

Thank you all for the opportunity to testify today, it's an honor to be here.

I was just a kid who had a dream of becoming a police officer, and was lucky it came true here at the Capitol. Five years ago today, I was called a traitor, violently assaulted in the line of duty, punched in the face, pepper sprayed, and thought: "I could die here" right on the steps of the US Capitol.

My name is Winston Pingeon and I was an officer with the United States Capitol Police for over five years. I do not speak on behalf of all officers nor the department which I left ten months later, but I believe my experience is not unique- as one of many who showed up to work on January 6th like I did every day, ready to protect and serve the Congress, the Congressional community, and the Capitol itself. Serving as an officer was the honor of my life, especially with the Ceremonial Unit, honoring the Inauguration of President Biden, as well as the lying in state ceremonies of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Officer Brian Sicknick, and Officer William Evans. I would be remiss to not mention honoring the life and funeral of Officer Howie Liebengood who sadly took his own life just days after January 6th, 2021.

On that day, I was assigned to the Civil Disturbance Unit, the hard gear riot team, on the West Front, as thousands descended upon the Capitol from Pennsylvania Avenue. Before I knew it, we were completely overrun, and what started with mere insults turned into being brutally attacked. This should serve as no surprise to anyone- the evidence of violence is obvious and extensive. Hundreds of police officers, my friends, fought valiantly to defend the Capitol and our democratic process that day. From the west front, to inside the Capitol, the mob said to me: "President Trump sent us" and "we don't want to hurt you, but we will"

While I suffered immensely on and because of January 6th, I do not wish to dwell on my own pain and want to be clear that this is not about me, or any one person here today. The events of that day are bigger than any of us because of just how abnormal that day was in American history- it was not a peaceful transition of power. The Capitol had not been so desecrated since the War of 1812. So many Americans have accepted the whitewashing, minimizing, and falsehoods of January 6th. What happened that day is wrong- it should go without saying, pardoning criminals who severely beat me and my fellow officers that day is completely unacceptable. We cannot accept violent felons being pardoned and released back into our neighborhoods without consequence. That is not justice.

Violence is never acceptable. It must be unequivocally condemned by the President and by our fellow Americans- not selectively ignored, or pardoned. I implore America to not forget what happened on January 6th. We must refuse to accept the normalization of violence.

Yet, in this deeply divided time, I believe the vast majority of Americans have so much more in common, than what separates us.

And finally, to all officers who have continued to show up, day in and day out, in service to Congress and to our Country: thank you.

Bio:

Winston Pingeon graduated from American University and immediately joined the United States Capitol Police, where he served for over five years. In his time as an officer, he served on numerous assignments including the Ceremonial Unit, the Special Operations Division and the Civil Disturbance Unit. He has since left the Capitol Police and is an artist.