

ROE V. WADE OVERTURNED

Advocates concerned about other rights

BY MEGAN RODRIGUEZ STAFF WRITER



Billy Calzada/Staff photographer

People protest the Supreme Court ruling at an event organized by Mujeres Marcharán Coalition at the San Antonio Federal Courthouse.

Eight-year-old Kalina Bilbe watched over the crowd of hundreds of protesters from her perch on the shoulders of her father, James Bilbe.

She softly chanted “My choice” as they made their way through downtown.

Her mother, Angela, 33, and brother Kathan, 12, marched alongside them.

The family went downtown Friday night to protest the Supreme Court ruling on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

“I’m frustrated,” Angela Bilbe said. “I’m pissed. I feel so helpless. How are you going to take away my choice? How are you going to tell me that I’m not

competent enough to decide if I can have a child or not?”

James Bilbe, 34, said he hoped electing new leaders could help restore access to abortion.

The couple had thought about going to Austin to protest but decided to stay in town when they heard about the protest here.

“Our hearts are broken,” he said. “We’ve been upset all day.”

Protesters kicked off the event at the federal courthouse on West Nueva Street before marching more than a mile through the inner city.

They looped back to the courthouse to hear speeches from organizers and attendees, some of whom talked about their experiences having abortions.

The Mujeres Marcharán Coalition and other abortion-rights allies coordinated the march. The groups had planned for almost two weeks to protest on the day the Supreme Court decision came down.

“We need to get together, we need to act together, we need to basically show that we are mad and we’re not going to take it anymore,” said Rachell Tucker, an organizer with the Mujeres Marcharán Coalition. “It is not just through the voting box. It is through solidarity and the streets. We can’t go back home and be silent.”

At the protest, Michelle Reyes, 55, reflected on an abortion she had when she was in her 20s. She recalled people shouting at her as she walked into the clinic. During her visit, staff members reassured her that she was safe, even after people broke through the clinic’s front doors.

Getting an abortion was already scary, Reyes said. The protesters at the clinic that day made it worse.

Reyes, a college student at the time, already had a son when she had her abortion. She’s now a mother of two adult children — one in her 20s and the other in his 30s. She said she is fighting for them.

“Most of the afternoon I was at home alone, and I knew people felt the same as I did,” she said. “But it does feel good to come together and know that we all have a common — in some ways, a common enemy — but a common purpose and goal.”

Physician Lindsey Neill carried a sign that said, “Pregnant. Pro-Choice. Proud.” The 36-year-old said she was 20 weeks along in her pregnancy and felt lucky to have been able to choose to have her baby.

“Knowing that this was coming didn’t soften the blow at all,” Neill said of the ruling. “Once it became a reality, it just hit you much deeper. I immediately thought about this child and what world I am bringing them into. My only hope is to raise them to stand their ground and support the lives and rights of everybody on this planet regardless of their race or gender or choices.”

The Mujeres Marcharán Coalition — Spanish for “women will march” — has planned the local International Women’s Day March for the past three decades. Tucker said the coalition is made up of representatives from almost 15 organizations.

Friday’s protest, she said, was planned by several groups, including Veterans for Peace, Party for Socialism and Liberation, Autonomous Brown Berets De San Anto, the Bexar County Young Democrats and Planned Parenthood.

It drew local politicians including Mayor Ron Nirenberg and District 5 Councilwoman Teri Castillo.

A coat hanger was taped between the hot pink words — “NEVER AGAIN” — on Lili Biglari’s sign. The 17-year-old from Alamo Heights said the court’s ruling was “extremely upsetting.”

Biglari was worried that the decision could open the door to the high court overturning the right to same-sex marriage.

“With this happening, we don’t know what the Supreme Court could do next,” she said.

Another protester, Mary Beth Hawkins, 60, also was concerned about what the ruling could mean for other rights.

“I’m 60 years old, and I grew up with this right — although, when I was young in high school, it was still difficult for women, especially young girls, to get abortions,” she said. “I saw many of my friends struggle. I understand what it means to lose this right. I understand how it’s going to affect other people’s rights.”

Hawkins walked quickly during the march, carrying a “Private Property/ No Trespassing” yard sign with the words “My Body!! Hands Off!” written across the bottom.

When Naja Garrette, 23, heard about the Supreme Court’s 6-3 decision, she immediately started looking for protests to attend. The graphic designer said she wanted to stand up for women who may need abortions.

“I would want someone to advocate for me,” Garrette said.
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