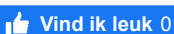




Week-long event protests circumcision



By [Jordan Gass-Pooré - Spring 2015](#) Mar 30, 2015



David Wilson, a human rights activist from Cocoa Beach, Fla., evokes Uncle Sam at a demonstration against newborn male circumcision Saturday in front of the White House. Wilson told passersby that circumcision is unnecessary and painful. SHFWire photo by Jordan Gass- Pooré

WASHINGTON – Passersby eyed an anatomically correct male doll fastened to a plastic contraption Thursday on the West Lawn of the Capitol. Christina Love, founder of [Genital Autonomy of Western New York](#), explained to people that it's a [circumstraint newborn immobilizer](#) used to circumcise male newborns.

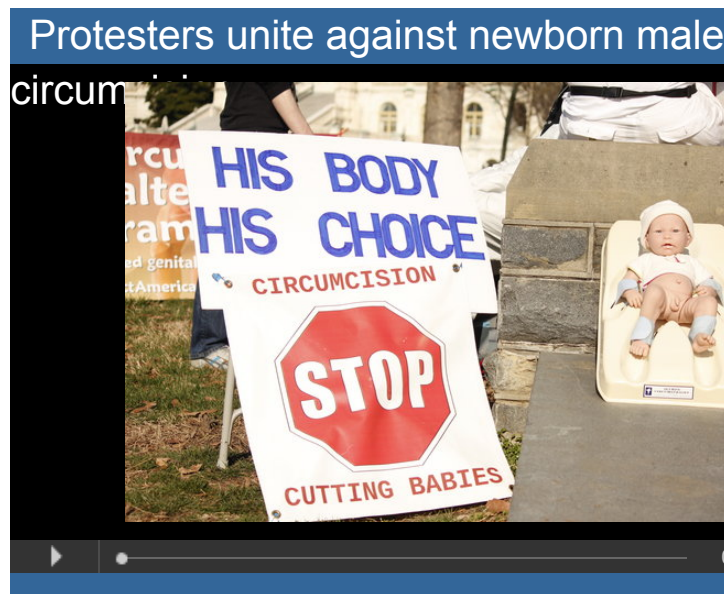
Love and other genital rights activists or “intactivists,” from the words intact and activist, protested against newborn male circumcision, the

surgical removal of the foreskin from the penis, as part of [Genital Integrity Awareness Week](#).

They marched Saturday from the Capitol to the White House where protesters chanted “not the family penis.” The week concluded Monday with a White House sidewalk demonstration.

“Intact genitals are a human right,” Love said about why she participated in the events. Other genital rights activists echoed her sentiments.

David Wilson, 61, also stood on the West Lawn and held a sign that read “Whose Penis? Whose Body? Whose Rights?”



The questions on the sign are some he has asked himself for decades and wants others to do the same.

When Wilson was 12 he heard his mom talk about circumcision and it left him traumatized. With this news, Wilson said he ran to the bathroom to look at his penis and saw the circumcision scar.

Wilson said he didn't find out the reasons why newborn males are circumcised until a high school sex-education class. He said the teacher told him and the other students that circumcision helps prevent penile cancer, which kills one in 1,437 men annually.

“I’d rather take my chances,” Wilson said of his desire to restore his foreskin.

That’s why Wilson said he began writing about the topic online in 1996, where he found out he wasn’t alone.

The Internet helped him join forces with the nonprofit [National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers](#) to start Genital Integrity Awareness Week in Washington, which coincides with the Monday’s anniversary of [legislation](#) limiting female genital mutilation passed in 1996.

“Where is the outrage over the 117 baby boys that die every year?” Wilson said. “One death from a McDonald’s toy and it’s yanked off the market.”

This figure was established by [Dan Bollinger](#), an opponent of circumcision, based on his reviews of infant mortality statistics. It has been disputed by some medical professionals.

[Ryan McAllister](#), Georgetown University research assistant, has been studying circumcision for about 15 years and said the topic can be viewed through many lenses.

“For something that seems like a single issue, it just became Mary Poppins’ purse; you go in and keep finding more stuff,” said McAllister, who has a doctoral degree in physics.

There’s the American medical community, which is, overall, in favor of circumcision, he said.

The American Pediatrics Association released an updated [statement](#) in 2012 that says the health benefits of newborn male circumcision outweigh the risks. However, the organization does not recommend the procedure universally.

The update comes at a time when sentiment against circumcision is on the rise. Circumcision rates declined from 64.5 percent to 58.3 percent from

1979 through 2010, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [report](#).

Another CDC [report](#) concludes that circumcision doesn't appear to reduce HIV transmission rates.

Studies have shown decreased urinary tract infections and herpes simplex 2 transmissions among those who have been circumcised.

Risks associated with circumcision are low. The most common complications are bleeding and infection, according to the CDC.

Some people are in favor of newborn male circumcision because they don't want to eclipse the parent's right or a religion's right to choose, McAllister said.

Newborn male circumcision is practiced in Jewish and Islamic religions. It usually symbolizes faith in God.

Wilson said there should be genital rights for all children, regardless of religion or gender.

"We put religion above culture," he said. "If it's a religious reason it's okay. If it's cultural it's barbaric."

Reach reporter Jordan Gass-Pooré at jordan.gass-pooré@scripps.com or 202-408-1490. SHFWire stories are free to any news organization that gives the reporter a byline and credits the SHFWire. Like the Scripps Howard Foundation Wire interns on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).

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Jordan Gass-Pooré is a Spring 2015 reporter for the SHFWire from Texas State University.

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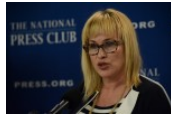
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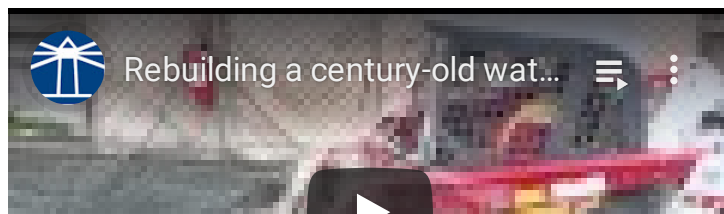


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