More than 2,000 people marched to Park Central Square in downtown Springfield the day after President Donald Trump's inauguration to listen to speeches by a white woman, a black woman, a woman in a hijab, a transgender woman, a woman politician, a woman pastor and several others.

The women and men who attended the Women's March on Springfield held signs with slogans like "Keep your tiny hands off our rights" and "I will not go quietly back to the 1950s."

From the back of the crowd, Shirley Collison, 71, held her iPhone above her head to take a video.

"I learned from my grandchildren," said Collison, who attended the rally with her husband of 50 years and her daughter.

Collison described herself as a lifelong feminist who was a stay-at-home mom. She said the march was about equality for everyone and mentioned three people whom she wanted to honor by marching: her mother who fed homeless people and cared for young, pregnant women; her mother-in-law who had 11 children and marched for women's rights; and her nephew who died before he could ever marry his partner of 19 years.

"Hopefully, the message goes to the White House," Collison said. "To unify, not divide."

Whether or not Saturday's march was a pro-civil rights or anti-Trump event varied from person to person.

Collison said Trump is the president and it is important to honor the presidency.

Elsewhere in the crowd was Kim Bresee, 49, and in Bresee's back jeans pocket was a section of toilet paper with Trump's face on the squares.

"I'm here to protest Donald Trump and policies that affect women's rights," Bresee said. "I think he's dangerous and irresponsible and..."

Rich Gardner, who attended the march with his wife Kristin, said he hopes that Trump will stand up to Russia and that he hopes Trump will listen to his rhetoric.

"For me this march isn't about being anti-Trump. It's about supporting my wife and daughters," he said. "We're not anti-anybody ... I've got a household full of young women and I want them to be more free than my mother."

Kristin Gardner wore a green T-shirt with the words: "Nasty Women Unite."

"I just want to make sure everyone has the same opportunities," she said.

The parade snaked its way from the parking lot at Springfield's municipal court building, across the Martin Luther King Jr. Bridge and over to Park Central Square where several speakers addressed the crowd.
Rep. Crystal Quade, D-Springfield, spoke into the microphone about her own self-doubts when running for office this past year, saying too often women don’t believe in themselves.

"We have to stop second-guessing ourselves," Quade said to the crowd, which included her two daughters.

Quade encouraged more women to run for office.

After her speech, Quade told the News-Leader that speaking to the crowd was "overwhelming — in a good way.""Women's March on Washington (http://www.news-leader.com/pages/interactives/womens-march-photos/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=)

"We can band together. We can be there for each other," she said. "There are thousands of people locally who care."

Later during the event, Kaijuana Sutton spoke about a subject she was once afraid to broach: domestic violence.

Sutton, who is originally from Chicago, runs an organization called Drama Free Divas, which she said promotes self-esteem and awareness about domestic violence.
"I saw (domestic violence) growing up. My mother was a victim," she told the News-Leader. "All of my sisters were victims."

Sutton said she was pistol-whipped, spit on and pushed out of a moving vehicle.

"And I stayed because I was afraid," she said. "I didn't feel like I could make it on my own."

By the age of 19, Sutton said she had three daughters and she knew she had to stand up for herself.

"If I don't break the cycle I know, it's going to continue with my girls," she said, adding that there aren't enough resources for domestic violence victims.

Now, Sutton said her oldest daughter is 18 and preparing to go to college, and none of her daughters have experienced domestic violence.

"I feel like I've broken a generational curse," she said. "If we want to see change, we have to be that change."

The rally touched on political issues in addition to women's rights. Some attendees said they were concerned about the future of the Affordable Care Act, and Crystal Brigman Mahaney, the deputy director of Missouri Healthcare for All, spoke at the rally, too.

Tom Rowley, 60, drove about a hundred miles from Willow Springs to attend the march.

He's a carpenter who builds staircases for a living, and when business slowed down, he said it was only because of the Affordable Care Act that he was able to afford health insurance.

"I want to see what we have improve, not get torn up," Rowley said.

Rowley said he was impressed by the diversity of people who attended the march.

"This is not just a bunch of whiners complaining," he said. "These are people who have issues they want addressed ... we're not going away."
Near the end of the rally, Bethany Johnson, a transgender woman wearing a Captain America shield on her back, spoke and drew some of the loudest cheers.

She mentioned the 2015 vote that repealed the city's ordinance banning LGBT discrimination in the workplace. Johnson banged the podium and called on the marchers to contact their politicians.

"Local elections in Springfield are April 4," Johnson said. "And your vote is needed."

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