

Why I'm Marching

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1/13/2017

My first major march took place in 1972. I was five years old, in Dag Hammarskjold Plaza in New York City, marching with thousands demanding that the USSR allow Soviet Jewry to emigrate. Since then, I have lent support to so many causes, including equal rights for women, healthcare reform, immigrant rights, and most recently, the Fight for \$15 and a Union for all.

I protest and organize and march because I am an activist, and I believe in the power of people standing together and working to make change happen.

That is why I will again be in Dag Hammarskjold Plaza on Saturday, January 21st, this time standing strong with the Workmen's Circle, the progressive activist organization that I have been proud to lead, as part of the grassroots national day of action around the Women's March.

There are so many reasons to stand together and march on this day.

I am marching because I am a woman and I am committed to fighting back against all attacks on women's exclusive right to make decisions that affect their body and reproductive choices.

I am marching because I am a breast cancer survivor. I am alive and well in part due to federal investment in cancer research. And, thanks to Healthcare Reform, I am guaranteed health insurance coverage despite my preexisting condition.

I am marching in memory of my great grandmother, Hinde Helsein, who worked as a midwife in a clinic with Margaret Sanger, and saw firsthand the hardships suffered by women at a time when birth control was not legal or readily accessible.

I am marching because my grandparents worked in sweatshops and fought for the right to belong to a union. Now, those same worker rights are under attack as President-elect Donald Trump has made clear his intent to decimate unions and roll back worker rights and protections.

I am marching because I am just a short-term tenant and caretaker of the earth, and I know that if we don't stop polluting our world, it will not be viable for future generations.

I am marching because the civil rights revolution of the 60's, that the Jewish community played such an active role in, is still ongoing, and that the gains that have been achieved now are under attack.

I am marching because as a Jew, my history makes me painfully aware of the dangers of hate speech, isolation, and religious persecution. It is not enough to say never again; I must act when others are singled out and attacked.

I am marching because today I am the executive director of an organization founded by immigrants, Eastern European Jews who once settled in a United States that was not always welcoming of their "otherness." A hundred years ago, our community was lucky enough to forge a path to belonging. Today, we all benefit from living in a country made greater by its diversity.

I will march on January 21st and be prepared to work on January 22nd and 23rd, and the weeks and months ahead when so many of the rights and privileges I – and countless others - hold close to our hearts come under attack.

I am certain that this is only the beginning of the work we must do. I commit to marching, to organizing, and to fighting back to preserve the world for today and for future generations.

And so, on January 21st, that idealistic five-year-old who once stood in Dag Hammarskjold Plaza in awe of a generation of activists will return to send a message to the next generation that we need to stand up, speak out, and work to protect our rights.