










**COMMENTARY** JAN 23

# Why I broke my commitment to personal laziness to attend the Women's March

 Anna Hanks, Contributor 

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Last November I had no idea that the presidential election would lead me to a packed Washington D.C. metro car full of pink-hatted people speeding towards the Women's March on Washington, singing me a spirited round of "Happy Birthday."

Following the November election I had been so heartbroken that I spent weeks wearing all-black clothing and listening to goth music, just like I did when I was in high school during the Reagan years. I again felt so powerless as a Texas liberal.

During the Thanksgiving holiday, a lunch with my best friend from high school and her family led to an offhand invitation from her husband to join them and their Utah friends at the January Women's March. He promised it would be fun, but I wasn't sure.

I waffled on going to the big march, even as my friends planning to attend the same event were getting excited. I am deeply committed to personal laziness, and I do not like cold or crowds. Marching in Washington in the winter wasn't something I wanted to do; it was something that needed to be done. I was heartsick that our country elected a man who talks about women the way President Trump does, and I was even sadder that a majority of white women had voted for him.



A Washington D.C. Metro car carrying protesters leaving the Women's March on D.C. Saturday January 21, 2017. Courtesy Anna Hanks

I figured since I was digging out my long underwear and making the trip to D.C., I ought to go to some of the inauguration events. On Inauguration Day I schlepped in from the Virginia suburbs, managing to get close enough to hear the inauguration speech from outside the National Mall. At the Inaugural Parade (where I had zero trouble getting in the front section) I clearly saw the divided state of America, with "Make America Great Again" hats next to pink pussycat hats. I watched Trump supporters bully peaceful protesters, shouting "Loser!" "You lost" and "You're fired!" The Inaugural Parade felt like a victory party for a small town high school football team. It included 223 horses, the Texas State Strutters dance team and large farm equipment rolling down Pennsylvania Avenue.

In our area of the Inauguration parade a petite woman in the very front row turned to leave. People asked if she was cold. "I'm questioning why I'm here. I'm not sure if this is the kind of history that I want to be part of," she said.

As I left the parade, I saw a bonfire with a newspaper stand in it, someone else trying to burn a Trump flag, and protesters with shiny faces who were washing out their eyes. Police in riot gear were slowly and calmly claiming ground in front of the Washington Post building, with their clear shields at their sides. I saw a repairman boarding up some shop windows but I never felt like I was in danger from the protesters.

The next day at the Women's March on Washington, I was surprised by how organized the Utah marchers were. They had a gold color scheme, a motto of "I fight for \_ "[fill in the blank]" and some GIANT boxing glove signs. Many marchers were wrapped in gold thermal blankets that made it easy to spot fellow Utah marchers.



COMMENTARY

### **Yes, women are marching, but there's another story we need to tell**

Meeting up with the Utah crew early on the National Mall side of the National Air and Space Museum, I saw thousands of people streaming by. Before the March started, our group spiritedly marched around the building, where we encountered a crowd so large we could move no further. I could see a jumbo-tron and hear the many, many, many, speakers. The 14 year-old in our group hurt so much from standing that she started doing the squats. I read birthday greetings on my phone with intermittent cell service.

After four-and-a-half hours, people on stage are still talking, but the Utah group was ready to move. The giant boxing gloves couldn't get very far. It was a human traffic jam as the Women's March morphed into the Women's Shuffle. Rather than creep with the crowd to the White House Ellipse, our little crew ditched the march to pursue snacks. We were cold and hungry and ouchy.

In our effort to find an eclair and a chair, we accidentally find the giant boxing gloves again and rejoin the Utah contingent, marching down Pennsylvania Avenue, which was not the original Women's March route.

"Hands too small, can't build a wall," and "We're not gonna go away, welcome to your first day," we chanted. I held part of Utah's protest banner and I realized that our impromptu route is the same as the official inaugural parade, only with a heck of a lot more people around.

In front of the Trump hotel, my friends peeled off in desperate search of a pastry, while I watched the crowds. But that downtown bakery was already picked clean by the hordes of hungry marchers.

The nearby Metro Center subway stop was mobbed by pink-hatted people trying to leave, with lines for the subway down each side of the block.

We retreated to the posh corporate office of a D.C. based friend, where his co-workers had the same idea. His office lounge turned into a spontaneous after party, with exhausted marchers sucking down popcorn, M&M's and smartphone powering electrons. The TV at our accidental afterparty showed White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer talking about how many people there were at the Inauguration the day before.

I'm floored. I had been to the exact now-mobbed Metro Center the day before, when it had seemed deserted. I don't believe the new White House Press Secretary's version of the truth, something that makes me very sad. What kind of country am I living in now?

Despite my initial reservations, I'm so glad I made the trip to D.C. for the Women's March. Being part of the largest ever Inaugural protest seems like being on the right part of history.

And I'm selfishly glad that none of the people marchers were arrested. It would have sucked to get arrested on my birthday.

*Anna Hanks is a writer in Austin. Twitter: [@anninaustin](#)*

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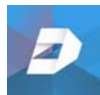
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