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Bloodstained Men group protests circumcision on the Drag



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A group of five men and women protested circumcision yesterday by wearing white suits with red stains around the crotches on the corner of Guadalupe Street and 24th Street.

The suits were painted red as symbols of the physical and emotional scars carried by men after being circumcised, according to the group founder, an activist named Brother K. The group, which was accompanied by other local protestors, is called The Bloodstained Men.

“It’s the most perfect protest symbol I’ve ever seen in my life,” K said. “We’ve taken the blood stain that we wear under our clothes and put it on the outside.”

K started the protest group as a Facebook page in 2012, and it has grown into an official nonprofit organization that raises awareness for parents such as Krystal Raven. Raven is a mother of four, expecting her fifth, who started following the group after researching in preparation for her first pregnancy.

“117-plus boys die each year [in the U.S.], mostly from blood loss [because of circumcision],” Raven said. “It’s not commonly practiced anywhere except [the U.S.], a little bit in Africa and Israel. It’s what people [here] think they’re supposed to do. We have to end that cycle.”

Circumcision is a short surgery involving removal of the foreskin from a penis that costs around \$500 and is labeled as cosmetic by insurance agencies, Raven said. There is evidence circumcision can reduce the risk of some sexually transmitted infections and penile cancer, according to the World Health Organization.

Psychology sophomore Ifeowula Bada is from Nigeria and said circumcision is common there but fears the protest could be offensive.

“[The suits] get the point across,” Bada said. “You’re drawn to it. The way it’s presented is like, ‘Hey, this is harmful, don’t do it,’ and they’re not allowing people to have their own opinions. I’m not saying it’s bad. ... I’m just saying it’s a little out there.”

The group is finishing its tour of protests in the southern U.S., with two final protests in Austin. Today they are protesting at Lamar Street and Barton Springs Drive starting at 10 a.m.

“A lot of people think this is not an issue that should be talked about or given any attention,” K said. “It’s so devastating, so cruel, such a barbaric injury to our children, that it’s easier to deny it, to pretend it has no meaning, that children suffer no injury from it.”