

# 225,000 rally to defend human life

by Linda Everett

In one year in this country, more lives are destroyed by abortion than all the Americans who died in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War combined. The horror of such an annual slaughter can only be surpassed by a nation's 20-year history that treats such a slaughter as a "right." On Jan. 22, after a week of Hollywood glitz and inaugural glamor, hundreds of thousands of Americans awoke to the cruel realization that years of abortion "rights" as defined by the 1973 Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion, have wiped out 30-31 million lives, and now, with Clinton in the White House, the "right" to slaughter is about to be expanded.

This was the mood of 225,000 Americans who poured into the nation's capital for the annual March for Life on Jan. 22, the 20th anniversary of the Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision. Nellie Gray, founder and organizer of the March for Life, admitted the pro-life movement has been dealt a setback. But seeing the nation collectively snuff out 1.6 million lives every year has revived outrage—and political commitment. Gray told the crowd, "We didn't give up 20 years ago, and we're not giving up now!" Former candidate Pat Buchanan added, "I've lost 36 straight primaries, and I'm not giving up, so don't you, either." That rallying call was echoed by speakers, mainly veterans "fighting in the trenches for the last two decades," including several congressmen and representatives of many religious denominations, from Orthodox Jewish rabbis to leaders of the Baptist Church Life Commission, the Orthodox Church of America, and several Catholic cardinals and bishops.

Operation Rescue launched its week of activities in the Washington area with a "call to resistance movement." Besides rallies during the week, Operation Rescue and the Christian Defense Coalition led 500 people in a prayer vigil in front of the White House on the morning of the march.

*Roe's* assault on the dignity of human life over two decades was noted no less seriously elsewhere in the nation. Ten thousand attended one Minneapolis rally alone. In Michigan, where triple the number of people traveled to the Washington march this year over last, and where thousands of families lit candles on the eve of the *Roe* anniversary, hundreds joined the state's scores of marches, vigils, rallies, and memorials. Washington State, the first state to vote for abortion-on-de-

mand in 1970, drew more than 9,000 to its own march in Olympia. Four thousand people who have "had it with Clinton" marched from the Dallas City Hall to the Fred Cabbell Federal Court Building where the *Roe* case ("*Jane Roe*" v. *District Attorney Wade*) began. In Washington, D.C., as in Texas, Pennsylvania, Florida, and elsewhere, hundreds of people participated in "rescues" and vigils at abortion clinics. As one Dallas rescuer put it, "The pro-life presence was felt" at six of Dallas's nine abortuaries.

The abortion lobby celebrated the *Roe* anniversary with a driving assault. There was a physical attack on four dozen children carrying a 25-foot banner along with march organizers and religious leaders who led a rally to the Supreme Court; and a legal one, through a series of federal bills, against those who oppose abortion or demonstrate against it. The blocking, then charging of the rally by the National Abortion Rights Action League, NARAL, was broken up by police.

## Legal assault on pro-life forces

The legal assault continues. A proposed federal Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) will allow abortion right up to birth for any reason, no state restrictions allowed. Several federal and state bills would ban any protests at abortion clinics. These bills are being rammed through amid allegations that abortion foes are using "violence against women," "terrorism," and "chemical bombs" at clinics. In fact, the overwhelming number of the hundreds of rescues, weekly prayer vigils, and sidewalk counseling at abortion clinics across the country for years are non-violent, First Amendment-protected "free speech" activities.

On Jan. 13, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Bray v. Alexandria* that local state and county trespass laws may and should be enforced against persons or groups like Operation Rescue that block clinic entrances. Operation Rescuers recognize and accept that they risk arrest and use passive non-resistance when arrested. But, the court ruled, federal judges could not use federal civil rights laws to level far-reaching injunctions covering broad geographic areas to ban demonstrations or "rescues" at abortion clinics. These, and colossal fines, were the main tools the abortion lobby used to cripple clinic protests.

NARAL's Kate Michelman charges that the Supreme Court ruling "virtually issued license to groups like Operation Rescue to escalate their violence against women and the clinics all over this country." She demands federal laws to "protect" women, but Planned Parenthood and its affiliates with 922 abortion clinics want protection of their business. Together, they are lobbying Congress to pass the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act that makes impeding a person's entrance to a clinic (or slowing it by giving her a leaflet) a federal felony punishable by up to three years imprisonment and \$250,000 in fines. Other bills so loosely define "harassment," it could be interpreted to mean an individual's silent vigil at a clinic.