

Day School ninth graders who traveled with Rabbi Robert Abramson to Washington. Elana and her dad, Allan, waited as the crowd slowly began the march from the Ellipse to the Mall.

"How many people there are here is anybody's guess," Allan Nachman said, "but it's an impressive statement." Fellow marcher David Chait would later add, "The only other time I was ever in a line like this was waiting to get into a U-M game."

The massive crowd slowly moved down Constitution Avenue, covering the eight-lane street from sidewalk to sidewalk. A huge "Let My People Go" banner carried by 12 members of the Boston contingent, nipped at the heels of the Michigan delegation stragglers. The delegation separated during the two-mile, hour-long walk to the Mall's speakers platform, but stayed in visual contact because of the distinctive Detroit hats.

Asked if she liked the long walk, 7-year-old Naomi Loebl, a Hillel Day School student, gave an emphatic "No" with a big grin on her face. Naomi's mother, Judy, said it was exciting to see so many people. "There's a real sense of unity. It brings back the spirit of the '60s." Mrs. Loebl said she wanted her daughter to feel the sense of frustration felt by Soviet Jews and be part of an historic event. "My mother used to take me to demonstrations when I was a child."

As the crowd reached 7th Street and turned toward the Mall, Steve Rosen of the Ann Arbor contingent yelled out, "Hey Ann Arbor!" The delegation responded with a "Yes?"

"Turn right!" roared Rosen, and the crowd turned the corner.

Back on Constitution, a small man slowly made his way through the crowd trying to distribute literature. A huge, bearded Jew followed right behind him, warning, "Jews for Jesus! Don't take it! Jews for Jesus!"

2:20 p.m. The Michigan delegation moved past 6th Street, still a block from the speakers. The crush of people made it nearly impossible to hear or see. Several Michiganders slowly worked their way forward, while others moved to the edges of the crowd where it was easier to hear, but not see. Even a giant video screen on the speakers platform was hard to see through the masses.

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