

Extra Feature Story

Obama Inauguration Plans Celebrate America's Diversity

December 23, 2008

For Inauguration Day, the historic ritual that celebrates the long history of peaceful passage of power in the United States, President-elect Barack Obama has chosen a civil rights leader, a Pulitzer Prize finalist author, a multi-Grammy winning artist, decorated military officers and a controversial conservative minister.

While an estimated 2 million -- or more -- inauguration-goers line up along the parade route, Mr. Obama will have coffee with President George W. Bush at the White House at 11 a.m. The first such coffee took place in 1837 when Andrew Jackson hosted his successor, Martin Van Buren.

At the Capitol, guests will be entertained by the United States Marine Band, which made its debut for the inauguration of Thomas Jefferson in 1801. The San Francisco Boys Chorus and the San Francisco Girls Chorus will also perform.

Once the first family arrives, "Purpose Driven Life" Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in Orange County, California, will give the opening prayer and the "Queen of Soul," Aretha Franklin, will sing.

Oaths of Office

Senator Joe Biden will take his oath of office first from Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens.

Like previous incoming presidents, Mr. Obama has commissioned a new piece of music to be played for his swearing-in. The piece is by John Williams, the same composer who wrote music for Obama's election night, and will be played by world renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma and violinist Itzhak Perlman.

At noon President-elect Barack Obama will become President Obama when Chief Justice John G. Roberts leads him in the Oath of Office found in Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution:

"I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of the President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Mr. Obama has decided to take the oath of office on the same Bible used by Abraham Lincoln at his first inauguration in 1861.

Military bands will play "Hail to the Chief," followed by a 21-gun salute.

Inaugural Address

At this point, newly minted President Obama delivers his inaugural address, outlining the course for his new administration and the path of the nation.

Candidate Obama ran as a unifying force and while the country is facing possibly the worst economic crisis in a century, many will look to his speech for clues about his goals and plans.

The ceremony closes with a poem from poet and Yale Professor Elizabeth Alexander, and a prayer from Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery, minister and civil rights leader.

The president and vice president are then guests of honor at a lunch held by the United States Congress -- one of the only times the president, vice president, and both houses of Congress congregate in the same location.

Controversy on Stage

Mr. Obama, as presidents before him, has chosen many different leaders, artists and musicians to share the spotlight with him. They are supposed to represent many different views and all Americans in part.

Pastor Warren is the leader of a twenty thousand member church and is highly praised for his work with AIDS in Africa, social justice and the environment. However, he holds opinions contrary to the president-elect on some gay rights and abortion issues. Many see this pick as evidence of Mr. Obama's policy of inclusion.

Singer Aretha Franklin has performed for over five decades all over the globe and while she has performed for President Bill Clinton, it was not during his inauguration. She has racked up over 21 Grammys during her career including one for "Living Legend."

The presidential poet, Professor Elizabeth Alexander was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 2005 and most recently she was the recipient of the Alphonse Fletcher, Sr. Fellowship for work that "contributes to improving race relations in American."

Alexander's father was a civil rights adviser to President Lyndon Johnson and was instrumental in the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

The Reverend Dr. Joseph E. Lowery is a renowned civil rights leader and is best known for his work with Dr. Martin Luther King to lead the Selma bus boycotts.

Obama has also invited any surviving Tuskegee Airman (at least 200) to be his personal guests at the inauguration. The airmen were an elite group of black pilots who flew with distinction in World War II, even while the military was segregated.

The Fun Facts:

While Barack Obama will be the 44th president, this is the 56th presidential inauguration.

In 1789, George Washington's original inauguration was held in New York City on April 30.

George Washington's second address was the shortest inaugural address in history, 135 words and William Henry Harrison had the longest, 8,495. (Harrison died just 30 days into office; many think it is because he contracted pneumonia during his lengthy speech.)

In 1865, Abraham Lincoln was the first president to include African-Americans in his inaugural parade.

In 1917, Woodrow Wilson was the first president to include women in his inaugural parade.

In 1961, the Army used flame throwers to remove the snow from the parade route. Robert Frost wrote a new poem entitled, "Dedication" for John F. Kennedy, but he was 87 years old and couldn't see the words because of the sun's glare that bright, cold January day. Instead he gave up and fell back on an old poem he knew perfectly by memory, "The Gift Outright."

Lady Bird Johnson was the first first lady to stand with her husband as he took the oath in 1965.

In 1997, Bill Clinton's, inauguration was the first inauguration to be broadcast live over the Internet (Harry Truman's was the first on TV in 1949).

When January 20 is on a Sunday, the president-elect usually takes the oath of office privately and then repeats the ceremony in public on Monday.

-- Compiled by Lizzy Berryman for NewsHour Extra

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