ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS WAGED BY FEMINISTS WAS TO LEGALIZE ABORTION, ULTIMATELY SUCCESSFUL IN THE 1973 ROE V. WADE SUPREME COURT RULING. TALKING PUBLICLY ABOUT AND TESTIFYING TO ONE'S EXPERIENCES WERE CENTRAL TO THE MOVEMENT TO CHANGE ABORTION LAWS. THIS TESTIMONY BY BARBARA SUSAN WAS GIVEN BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE CONSIDERING CHANGES IN STATE LAW.

I became pregnant. I had incomplete knowledge of contraception. I was sane and healthy, therefore ineligible for a legal abortion. Not being criminal or sophisticated I had no access to illegal means of abortion. I asked my mother for money to cover the cost of a trip to Japan where abortion was legal. She was not wealthy. She refused. She became hysterical. I became hysterical. Twenty-four hours later I was married. Eight months later I was delivered of an infant. Shortly afterwards the child was adopted and my marriage dissolved.
At the time of conception I was capable of a love relationship but not a parent-child relationship. The state forced me into becoming a parent by denying me the right to a legal abortion. I would like to sue the state for damages resulting from that maternity.

I was forced into a marriage relationship through pressure from my family. Pressure, which since I was in a vulnerable position, I was unable to resist. My husband had no money. I left college and took a full-time job. By taking a leave of absence from college I forfeited a regents scholarship (which was the only reason I was able to attend school). Also, the school had a rule which did not allow pregnant women to register. In effect, I had no freedom to pursue the goals which I had set up for myself. The state was punishing me for my sexual behavior. I no longer had control of my life. At seventeen years of age it had been interrupted by forced maternity.

I decided to give the child up for adoption. I had to defend that decision against family and friends who had been so influenced by the legal sanctions given to motherhood that they found it impossible to accept my decision. They tried to convince me to stay married and become a mother. I was unprepared for motherhood financially, emotionally, and morally.

I decided to dissolve the marriage. After the birth of the child I returned to school. I was also working at that time to pay off legal bills, medical bills, and to support myself. (I had been fired from my previous job when they discovered I was pregnant.) After one term I left school and got a full-time job. My present occupation as an art teacher and a painter is not a very lucrative one, and can barely support me, let alone enable me to return to school.

When I tried to take control of my life (have an abortion), I faced opposition. The state was on the side of the opposition. I feel it is unconstitutional for the state to have taken any position in relation to the moral and emotional way in which I chose to conduct my life. The state should compensate me for the emotional ordeal it put me through. Moreover, the state should be made to support me while I finish my education.