

AS I SEE IT

‘Flag Guy’ is hard to miss at No Kings, anti-ICE protests

“As I See It,” a weekly photo column by Pulitzer Prize winner Stan Grossfeld, brings the stories of New England to Globe readers.

By [Stan Grossfeld](#) Globe Staff, Updated April 6, 2026, 6:19 a.m.



Carter Chamberlain, a fusion physicist, holds 18 upside down American flags during a Bearing Witness ICE protest outside the regional field office for ICE in Burlington on April 1. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

BURLINGTON - How hard is it to be Flag Guy, the human who transforms himself into the 20-foot high flag display at anti-Trump demonstrations in and around Boston?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind.

Carter Chamberlain, 38, a fusion physicist, is impossible to miss. At the "No Kings" rally last month, he wore 18 American flags upside down.

They fly from five adjustable poles attached to the back of his military-style ruck sack tugging at his chest. The rig is 17 pounds. The 5'9" Chamberlain weighs 140 pounds.

"It squeezes the air out of your lungs," he says outside ICE Boston headquarters in Burlington, where he is a regular at the weekly Bearing Witness vigils.

It's the ultimate workout.



Chamberlain's upside down American flags were part of the "No Kings" rally at Boston Common on March 28. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

He checks the weather before heading out, like a sailor. Keeping his balance is tough, he says.

“This isn’t even at full mast yet,” he says. “I had to drop down 2 rungs because it might be too windy.”

“It is quite calming to be kind of blown around by the wind. It’s like being a kite.”

He’s been knocked down only three times over the three years he’s been doing this. He says it’s like landing softly in a parachute.

“It’s a matter of building up strength and being in shape. In the summer, I did four protests a week.” But it is quite the workout. After the recent “No Kings” rally, he was

sore for three days.



Chamberlain leans into the wind at a "No Kings" rally at Boston Common. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

He says he is not affiliated with any political party or paid to protest. The rig, which he invented, costs \$300-400.

“I’m just an ordinary American exercising my First Amendment rights with an extravagance that mirrors this administration’s.”

Chamberlain strives to be the opposite of what he calls “the reality TV star.” He needs a wide berth to control the flags, especially if there’s a breeze.

He never gives speeches. His tower of upside-down American flags - a symbol of distress - speaks for him.

“I’m kind of a quiet person. And so this rig has gotten bolder and bolder with me just being content to remain vocally silent,” he says.

“There’s just something empowering about the unnamed faceless mask of this movement. It’s the opposite of Trump. It’s like not narcissistic at all. I’m happy being in the background.”



A Trump protester stands next to Chamberlain at a Bearing Witness ICE protest. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

His rig has evolved.

“(The harness was) originally was just an old posture corrector with a couple of flags on it, and then I decided to keep adding more flags to it every year. “

Marching is getting more difficult. At the ICE Boston field office in Burlington last week, police would not let him stand on a small traffic island off of the Burlington Mall Road.

“The police captain came up to me last week and told me, ‘We noticed that your flag rig has grown over the weeks and you’re now kind of in the category of a parade float. So we need you to lower the flags when you go up to march in the traffic light area because you’re blocking the signal otherwise.’”

He does not argue.

“They’re very friendly, very cordial. Again, they remain neutral and making sure everyone’s safe,” he says. “And I certainly want to remain an upstanding citizen, and I don’t want to cause a traffic accident with a backpack.”



A road separates a handful of Trump supporters from several hundred Anti-ICE protesters outside the ICE Boston Field Office in Burlington. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

Trump supporters don't bother him. On this day, they total less than a half dozen.

"I see the people protesting over there. As disillusioned as they are, they have their freedom of speech," he says. "The weird logic is that we're protesting ICE, so we're supporting immigrants. Immigrants are rapists, therefore we're supporting rapists, therefore we are rapists. It's a chain of logic that is broken in many places."

One protest in Salem was disturbing, he says.

"There was a homeless veteran who came up, lifted up his shirt, showed me three bullet holes and said, 'I didn't take three bullet holes just so that you could disrespect the flag like this,' All I did was say, well, thank you for fighting so that I can keep my First Amendment right. And yeah, it just disarmed it."

He wasn't always Flag Guy.



Burlington police no longer let Chamberlain stand on a nearby traffic island because they say he is more like a parade float and blocks the motorists view of the traffic lights. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

Chamberlain, who is autistic, grew up in Wrentham, where he graduated from King Philip Regional High School. In 2010, he graduated with magna cum laude from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. He earned a PhD in physics from Virginia Tech in 2016.

He has worked for three nuclear fusion companies and is awaiting funding for a fourth.

“It takes a lot to put my brain to sleep at night,” Chamberlain says.

Is he worried that Trump could start a nuclear war?

“I think he would be incompetent enough,” he answers wryly.

In Burlington, he places the flags on the grass and one motorist screams at him. But some of the several hundred anti-ICE protesters stop by and thank him for attending.



Chamberlain prepares his flag rig in Burlington. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

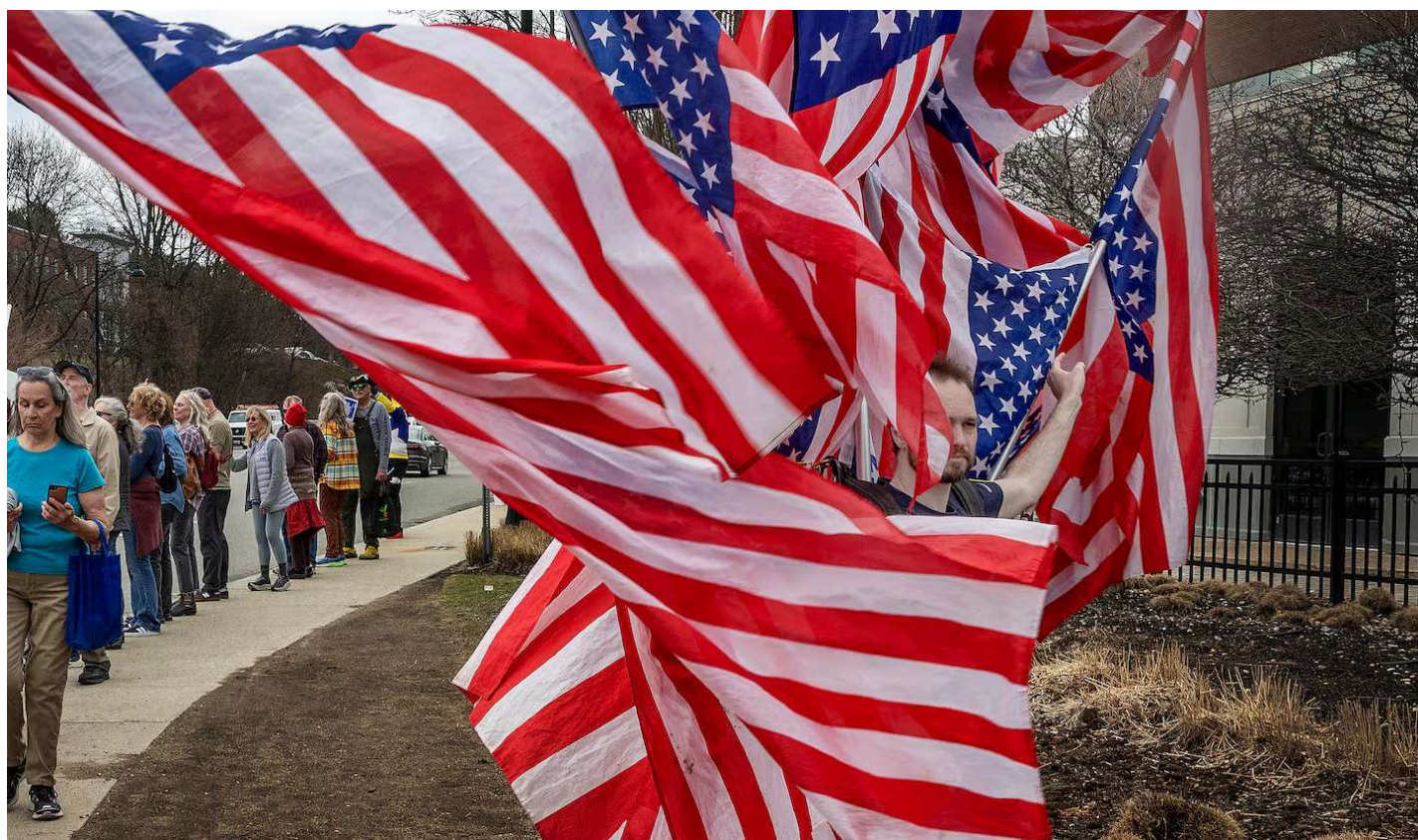
Does he have groupies?

“Groupies? I’m socially oblivious, uh, to this whole thing. Again, people come up to me. ... They say how much they love and support me. And all I’m thinking about is, ‘OK, how can I make this more balanced? How can I add more flagpoles to it, add more flags?’”

Across the street are three or four Trump supporters. The mood is mellow.

Laura Simpson twirls two Trump flags like a majorette.

She has plenty to say about Flag Guy.



Chamberlain battles the breeze at a Bearing Witness ICE protest in Burlington. STAN GROSSFELD/GLOBE STAFF

“He’s been to every single parade, every single event, for every socialist communist event. I imagine he’s getting paid big bucks. Never speaks a word, won’t talk to anybody. ... I’ve

known him for years. How does he get airline tickets and the ability to go from city to city all the time?”

Chamberlain laughs.

“A total lie,” he says.

“They fly me in for the protest, apparently all the way from two miles away? I live in Burlington, so it’s just hollow accusations. But they are clearly on the moral low ground for supporting the things that their idol is accused of and been convicted of.”

Still, as the wind wafts him one step backwards, he waits and moves two steps forward.

That is progress.

“Adversity is going to make us stronger. We’re going to come out of this stronger than ever.”

UP NEXT



As I see it:

More than a little lamb