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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"



Barack Obama, joined by his wife, Michelle, and daughters, Malia and Sasha (right), takes the oath of office from Chief Justice John Roberts to become the 44th president of the United States at the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Tuesday. An estimated 1.5 million people from all over the country attended the inauguration of the nation's first Black president.

A historic inauguration by the people, for the people President seeks to 'remake' America

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Barack Hussein Obama — a Black man — was inaugurated the 44th President of the United States on Tuesday before a historic crowd of at least 1.5 million people.

The first African-American to hold the office, considered the most powerful in the world, his inaugural address and overall ceremony included strong and specific references to the historic and modern-day struggles of Black people, including the "lash of the whip."

"Our journey has never

been one of short-cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted — for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things — some celebrated, but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom," he said, reflecting on the hard work — and pains — of building a nation.

"For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across

oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West; endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth. For us, they fought and died in places like Concord and Gettysburg, Normandy and Khe Sahn."

The "lash of the whip" and the plowing of the "hard earth" were obvious references to Black slaves, once considered only three-fifths of human beings and rarely credited for the work they did to build America. Descendants of those slaves converged by the hundreds of thousands on the U.S. Cap-

itol this week to experience for themselves the historic moment. Their euphoric chants of "O-ba-ma! O-ba-ma!" were heard frequently during quiet moments of the inaugural ceremony as many without tickets packed in beyond the boundaries of the National Mall.

They punctuated Obama's speech with wild cheers as he used words such as "equal" and "free" that African-Americans often long to hear from people of power.

Obama consciously used the same Bible as his hero, Abraham Lincoln, signer of the Emancipation Proclama-

tion that led to the end of American slavery, Jan. 1, 1863, only 146 years ago.

"We remain a young nation, but in the words of scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things," Obama said.

"The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness. In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we

understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned."

The historic inauguration comes amidst painful times for America. Obama — with his unique ability to inspire — is viewed as a transitional figure by people of many races and nationalities, particularly during this time of war and economic crisis. But, suffering is consistently greater for African-Americans.

To have someone in the White House with a modicum of understanding of and identification with their prob-

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