

Same agenda, second verse

Austinites march from City Hall to the Capitol to support impeaching Trump, women's rights

**EMMA BAUMGARDNER
& MADISON OLSEN**
staff reporter & photo editor

Ask Glinda Tansey to describe herself, and in no uncertain terms, she'll tell you that she's a "pissed-off grandma." What could have made this local grandmother so angry?

"I'm pissed off about immigration policies especially," Tansey said. "What [the Trump administration] has done [to] the 'Dreamers,' I could just go on and on and on about all the stupid misunderstandings that they're causing about human beings; we need a safe place."

Tansey was one of thousands of protesters in Austin and in other cities all across the country Jan. 20. Men, women and children gathered to rally against President Donald Trump, whose inauguration occurred exactly one year before the day of the march. Marchers also observed the anniversary of the Women's March, the largest single-day protest in U.S. history on Jan. 21 of last year. The full day of protests started with the Impeachment Rally at 10 a.m. at Austin City Hall with speakers who shared personal stories about how legislation under Trump has influenced their lives and what citizens could do to create the change they wanted to see in the White House. The marchers were greeted by a smaller group of Trump supporters who interacted with the marchers without significant confrontation.

The crowd began the march to the Capitol up Congress Avenue following a group called the Texas Handmaids, women clad in red robes to emulate the characters in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. After the procession reached the Capitol, the event concluded with the annual *Roe v. Wade* Rally.

The Resistance Choir marched among the procession, sheet music in hand, performing the MILCK song, "Quiet." The song was popularized during the Women's March that took place in Washington a year ago. Speakers at this year's event included politicians working in the Texas Senate and House to pass bills protecting women's right to abortion. Rep. Donna Howard, D-Austin, stressed to the crowd that women's health policy must change.

"Right now we're one of only two states that have young people that do not have access to contraceptives and unfortunately find themselves in a position where they have an unplanned pregnancy and then have no resources to deal with that," Howard said in an exclusive *Shield* interview.

Howard also has shifted focus towards the problem of sexual harassment in the public school system. According to the American Association of University Women, nearly half of students surveyed experienced some form of sexual harassment during their middle and high school years.

"I think most of us have focused on teacher or adult on student issues when in fact I've found from my preliminary research that it's seven times greater that it's student-on-student assaults." Howard said. "It's astounding to me to know that this is right under our noses, and we need to be seriously addressing this and

Rally attendees surround counter-protesters, blocking out a pro-Trump flag with a flag of their own. Photo by Kien Johnson.

figure out what we need to do to create a safe environment there as well."

Another speaker, 2014 Democratic gubernatorial candidate Wendy Davis became a prominent political figure among Texas Democrats in 2013 after her 11-hour filibuster against Senate Bill 5, which passed about a month later and significantly reduced access to abortion across the state.

"We've been through a really tough year, and I know a lot of people are feeling simultaneously hopeful and discouraged about some of the things that have happened," Davis told *The Shield*. "We have to be resilient in the face of challenge. ... As long as we don't give up, we will see the change that we all hope to see."

Davis also founded the nonprofit organization Deeds Not Words, an organization of self-proclaimed change makers aimed at improving the lives of women through action.

"It's centered around the idea that, while it's important for us to talk about things that matter to us, it's also important for us to commit ourselves to action," Davis said. "Deeds Not Words is specifically focused on young women ... to help give [them] a path to use [their] action in a productive and powerful way."

The topic of immigration was at the forefront of the rally, with the issue of funding for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, being brought to national attention after the government shutdown. The immigration policy DACA grants children, known as "Dreamers," who entered the country illegally as minors, a renewable two-year period of deferred action—rather than deportation—and a work permit. The DACA policy was rescinded by the Trump administration last September via executive action, but the action to rescind the policy was delayed six months to allow Congress to devise a solution for the population DACA no longer protects.

Protesters at City Hall were met with a heavy police presence and a small force of counter-protesters, some holding Trump flags and megaphones. Many of the counter-protesters actively engaged in discussions with the marchers, wanting to hear some arguments from the opposing side.

"We may not always agree politically, but we can find a middle ground," said a counter-protester who identified herself as Gina Williams. "When we get out here and have these interactions, we're able to meet people and bridge the gaps and open the door to communication and maybe find a common ground. If we don't open up the door to conversation, then history's doomed to repeat itself."

For some counter-protesters, the rally served as a way to hear opinions on the Trump administration from the opposite end of the political spectrum.

"You watch the news, and it will tell you about what people who have different views



"While it's important for us to TALK about things that matter to us, it's also important for us to COMMIT ourselves to ACTION," Wendy Davis

"I don't feel like we've been FAIRLY represented. I SUPPORT freedom of speech, but I do hope more people can UNDERSTAND us," Colin, a counter-protester

than you think, and it's not always accurate," Robert Young said. "I'd rather hear from real people because that's the only way you can find out that you may have more in common than you think. If all we ever do is yell at each other, we're going to be doing this 30 years from now. You got to come down and find out what you can do together, then you can actually improve situations."

Even though many counter-protesters said they hoped to create a channel for open dialogue, there was still conflict at the Impeachment rally. At the beginning of the rally, a woman who identified herself as Vicky Williams ran through the crowd with a Trump flag and had it almost forcibly taken from her by a protester. Then Jon Colgin, a counter-protester wearing a red "Make America Great Again" hat, ran across the stage blaring an air horn. A protester, later identified as Alexei Wood, came running towards him, took the hat from his head and ran in the opposite direction. Wood was chased into the crowd by Colgin, and both were detained shortly after the incident. According to *The San Antonio Current*, Colgin was originally held in handcuffs but was later released without charges. Wood was arrested on the charge of theft.

"I have fellow patriots that are out here," said

a Trump supporter who would only share his first name, Colin. "There have been times when they have been violently attacked, so [I'm here] to stand with them, even if we're outnumbered. I don't feel like we've been fairly represented. I support freedom of speech, but I do hope more people can understand us."

One of the McCallum students who attended the rally, senior Ruby Dietz, volunteered at the Planned Parenthood booth during the first few hours of the rally.

"I've been a volunteer with Planned Parenthood for a year now," Dietz said. "When you volunteer [for] something that you love, you never stop learning about it, and you never stop growing more and more passionate. At first, I started volunteering really just because I was so frustrated with the amount of people I'd met who didn't understand what Planned Parenthood is really about. I fight for women's reproductive rights to set those [records] straight. I just want people to be aware that Planned Parenthood is doing actual good."

At the Capitol, booths from various organizations shared information on how to get involved in the women's rights movement, and women spoke on the steps of the Capitol to galvanize the crowd.