

We Made HERstory!

Women Marching on Washington Over a Million Strong

By EMMA & LLUVIA MULVANEY-STANAK

Over 1.15 million people in a town ruled by a dick, a colon and a bush. Ah, the perfect setting for a Planned Parenthood gathering. Feminism took many forms in the April 26th March for Women's Lives in Washington D.C.

Scores of polished professionals with lipstick and Louis Vuiton handbags covered in pro-choice stickers marched side by side with young feminists shirtless with flowers as bras. The largest march in the history of the US turned out 1.15 million people to demand access to contraception, sex education, abortion, and women's rights. Entire families turned out, elderly couples, college students shouting "1, 2, 3, 4, kick Bush out the door" and "Whose choice? My choice."

Lluvia: "The vibe was indescribable. It was a pure community of 1 million people who were there to defend the right to choose. It really struck me and I was in awe, walking among the throngs of people. Even a lifetime of activism

and regular attendance at rallies and marches with many, many people – this was my first democratic gathering where the energy was just so positive. It really made me have a renewed sense of hope, in these times of frustration, anger and negativity."

Whoopi, Madeline Albright, Ani DiFranco, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Gloria Steinem, and Ashley Judd were just a few of the incredible line-up of speakers who rallied the crowd with inspiring and witty words and songs of truth, that exposed the Bush Administration as the most anti-choice and anti-woman group of politicians we have seen in decades.

The march poured into the streets of the District with throngs of people from all over the country. Signs ranged from the need for quality sex education and protection for abortion rights to repealing Bush's global gag rule. This gag rule prevents non-government organizations that receive U.S. aid from providing abortions or even educating women on contraception. As a direct result, many non-governmental organizations have lost funding, and ironically, abortion rates have increased – along

with death rates (as high as one-third) as a consequence from botched, black-market abortions.

But what would a jolly pro-choice rally be without the fanatic pro-life counter-protestors? At one street where fewer than 200 pro-life protestors stood, pro-choice march organizers held a sign mimicking a road sign reading, "Danger, Entering Fanatic Zone." Barely lining the street, the few (and attempting to be loud) pro-lifers held traditional graphic fetus signs, bibles, rosaries and religious condemnation signs. They attempted to stun and silence the marchers as we passed using bull-horns, but the enthusiasm of the pro-choice crowd easily drowned out the fanatics. By far the best retort (besides ignoring them), was a very popular chant, "Pro-life? That's a lie! You don't care if women die." More impressively, several pro-choice marchers dropped out of the main march and encircled the pro-lifers to emphasize that indeed they represent a minority viewpoint.

Emma: "The march reaffirmed my faith in the political power of people, and most of all, women. Every speaker emphasized the need to

'organize, organize, organize' when we all returned home, and by the sense of energy in the crowd, I am extremely hopeful that we will not only see a regime change but a shift in local and state-level politicians who are anti-choice and anti-woman."

Beyond *Roe v. Wade*, this march really marks a revived popular political movement in this country. Speakers during the main rally emphasized that the majority of Americans are indeed pro-choice but the media conglomeration and religious right fanaticism reflected in the current Administration has skewed popular perception. With the election rapidly approaching there is once again a sense of hope that our thoughts and ideas can be expressed through political action, media and music without being gagged. A hope that our mothers, sisters and daughters will be able to choose what is right for *their* bodies and *their* lives. And most importantly, there is hope that indeed we may see a regime change in November. ▼

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