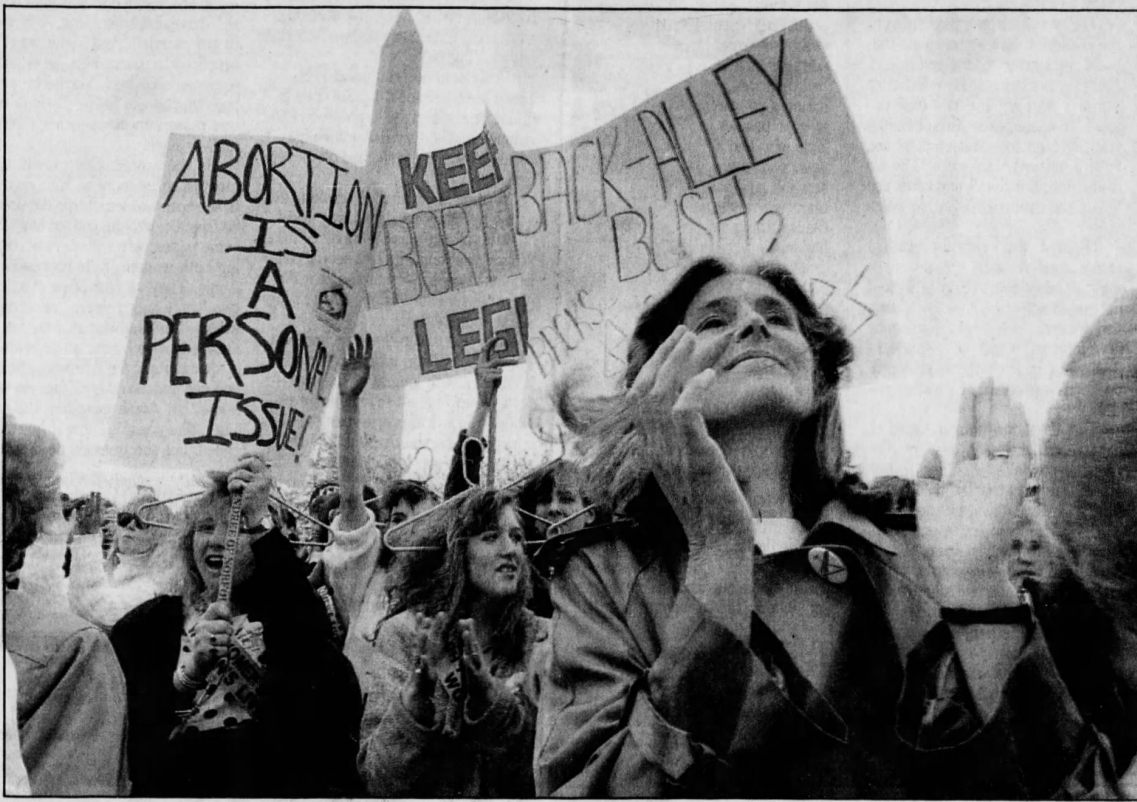


“Come here today to make a statement with thousands of other women about choices, and how important it is.”

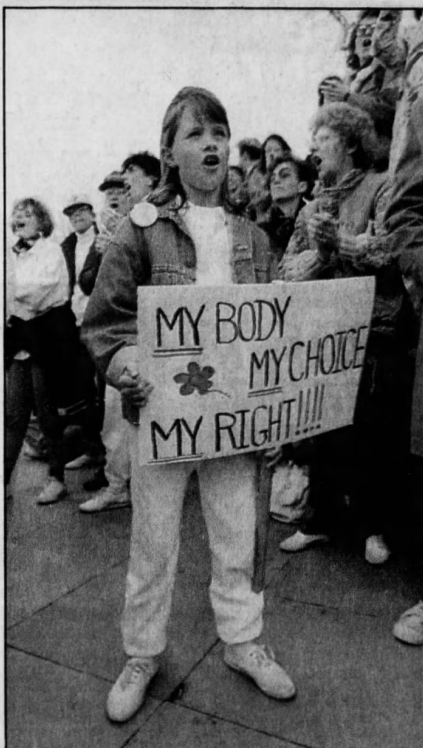
SALLY BARRETT-PAGE



Sally Barrett-Page, 43 (right), of Boulder, Colo., and high school students from Harrisburg, Va., cheer at the April 9 rally.



Gygi Jennings, 23, of New York City. The day before the march she saw a picture taken years ago of a woman who had died after an illegal abortion. “This shouldn’t have to happen,” she said.



Lisa Badanes, 10, of Chappaqua, N.Y. Asked why she came, she responded: “Because I don’t want people dying. They deserve a choice.”

WHY THEY MARCHED

Photostory by Patricia Beck

Drawn by the urgency that on April 26, the Supreme Court will hear arguments in a case that could restrict or nullify access to abortion, more than 300,000 marchers descended on Washington, D.C., last Sunday for the “March for Women’s Equality/Women’s Lives.”

News accounts stressed the unexpectedly large size of the crowd. But Free Press photographer Patricia Beck — who documented the event, even though she was not on assignment — found herself thinking in individual terms.

“This was the first march that I ever felt such a strong need or desire to attend. I personally felt it was really important,” Beck says. “And I looked around and thought it would be interesting to find out why all these other people were here.”

So Beck worked her way through the overwhelmingly female crowd with her cameras and tape recorder, stopping person after person to pose a simple question: Why did you come?

This is what she saw and heard.



Kathy Mizzer, 42, of Washington, D.C., stands with her twins Dayna and Heather, 2½, and son Sean, 5 (to Kathy’s right), as they watch the marchers approach Capitol Hill. Husband Tony Mizzer is not in the picture.



Sisters Denise Mayer, 39, of Montclair, N.J., left, Dianne Mayer, 35, of Philadelphia, and Debbie Mayer, 36, of Boston. Denise said, “I’m about to have my first child and I don’t want it to have to go through what women did before 1973.”

“I was in college in the ’60s; I had girlfriends who did the coat hanger bit through back-alley abortionists, so I went through it and I don’t ever want to see my daughters do anything like that, ever. I’m here to save their lives.”

KATHY MIZZER



"Ms. Liberty," of Dutchess County, N.Y., laughs with Arlene Hudson, of Gaithersburg, Md., at the rally at the Washington Monument before the march. "Ms. Liberty" said she attended "because I realize this is white-male America . . . and because our voice has to be heard to reach the government." Hudson, who gave her age as "over 60," said, "I think one of the reasons we have so much crime today is that there are unwanted babies being born. I think we should do something about that."

WHY THEY MARCHED



Dana Aronson, 28, of Hoboken, N.J., listens at the rally at the Washington Monument. "I think what they (pro-lifers) don't understand is that it's wrong to bring a child into the world that is going to be unloved and live in poverty. . . . We just feel we're really pro-life."



Margarete Hoyer, 70, of Montclair, N.J.: "It's a woman's decision as to whether she is ready to take care of a child so that he or she will be welcomed into a loving home. I feel that unwanted children end up being abused and probably will end up having to be supported by the state."

Sharon Behar, 29, of Burlington, Vt., leans on Cheryl Hurwitz, 28, of Frederick, Md. Deborah Abramsky, 27, of New York City, is at right. The other two agreed with Hurwitz that "now is the time that feminism and the rights of women are more at stake than they have been in the last 20 years."



Kya Walker, 10, of Atlanta, hands raised, cheers during the Sunday morning rally at the Washington Monument before the march to the Capitol. Kya said she came "to support the abortion system." She said she came with her mother.