



A New Year, but Not a New Issue

Why I Am NOT Marching This Saturday

I was never a joiner and really hate crowds. Where most people find reinforcement and validation in collective theatrical action--I find claustrophobia and anxiety.

That is not to say I have not participated in most of the major women's marches on Washington--and New York--and even initiated quite a few and spoken at many others.

It's just that I've been there and done that oh so many times before---

So this Saturday WHEN THOUSANDS ARE MARCHING I will be where I have been for the last 46 years...with my patients, staff, and volunteer clinic escorts--the demonstrators screaming at them that they are "killing their babies"... calling the police to put up barricades...protecting, defending, putting my sword down in the sand--and saying with my body and with my work--that

THE POWER OF THE STATE STOPS AT MY SKIN.

Where will you be THE DAY AFTER THIS Saturday and what will you be doing all the Saturdays after this one?



Choices Volunteer Clinic Escorts in bright green vests welcome patients every Saturday morning, rain, shine, sleet or snow, and shield them from anti-choice protestors.



Video: Just Another Saturday Outside of Choices Women's Medical Center



Ariel Chesler, Phyllis Chesler, and Merle Hoffman, 1989, demonstrating outside of St. Patrick's Cathedral

January 22, 2017 marks the 44th year that abortion has been legal in this country. It has been 44 years of women's empowerment to have a simple procedure that enables them to make the single most important decision that will impact their lives: whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term, give birth and become a mother. It has also been 44 years of unrelenting attacks on this right, varied tactics that have the same cruel purpose: to deny women both the right and the ability to make this decision.

I founded Choices shortly after New York State legalized abortion in 1971, two years before the Roe V. Wade Supreme Court decision. As the attacks intensified, I fought them in both word and deed. Thru the challenges, of evictions, bomb threats, invasions, murders of friends I developed Choices into one of the largest women's reproductive health centers in the country. I organized resistance, drew my line in

the sand, and held it. And I was always motivated by the memory of the first woman who came for my help. She was from New Jersey, a state which then did not offer legal abortion in 1971, and I held her hand during her abortion in a promise that she would be safe and go home to live a life of her choosing.

Now in January 2017, we face as great a threat to women's freedom as I've seen in my lifetime. Foes in statehouses around the country plan to strip abortion away with creative draconian laws that restrict access, if not ban it altogether. Any one of these could pave the way for a reversal of Roe. I pledge to all of you reading this that I – and Choices – will never back down or shy away from the struggle to ensure that all American women and girls have the right to full reproductive health care.

I want to share with you part of a Proclamation, a Bill of Rights for Reproductive Rights and Justice that NY Pro-Choice Coalition members held up in front of the huge doors of St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1989, during the first pro-choice civil disobedience action. 9 people were arrested--- It is even more urgent and relevant today:

- 1. Women are full moral agents with the right and ability to choose when and whether or not they will be mothers.**
- 2. Abortion is a choice made by each individual for profound personal reasons that no man nor state should judge.**
- 3. The right to make reproductive choices is women's legacy throughout history and belongs to every woman regardless of age, class, race, religion, or sexual preference.**
- 4. Abortion is a life-affirming act chosen within the context of women's realities, women's lives, and women's sexuality.**
- 5. Abortion is often the most moral choice in a world that frequently denies health care, housing, education, and economic survival.**



Merle Hoffman in her office with her 6 foot hanger and the Proclamation

January 19th, 2017

*Merle Hoffman, Founder/President
Choices Women's Medical Center*

Choices Volunteer Clinic Escort Program

Defending Choice at Choices

Choices Volunteer Clinic Escorts are organized through Choices and the National Organization for Women (NOW), New York Chapter, and come from all over NYC, Long Island and even New Jersey. They are multi-generational, many college and university students, female, male and gender non-conforming. If you are interested in volunteering, occasionally or regularly, once a month or once a year, we welcome you. Every escort who comes makes a difference in women's lives! Contact mgreenberg@choicesmedical.com for more information.

718.786.5000 / www.choicesmedical.com / outreach@choicesmedical.com

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Choices Women's Medial Center | 147-32 Jamaica Avenue
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