



Weather

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High 30. Low 22.
Thursday: Mostly sunny.
High 44. Low 30.
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Obama Takes Charge

NATION ASKED TO BEGIN TASK OF 'REMAKING AMERICA'

ESSAY

In His Moment, Many Feel Echoes Of Their Own Stories

By DAVID MARANISS
Washington Post Staff Writer

In taking the oath of office as the first African American president in the nation's nearly 233 years, one man reached a singular achievement. But at four minutes after noon yesterday, Barack Hussein Obama was inevitably transformed — no matter what happens during his administration — from an individual, a politician, to an icon and a symbol. Here was history at its most sweeping and yet intimate.

An essential theme of his presidential campaign was that his candidacy was less about him than it was about the coming together of the people of the United States of America, as Obama ritually called it in his rolling cadence. We are the change we have been waiting for, he would proclaim, repeating the mantra so often that he left himself open to sardonic mocking. Yet that idea, more than anything he said or did, became the dominant sensibility of an extraordinary day.

With the inauguration witnessed by perhaps the largest audience ever to assemble in Washington, and with the fit young leader and his wife striding confidently down part of the Pennsylvania Avenue parade route, the day, of course, was about him.

But more than that, it was about everyone out there in the crowds that stretched from the west side of the Capitol all the way to the Lincoln Memorial: every person with an individual story, a set of meanings and reference points for a moment that many thought would never happen in their lifetimes.

In his inaugural address, Obama concentrated mostly on the difficult trials to come. Drawing more on the metaphors of George Washington than of Abraham Lincoln, he evoked a figurative winter of hardship that the nation must and will endure, harking back to the uncertain revolutionary winter of 1776. The crowds, meanwhile, seemed ready and willing to stand for as many hours as it took in the literal winter, in the whipping cold of a January day, to celebrate the meaning of the moment rather than focus explicitly on the tasks ahead.

Obama's message was somber, serious and forceful, with several graceful rhetorical riffs but no attempt at lyrical exaltation. It was as though he understood that the crowd would have enough hope and joy on its own, without need of more from him. "We must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and begin again," he said at one point, but his celebrators already seemed picked up about as straight and high as they could get.

On a weekend train down from New Jersey, an older black man wearing presidential cuff links, stooped with arthritis but in good voice, kept saying to the people in his car: *There are all these stories. Everyone has a story. We all have stories.*

And so they did yesterday. The stories were not about Obama and his own un-

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The new first couple, Barack and Michelle Obama, drew cheers as they emerged from their limousine to cover a few blocks of the inaugural parade on foot. More than a million people crowded the Mall and the parade route to get a glimpse of the first African American president.

BY PRESTON KERES — THE WASHINGTON POST

A Historic Inauguration Draws Throngs To the Mall

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR
and ANNE E. KORNBLUT
Washington Post Staff Writers

Barack Hussein Obama took the oath of office as the nation's first African American president yesterday, summoning a vast crowd and a watching nation to the task of reviving a country in crisis.

The inauguration of the 44th president, who made "hope" and "change" the bywords of his improbable campaign, took place amid a building air of anticipation in Washington. A city that had braced for record-breaking attendance swelled with visitors who would, at least briefly, nearly double its population. Before dawn yesterday, more than 1 million people began streaming into the city to bear witness to the event, brushing aside the frigid temperatures and travel problems.

As he spoke, Obama looked out at a sea of admirers, some of whom had camped out overnight in tents or made long treks by bus and Metro. By the end of the day, those spectators lined the route of Obama's procession to the White House, chanting his name and straining for a glimpse of the new president.

Obama made only glancing references to the racial barrier that had fallen with his historic ascent. Instead, in an 18½-minute speech notable for its somber tone as much as its soaring rhetoric, he outlined the challenges of what he called "this winter of our hardship": a collapsing economy, wars on two fronts, a lack of confidence in government and enemies eager to destroy the American way of life.

"We must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and begin again the work of remaking America," Obama told the throng, which stretched from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial.

Obama was accompanied to the West Front of the Capitol by President Bush. At the stroke of noon, the man who had served not even a full term in the U.S. Senate became the nation's commander in chief, and at 12:04 p.m., he was sworn in by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr.

Obama took the oath by stating his full given name, which he had once said opponents had used to try to set him apart from mainstream America.

It was the first time Roberts had administered the oath — and the first time any chief justice had sworn in a president who voted against his confirmation — and both men stumbled over the words. But the sight of the two youthful leaders — Roberts, 53, the second-youngest chief justice, and Obama, 47, the fourth-youngest man elected president — underscored the theme of generational change.

So did the presence of Michelle Obama, 45, and the couple's two daughters, Malia, 10, and Sasha, 7, dressed in candy-colored

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ON CULTURE

All Hail the Leader of the Fashionable World

By ROBIN GIVHAN
Washington Post Staff Writer

Few first ladies have caused as much breathless anticipation for their Inauguration Day wardrobes as Michelle Obama. But soon after she stepped onto the national stage as the candidate's wife, Obama was elevated to a fashion star whose tastes ran from high-end designers to mass marketer H&M. She had the impressive height of a runway model, the figure of a real woman — a size 12 according to one fashion pub-

licist — and took an admitted delight in looking "pretty."

For the historic moment when she became this country's first African American first lady, Obama chose a lemon-grass yellow, metallic sheath with a matching coat by the Cuban-born designer Isabel Toledo. The dress followed her curves — paying special attention to the hips — and announced that the era of first lady-as-rectangle had ended. It signaled a generational shift in what women could be on the national stage. They could boldly embrace

color and reveal their power, their femininity and their legs.

Recent first ladies seem to have tried — at least during the first term — to hold on to the idea of *normalcy*, no matter that they are living in the White House with staff, security and the albatross of history. At their husbands' first inaugurations, Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush wore uninspired clothes that seemed to make a case against the women's being unique.

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Obama Requests A Halt at Guantanamo

The new administration instructed military prosecutors to seek a 120-day suspension of legal proceedings at Guantanamo Bay. A2

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Sell-Off Is Sobering Welcome From Wall Street

By BINYAMIN APPELBAUM
and HEATHER LANDY
Washington Post Staff Writers

As Washington celebrated, New York fretted.

The Dow Jones industrial average yesterday fell below 8,000, shedding 4 percent, its bleakest performance on any Inauguration Day since the index was started 124 years ago. Nasdaq and the Standard & Poor's 500-stock index both plunged more than 5 percent.

Disillusioned investors fled financial companies as fresh evidence mounted that the industry's problems are larger than previously understood, larger than the response so far mustered by the government and perhaps larger than the resources remaining in its rescue program.

The possibility of bank nationalizations, in which governments take direct control of financial institutions, is being debated in Britain and elsewhere, as some of the world's biggest banks report surprisingly dire results. The indus-

try's plight, tightly intertwined with the ongoing recession, is among the great challenges confronting President Obama.

Problems have spread to companies that investors considered conservative and safe. Institutions including German giant Deutsche Bank, money managers State Street and Bank of New York Mellon, and even several members of the Federal Home Loan Banks system have revealed unexpected and significant problems, leaving almost no part of the financial indus-

try untouched.

Losses at companies already tarred by the crisis also have been deeper than analysts expected. Regions Financial, a large southeastern bank, yesterday reported a fourth-quarter loss of \$6.2 billion, greater than its total profits in the past five years. Citigroup said it lost \$19 billion last year.

The Royal Bank of Scotland disclosed this week it may have lost \$41 billion last year, leading the

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