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Anthony Frank

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Dear Mr. Franks,

Thank you for your time in accepting this letter. In our zoom meetings, I got the impression that you are a guy who is not about nonsense. With much respect to that, I'll be brief, yet detailed as possible to cover a large area of information. If you feel there is anything lacking, I'll make the adjustments as soon as I can. I do appreciate your taking the time to have the dedication and discernment in what could be one of the most tragic days in American history.

While writing by request, I wish I would have volunteered earlier for the opportunity to fully explain what were my true thoughts and intentions that day. My words on social media could be considered outspoken, at best, and at the worst, brutal rhetoric. At first glance, it would be easy to confuse those words with who I am as a person. While my posts and messages were meant to shock internet viewers into a debate, with a slim chance of either side winning, they were also a power trip for the 'likes'. Similar-minded people, acquaintances or otherwise, would rally support on points that I would make on social media posts that were political. So this all felt really good. It is widely known that positive reactions on social media create not only new 'content loops' of posts you agree with, but also, unbeknownst to many(including myself at the time), dopamine release in the brain. I was stuck in a vicious cycle of arguing with strangers on the internet, all in the name of feeling like I was accomplishing something. This led to what I thought was my final chance to walk the walk, and go down to what I knew was going to be the last and final President Trump speech.

Leading up to November, there were rumors of suspicion in regards to the election process, and how it was run during the start of the COVID pandemic. Some said the election process would be favored to the Democrats if the volume of mail-in ballots increased at the rate that they did. While still others

said the entire COVID pandemic itself was a conspiratorial smokescreen to block the legitimate election of none other than Donald Trump. Regardless of the 'how', the dismal reality began to set in that the election was not going the way 'we', the conservative crowd, wanted it to. It all led to the culmination of feelings of hopelessness and loss for anyone who was counting on a Trump reelection.

My support of Trump first began in 2015, when he was running as the primary candidate for the Republican Party. At this time, and still to this day, I was a registered member of the Green Party. I would sometimes entertain conversation about politics and ideals, but was not very outspoken due to what I knew was the obvious nature of political conversation, which was to argue. My political views came from progressive sources like The Young Turks, The Guardian news, and my time in school for Political Science at Millersville University. However, Trump did something that astounded me and persuaded me to continue to watch him, even eventually support him. During all my time in school watching and studying politics, I never thought I would see anyone decide not to play by the rules and straight-up 'trash talk' other politicians in a jovial and mocking manner. To me, this was beyond incredible. The rule has always been that people know, and even politicians on both sides of the aisle will accuse the other of, corruption and abuse of power. However, Trump made a spectacle about putting on display the failings of well-known and powerful politicians. Furthermore, his proposals on policy seemed to be logical to me. All the while, the various news channels began to ramp up messages of disapproval for him. I had never had much faith in the news' ability to tell the truth since my younger years, so I did not mind the constant messages from other channels. When Trump won the election in 2015, I felt for the first time like real change was coming to America's politics.

Fast forward to the first week of January 2021; I had countless online arguments in favor of Trump's policies, I had watched him claim what I had assumed were numerous victories, seen the constant pressure on him from the news media, and the endless hijinx from his political opponents to stifle his every move. The one thing I hadn't done, however, was attend a Trump rally. The huge crowds, the campy inside-joke chants, hearing Trump's political schtick live and listening for new material, was the one act of support for Donald Trump I never did. For four years, I had watched his rallies come through parts of Pennsylvania that were within close driving distance to me, but one thing after another always held me up from attending. Now, with the inevitable change in administration I had felt disappointed, yet accepting of the fact that January 6th, 2021 was going to be Donald Trump's last speech as president of the United States, I assume everyone had felt the same. In the days following up to the event, I had never heard Trump hype up a rally with the words 'Will Be Wild!', as he did in a tweet, so I thought he must have

something special planned. It was my last chance to be a part of a celebration I had missed out on for so long and would not have to look back later in life and wish I had made it to just one.

My decision to attend was made just a few days before January 6th. Washington D.C. is about a three and a half hour drive from my home. I threw on some winter gear and left early in the morning to arrive in time for the speech. After finding parking when I arrived, I proceeded to try to find my way to where the speech was going to be held. I was operating off of little information. Keeping up with business, young children, and stressful events in family life kept me from keeping abreast of details circulating the event; only what time it started and where it was. Trying to use my GPS, I noticed that my battery I thought was charged was, in fact, on less than ten percent battery. It also at this time was receiving little to no service, so I put it away to conserve it for if I needed it and favored using road signs.

The whole air and atmosphere of a Trump event, it seemed to me, was like a carnival or a pep rally. I first passed by a bingo parade float by a celebrity called Maga Tranny, and I heard there was some kind of pastor a few blocks away who also had a parade float, shouting out fire and brimstone rhetoric. Making my way to the Washington Monument, I saw countless food trucks, vendors, and people waving signs advertising their own YouTube channel while walking through diverse crowds of people from all walks of life, including groups of families, all donning classic Trump attire. Some people even dressed in costumes of American figures like the Statue of Liberty or American Revolutionists. All of this festival-like atmosphere, to me, betrayed the seriousness of what I thought we had all agreed was the most important issue, hearing Trump's plan to address this alleged election interference he had been attempting to call out for so long. I began to feel the majority of 'our' side might not be the rational free-thinkers I assumed myself to be.

I had not been paying attention to much of what was happening on stage until Trump arrived. His appearance and presence about 120 yards away from me, was only slightly better than having stayed home and watched the whole thing on TV. It was some of the recent material I had heard from him about voting fraud and how the election is rigged. Regardless, I could say I was there and I had finally attended a Trump rally. However, halfway through his speech the implications of the subject matter turned dark. Not having many friends in the Senate, he began to talk about the possibility of his Vice President, Mike Pence, returning the electoral votes for possible further certification. In my mind, that would be going against the idea of checks and balances in government, because the Executive would be unilaterally granting themselves more time in office, and possibly overturning a duly elected decision. For the first time since I watched him dance on Saturday Night Live to Drake, I

wondered if this man had truly lost his mind. I felt like even if Trump tried to have a court battle after conceding the election, he would then be having to prosecute the President of the United States, an office which holds immunity to civil prosecution. I did still admire, however, his unwavering tenacity.

He began to talk about how 'we', the crowd and himself implied, were all to go down to the Capitol to show strength, and that it takes a lot of strength to do some unknown thing that he would not say. At one point, he had said that he was aware the crowd was about to go down to the Capitol and that maybe he would join us. The crowd began to migrate toward the Capitol, and Trump swiftly boarded his helicopter and took off. I was baffled by the apparent bait and switch from Trump, but followed down Pennsylvania Ave with the crowd, believing there was a 'Part Two'. I presumed it was to chant and shout things like "Stop The Steal" and make a big show.

I followed the current of the crowd that led to the 'side porch' area. Protestors were gathered in pockets and having discussions about the event taking place. A small crowd of people were gathered by the door so I got closer to investigate. I found myself standing near the entrance, while the crowd ebbed and flowed from the doors. Thinking this could last all day, I got into conversations with others about what might have been going on. Then I began to notice columns of riot police forming around the base of the Capitol, and I knew it was not going to be much longer until they began to tell everyone to leave and clear the crowd. I took another look over to the entrance and felt desperate as I wanted a picture for my friends back home as a memento of me being at this event that I felt was so bizarre and shocking. I made for the door, but found myself blocked by a larger man having a heated conversation with some unknown person on the other side. I did not want to push through the crowd and be a nuisance or accused of assaulting anyone. When I looked behind me, someone was standing in a waist high, broken window holding out their hand to bring in people. It seemed harmless at the time(foolish and wrong in retrospect) to then take his assistance and climb through. I am truly sorry for this disrespectful act.

Jumping into the Capitol, I stood up and was almost frightened to death when I saw a column of riot police to my left. I was sure I was about to get shot. But seeing that they did not move or say anything, I stood up to take the selfie I wanted to show off on social media later. After one quick glance down the halls to see and hear the general chaos and confusion happening, I promptly saw myself out the door, which was now having people walk out of it. According to the video evidence, I was in there for less than two minutes.

Now walking back onto the porch, I had planned to continue walking around and checking things out outside. However, I was surprised to hear my cell phone ring for the first time that day, since I assumed it was completely

glitching. It was my mom. She was hysterical over a news report she was watching that was saying the National Guard was getting called in to deal with the situation and begged me to come home. Although I was intensely curious to see what else would happen, in my religion the words of a mother are the closest thing you can get to hearing the words of God. I assured her right away that I was heading straight home and not to worry. I did, in fact, walk back to my car right then and leave.

My involvement in the events on January 6th have been a deep source of pain and regret in my life. Every time I see coverage of it on the news I am filled with sickness and agitation. They are creating a 9/11 style commission over it, which is to assume I was a participant in a terrorist event. The scope of implication from that alone to me is unbearable in the weight of shame it carries. Death and destruction were caused that day. Suicides were committed over that day. Violence is the one thing everyone can agree on that is not welcome in a democracy, and that day our side was fully painted red. Whatever cause for concern the protestors might have had that day will be immutably drowned out by the images of obscene violence. My intentions were never to harm anyone. History will never see this as a day where Americans were trying to address a grievance against their government. History will say 'this is the day so many people were tricked into committing the largest attack on American democracy'. All of those people and families that came to see Trump that day and hear the 'Great Plan' on how to 'Stop the Steal', will now cast their eyes down when they remember that day. I think everyone wishes it would have gone differently.

I am asking the court for leniency on behalf of all those in my life who rely on me day-to-day. Not the least are my two sons, ages 3 and 6, who watched me get arrested at the beginning of all this, and my beautiful fiancée. I will never forget my son's crying face when he did not believe my lie, "The police just need daddy's help, son. I'll be back soon". My image on the front page of the local paper, news stations calling my phone, harassing messages sent to my personal social media and business; I used to watch the news, but now the news was watching me. In the winter, I have four full-time workers, but in the spring and summer we will get up to twelve. These guys all make the highest industry wages from my business. Young men get better starts in life, and families get taken care of. It has been a great source of pride to me that the business itself has stood for four years as the highest rated in southwestern Pennsylvania. In my sudden absence, quite a few people will experience hardship.

I am not an enemy of the state. My views and tactics for proliferating my political ideology have been obnoxious at best, but I do not believe in political violence both in morality and practicality. I love my country. My family were

immigrants from Germany in 1746, before the founding of America. I believe I have a right as much as anyone else to voice my opinion and concerns, and certainly welcome and celebrate others to do so. I never once felt, in earnest, there was a place to ever take this great and peaceful country, and reduce it to a warzone. You need only to learn a little bit of history to learn the pricelessness of peace. I am sorry my involvement that day did help facilitate the environment of violence, that is something of great embarrassment and dishonor to myself.

I have since been trying to work on myself to go in a new direction. Politics has not been a great experience for me. Even before my arrest, I sought for and am now taking new mental health medication, and am seeing a therapist weekly. My only arguments online anymore are over the histories and religions of India and interpretations of Sanskrit(I am Hindu). I dedicate nearly all of my time to business and family, saving remaining time for reading and education.

It is my greatest hope all of the United States learns for this lesson, as I know I have. January 6th is what the end of the road looks like when citizens do not have healthy respect for openness and conversation in a democracy. So many theories and disrespect towards the other side created a sense of desperation and a disconnect from their fellow citizens, who were now viewed as the enemy. January 6th was a painful event, but it takes pain to grow. In this, I remain optimistic towards the future. However, nothing for me can take away the sting of resentment I have in my mind over my involvement that day.

Sincerely,

Samuel C. Fox

Citizen of Pennsylvania