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News — Opinion

Commentary: For D.C. march, thinking about the choices we make

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3 x 2 dc inauguration protest

AP PHOTO/JOSE LUIS MAGANA

Demonstrators march on the street near a security checkpoint inaugural entrance, Friday, Jan. 20, 2017 in Washington, ahead of President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration. Protesters pitching diverse causes but united against the incoming president are making their mark on Inauguration Day.

by Lisa Perriera

As the 44th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* approaches on Jan. 22, and with the coming of the new year, I find myself contemplating the word *choice*. After all, isn't the new year the time to think about the choices we make?

I chose to be a physician and an abortion provider. And, like many other providers, I do this work so that women can have a choice about what to do with their bodies, whether to parent right now, carry a pregnancy to term and place a child for adoption, or to have a safe abortion procedure.

But for me the word *choice* means so much more. We choose how to live our lives and the choices we make can affect so many others.

This is not always easy work.

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People say terrible things about me on the internet. They try to intimidate me by mailing postcards to my neighbors saying I'm a murderer.

When they bully me like this I choose to think of the patients I care for every day. I choose to think of the woman I cared for yesterday who thanked me through flowing tears of gratitude for providing her abortion care because it was such a struggle for her to obtain one.

I make the choice not to live in fear of harassment by anti-abortion bullies and protesters. Instead, I live with hope in my heart that I can make a difference in this world for the patients I care for.

I choose to believe that life begins at viability, not at conception. Yes, I know that is a controversial stance. I recognize that the issue raises questions of ethics, faith, and personal belief, and I respect that we may not all agree - so long as we can agree that decisions about pregnancy belong to a woman, not politicians.

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Whatever the opposition may say about abortion providers, I do value life very much. I value the lives of the women that I care for, and I value the decisions they make about their lives and their futures.

I choose to live with hope. I know that this was the crux of Barack Obama's election campaign in 2008 - it seems so long ago. At the beginning of Obama's presidency, I was filled with hope - like many of you - about what the future might bring.

While no one ran on "hope" in 2016, I think it's even more important as Donald Trump begins his presidency. I respect that many Americans chose him, even though I did not. I respect their choice. I hope that Donald Trump will make some positive changes in this country.

But I am also going in at the start of this administration with my eyes wide open, knowing that Trump has surrounded himself with people who want to bully women, harass providers like me, shut our clinics down, and make care unavailable to those who need it.

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I hope that respect for women's decisions and dignity win out over the politics of fear and shame.

This sense of hope is why I feel obligated to attend the march in Washington, D.C., on Saturday. I'm not going to protest Trump's presidency. I know that many women attending the march probably are there to protest, but not me. I will be there to represent all of the patients I have cared for in my time as a physician.

I want Trump to see all of us there and realize the great responsibility that he has. I hope that he will see that we are his constituents too. I hope the president will choose to look at all of the women proudly marching in Washington and realize that he has a choice, and I hope that he will choose to respect women during his presidency.

I also hope that Donald Trump will realize that he is a role model for the two sons I brought into this world, and that, despite what he has said in the past, the legacy of his time as president is not yet written. It's his to choose.

Lisa Perriera, M.D., is an obstetrician/gynecologist and abortion provider at Philadelphia Women's Center.



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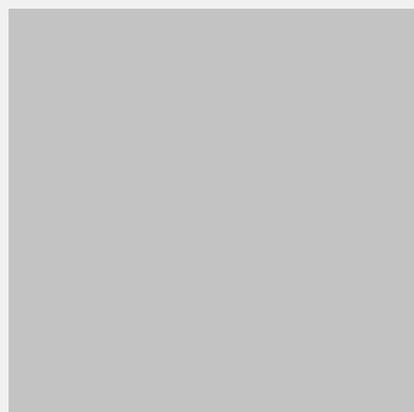
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