

**EXHIBIT 2**

**Honorable Chief Judge, Beryl A. Howell**  
**U.S. District Court, District of Columbia**  
**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA v. LEONARD GRUPPO**  
**Case No. 21-cr-00391 (BAH)**

19 October 2021

Dear Chief Judge Howell,

I respectfully would like to relate to you some things about me and my perspective regarding what happened on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January. I wanted you to know these things directly from me, before my hearing on the 29<sup>th</sup> of this month, because I think it could be, perhaps should be, valuable in your decision-making process.

I enlisted in the infantry of the U.S. Army, at the age of 21. I went to Jump School at Fort Benning, joined the Special Forces and completed four wartime deployments, among other uniquely noteworthy accomplishments during a long, distinguished career of 27 years, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel. However, my service to my countrymen didn't stop when I retired from the Army several years ago. During the entire COVID pandemic, I did not miss a single day of work in the ER. I diligently served the community where I lived and worked for four years, risking my life every day; since I'm considered at risk for life threatening COVID complications due to my age, weight, and hypertension. I treated hundreds of very sick COVID patients. When the vaccine became available, I was among the first to receive it but that was not until a year into the pandemic, and the worst of it had passed. Despite that, many in my community quickly shunned me once my picture appeared in the paper with Ken Kelly, who had invited me to the rally. I don't blame them, and I don't hold that against them, but that was the beginning of my punishment.

Because of that, I was unable to continue to work in my community and was forced to find work in another state. I'm lucky I was able to do so, otherwise I would be penniless and homeless right now. As it is, I suffered an enormous pay cut and I am just barely able to pay my debts. My credit is maxed out. I've been ostracized by my previous colleagues and co-workers. Some companies have "canceled" me. My professional licenses are under investigation. The cost of moving exceeded \$14,000, legal fees have been high and will likely climb higher, lost wages have already topped \$70,000 and climbing more each month. That wasn't enough, the catalytic converter from my SUV was stolen this month and will cost me \$2,000 despite my insurance covering the remainder of the repairs. I have been embarrassed, humiliated, and marginalized. My losses, as a direct consequence of the events in question, have already exceeded \$114,000 and climbing. Over the rest of my working life, reduced pay will easily exceed \$1,000,000, perhaps many times that amount depending on things going forward. I



really don't see how I will recover from this, and this court has yet to sentence me. If I am subjected to further financial hardship, I will likely be forced into bankruptcy and destitution, unable to pay my creditors and child support. How much punishment is fair and just? Should the punishment from my countrymen be considered as part of my overall sentence? I surely hope so. Still, I do not have the knowledge of the law and the perspective to make this judgement. However, I do want all of this to be known to the court. These are just the financial and professional penalties I have paid so far.

My health has suffered greatly. I have aged several years because of all this. My marriage has suffered greatly. I have likely developed rheumatoid arthritis since January, a potentially life-threatening autoimmune disorder, but I've neglected seeing a doctor about it with everything else happening. There is no hiding my permanently, bald head. I did grow my hair, such little there is around the edges, and some facial hair as I am apt to do from time to time as the mood or season strikes me.

I am truly sorry for my actions. I should have known better but somehow that day, I didn't. I have already paid a terrible price for this, and I believe I *should* pay a significant price for what I did. I am not trying to avoid punishment. I only ask that what I have already suffered be considered as part of any further sentence. My fellow countrymen have already beaten me up quite badly. I don't have much left. I've sold as much as I could to make ends meet; property, belongings, as much as I could. I have downsized to a small, 2-bedroom apartment. I have a little left but not much.

Why did I go up to the terrace? Why did I enter the Capitol building? I don't have a good answer. I've gone over it a thousand times and I'm still not sure why I didn't recognize what was happening and take alternative action. There were some factors influencing me that day which cannot be discounted. We were told, "everyone is going to the Capitol" and "be peaceful". There were easily over half a million people there all pushing toward the building, and I was caught up in that. There was someone with a bullhorn urging everyone to keep moving forward. The entire experience was surreal. I trusted the President and that was a big mistake.

I found myself in the grassy area to the left of the left-hand stairs on the side of the Capitol facing the Washington Monument. I was near the bottom of the stairs. There was high scaffolding over the stairs with some tapestry covering the side of it obscuring my view of anything past that. There was some large amount of equipment piled high on the grass blocking the path from the grassy area I was standing to the base of the stairs and blocking my view of everything on the downhill side of the equipment. I was caught in a surge of people pushing forward to the stairs. I went along with the crowd and eventually climbed up onto the banister of the stairs, near the bottom of the stairs, it was a bit higher than I was tall. I walked on the broad banister for a short distance than stepped down onto the stairs themselves. I walked up



the stairs from there, to the terrace. Here are two pictures depicting the approximate route I took.



When I reached the terrace, there seemed at least 5,000 people within my purview, and within just a few minutes of my arrival the scene rapidly changed from bizarre to chaotic as the police suddenly created a large perimeter around the center of the terrace. This prompted me to look for a way out. All around was a crush of people, shoulder to shoulder, covering the only two



stairways I could see leading to the terrace; the stairway I originally ascended and another coming up from under the terrace. I would have to climb on top of them to get down from there. Then I saw there were two open doors leading into the Capitol near where I was, and people streaming through them unimpeded. I later conservatively calculated that at least 1,600 people entered through those doors. There had to be an exit from there and so I made a quick decision that the most expeditious and safest way off the terrace was through the Capitol. As I came up to the door, they didn't seem to be damaged and there was no signage anywhere. I could see a broken pane of glass in a window next to the door which did give me pause that entering could be problematic, but I had no idea how problematic it would prove to be, and my overwhelming consideration was to get safely away from the terrace as quickly as possible. I was there to support the President of the United States and to be peaceful. I could not comprehend the scope of what was happening that day from what I witnessed around me. It was only during the days, weeks and months that followed, that it became more evident. Even now, investigations to understand what happened are ongoing. Once inside, I made every effort to find a way out as quickly as possible. The brief 6-minutes I spent inside, and all the other evidence, supports this testimony. I did see some broken furniture, a bench I think, in the hallway which made me redouble my efforts to quickly exit the building. I spoke with 3 police officers during the brief time I was inside and asked each of them how to get out. The first was near the door I entered and pointed to the way I came in, saying that was the only way he knew to get out. He did not tell me to leave. A review of his body cam recording will show that I am telling the truth. The second officer didn't know. The third directed me to the open door through which I exited. I have plead to parading in the Capitol, and that is the extent of my parading. Shortly after exiting, I encountered three police officers, a woman being assisted by two men. She seemed in some distress, likely from tear gas in my estimation, and I offered them assistance, but my offer was declined. I walked with all haste back to my hotel, avoiding any contact with the large crowds still surrounding the Capitol. I gave some money to a homeless man on my way back. I recognized back at the hotel from news accounts what had occurred at the capital that I did not see. I immediately felt ashamed and sorry for my participation. Just being there contributed to what happened. I am sorry. As I looked at the pictures on my phone, I became more ashamed from what I learned from the news accounts. I shouldn't have been inside the Capitol, or in retrospect even near it, I realize that now, but I hope this illuminates my thinking and actions. I am telling the truth.

Clearly, this was a life-altering mistake and I take full responsibility for my actions, but I am not an evil person. I am not a conspirator, insurrectionist, or anarchist. I went to the rally to support the sitting President of the United States of America. The rally moved to the Capitol, and I went with it. I am a lifelong patriotic American who loves my country and would die for my country. I am deeply saddened by what happened that day and the tremendous pain it has caused so many. I wish I could take that day back. If I could, I would not have gone to Washington let alone the Capitol, but I cannot change that now. Hindsight is 20:20. Still, I did not directly harm anyone or anything that day. I was a peaceful participant in the chaos of the day. I did not hoot,



holler, or carry on. I did not brag or revel in the day. Still, I was there, and now I am answering for that to this court.

I have served my country in four wars. I have put my life on the line countless times for my country in those wars and many other deployments with the Special Forces and other elite units and continued to do so, serving my community throughout the entire COVID pandemic in the emergency department. I have already suffered greatly because of my actions. I am sincerely remorseful, ashamed, and regretful for my role in the events of that day. I didn't realize then, but have come to realize since, that my presence was sufficient to cause harm. I should have known better but somehow did not, and I have already paid a very heavy price for that lapse in judgment.

I want to apologize to my countrymen for the part I played and the terrible pain this has caused our nation. I am very sorry the Capitol police were put in a situation where they had to choose between protecting Congress and protecting the public and the angst that has caused them in the aftermath of all this, leading some to commit suicide. That is horrible and I am deeply sorrowful over that. I am very sorry for my part in any disruption to congressional proceedings that day. It was never my intent to do so. Nevertheless, I realize I did unintentionally contribute to that, by prolonging the disruption of our democratic process, and I am truly sorry. I am also sorry for any fear and anxiety that my presence caused to our congress men and women. I apologize to President Biden, President Trump, Vice President Harris, Vice President Pence, Speaker Pelosi, and our other congressional leaders, for the trouble I have caused and any doubt my participation in the events of that day cast on the results of the election. I am sorry. Once congress certified the election, I immediately accepted the results and I urge anyone who has not, to do so. I apologize to my former employers and coworkers for any angst, discomfort or fear my actions caused them. Lastly, and most significantly, I apologize to my wife for failing to give her the life she expected and deserves and instead, have given her a life of fear and loathing. I have failed her, and I am deeply sorry for that.

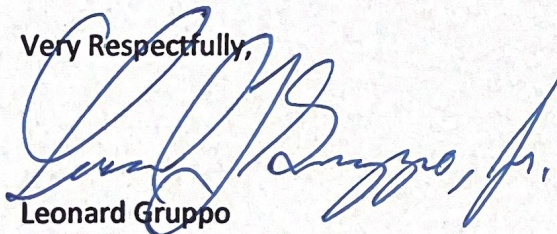
I'm not going to make up some story about how I've become a progressive liberal, but I can say that without question, I have become a much better person for suffering through this ordeal. "...suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope..." (Romans 5:3-4) If there is something good that has come from all this, it is that I have grown far closer to God than ever before. Despite my Catholic school education, I drifted away from the teachings of Jesus. Not even my wartime, near-death experiences brought those teachings into focus like this has done. My renewed faith reminds me that above all else, "...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart..." and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31). That day, I failed in these commandments. That was not a day of love. I will not fail in these ever again. Every day I pray for the welfare of our leaders and the officials of our country. I want the best for them and our nation. I sincerely mean that.



I long since stopped listening to and watching the news. I barely follow the top headlines of the day in a daily email. I rarely discuss politics and quickly change the subject when it does come up. I do not plan to participate in politics, other than voting, ever again, not that I did much in the past anyway except once attending a speech by President Obama.

I turned myself in. I have fully cooperated with the investigators. I was voluntarily interviewed by the January 6<sup>th</sup> Select Committee. I have been on my own recognizance without incident. There is little else I can say or do to show my regret. I'm sorry. I have been sorry. If I am to be made an example and held up as a deterrent for others, let me assure anyone paying attention, please don't do what I did or anything like that, or you will suffer greatly, and your life will be ruined. Follow the rules. Follow the laws. Love one another. I say this as I desperately cling to the remnants of what was until recently, an exceptionally productive and useful life, a life I hope that the court will deem worth salvaging. Nevertheless, I will accept whatever additional punishment I am given without complaint. I promise I will never communicate about this to the media or the public, directly or through a surrogate, so long as I live. When this is behind me, I will be a better citizen than I have ever been, and a better neighbor, son, brother, father, and husband, until the end of my days. You will never hear my name again. I beg for mercy from this court.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Leonard Gruppo, Jr.", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name "Leonard Gruppo".

Leonard Gruppo