

I Marched in DC on Jan. 6 Because Trump Inspired Me to Do One Thing

When I heard President Trump speak on Jan. 6, 2021, I was not inspired to riot.

I didn't travel to Washington, D.C., to start a planned insurrection or overthrow democracy. I had never even used the word "insurrection" in a sentence before.

I chose to go to Washington because of my dad. When he was in college, he had marched with Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, Alabama. His story of responding to injustice persuaded me to do the same.

Let me be clear. I'm not a President Trump superfan. In fact, when he first ran for president, I was a "Never-Trumper" who voted for Gary Johnson.

I went to President Trump's "Stop the Steal" rally because the election results didn't pass my "smell test," and it wasn't just because of all the improbabilities or statistical anomalies present in the 2020 election. I chose to attend because of the coordinated effort by social media, government and various news sites to shut down any dissent and try to discredit and destroy anyone who voiced a different opinion.

When I read that CISA (Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency) called the November 2020 election "the most secure in American history," it made me laugh out loud. Under the guise of COVID, states had unlawfully changed their voting procedures and expanded the use of drop boxes and mail-in voting in a historic and unprecedented manner, yet I was supposed to believe the 2020 election was the most secure in American history.

To me, that statement sounded less like humble analysis and more like arrogant propaganda.

As an early adopter of social media, an active voter, and a former fan of watching news shows like *20/20* and *Dateline* on Friday nights, I felt betrayed by every institution I had loved and believed in. So, I chose to go to D.C.

After caravanning into the city with Spice and three of his more extreme friends, we exited a downtown D.C. parking garage to the sound of “[Expletive] Trump” lyrics blasting from a truck on repeat over a catchy, bass-infused beat. With two wide-mouthed Gatorades, six waters and eight Sweet and Hot beef jerky packages stuffed into my coat, we ignored the song and walked two miles to the rally.

When we arrived, I saw vendors selling hats, t-shirts and flags. One flag featured Trump in a suit on a tank with a heavyweight championship belt around his waist and a machine gun in his hand with an American flag, explosions, fireworks and dollar bills flying in the background. The bald eagle in front of Trump flew majestically with its talons wrapped around a machine gun, which the eagle was somehow firing.

As we walked past the vendors, I saw hundreds of people in yellow and red Trump/Pence t-shirts with yellow and red flags. They held a sign that read “Viet Voices for Trump” and chanted, “USA, USA, USA.” From what I gathered, many of them were first-generation immigrants from Vietnam. I teared up when I saw their intense display of patriotism and love for our country.

As we approached the rally, the crowd size overwhelmed me. I can't pretend to give an accurate estimate of the crowd's size, but people were packed in from the “Stop the Steal” stage all the way to the Washington monument. Thousands of flags waved in the wind—American flags, Don't Tread on Me flags, military flags, a wide and colorful variety of Trump

flags, homemade cardboard signs, South Korean flags, QAnon flags, Christian flags, pro-gun flags and hundreds of yellow-and-red Viet Voices for Trump flags.

When Trump arrived in his motorcade and stepped onto the stage, Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA" played, the flags waved, the crowd cheered, and then chants of "USA" erupted. But as he spoke, one of the three more extreme guys who caravanned with us tapped me on the shoulder and said, "We're sick of this. We've heard Trump say all of this before. Nothing's going to happen. We're leaving."

My newfound friends left the rally because they were bored. They wanted action. They wanted military tribunals, but Trump bored them with his recounting of statistics, predictions, talking points and humor. The guy who made the call to head home struck me as the most likely to read QAnon posts every day, but he didn't hear any code words or "dog whistles." All he heard was "boring."

After they left, Trump asked us to march to the Capitol Building and protest peacefully, which we did. As we marched, I bantered with my friend and the people around me. I also stopped to take selfies and videos of the march because I had never seen that many people in one place before.

As we marched over a mile from the Washington Monument to the Capitol Building, it was peaceful. Nobody was violent. Nobody threatened any businesses. Nobody defaced any buildings. I didn't even hear any chants while we were walking. I stopped to climb something and get a bird's-eye view, and the crowd looked like a large group of very patriotic tourists or mall walkers.

Like me, they were bantering to friends, taking selfies and pointing out historical buildings to their kids. I did see one guy who others said was a white supremacist, but he was standing alone saying something while most people in the crowd

intentionally ignored him or didn't even notice him.

One group of people who were noticed by the crowd were first-generation Chinese immigrants, who handed out flyers that highlighted the evils of the CCP, the Communist Party in control of China. They called it "the demon CCP." The crowd took their flyers and responded graciously to the elderly men and women passing out the materials.

Once we arrived at the Capitol Building, it was more of the same. We walked within feet of the Capitol Building steps and chilled there for a couple of hours, but our view beyond that was obstructed by the scaffolding being built for the inauguration.

Hundreds of people were climbing up the massive banisters and making their way in and around the scaffolding, but it looked more like a crowd rushing the field after a college football game than a group of protesters.

As I stood feet from the Capitol steps with Spice, we joined two Black men, who started chanting, "Whose house? Our house! Whose house? Our house!" They were interrupted by a Vietnamese immigrant who wanted a selfie with them.

We watched as a man in a 1776 shirt waved an American flag next to a woman who was wearing a "Latinas for Trump" t-shirt. We also sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" as a massive flag was dropped over the scaffolding. At first they dropped part of it upside down, then slowly corrected their mistake.

I looked behind me and the lawn was filled with people, and more kept coming. To me, in that moment, it was emotionally overwhelming. It was the most beautiful patriotic moment of my life. That's why I was confused when police showed up in full riot gear and formed a line just a few feet from us.

Stay tuned to Charisma News for Part 2 of this opinion piece.
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