states, circumcisions have dropped sharply in the last three decades. A 2015 survey estimates that only 60 percent of newborns in the U.S. are circumcised.

Atkinson wants to combat the culture of “victim shaming” that he feels surrounds the topic. The group doesn't oppose circumcision as a medical practice, but argue that it should not be forced upon unconsenting children.

Bloodstained Men consists entirely of volunteers. They receive donations to fund their travel expenses.

“We are making progress, gradually, against this culture of ignorance and denial of the value of the foreskin,” Atkinson said.

Members of group assured this reporter that they only wear their blood-stained white pants from 10 to 3 p.m. every day during protest hours.

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