

Obama's inauguration is not just nationally significant," said William H. Rehnquist Professorship of American History and Culture Jim Ralph, "it is internationally important." Fully cognizant of the gravity of the event, the Middlebury community watched intently, reflecting on the manner in which the transition of power will transform their lives.

"What I find truly extraordinary is the hope and the promise that later in my life I might look back on this day, January 20, 2009, and this entire election process, as one of the most influential and one of the most critical for my future successes and for those of this country," Emily Gullickson '10 said.

Students, faculty and staff were alternately ecstatic and apprehensive: they relished the change to come, but wondered whether Obama harnesses the ability to live up to high expectations.

"We must be very careful that we do not spurn the great things of our past along with that which must be changed," Rachel Pagano '11 said. "We must remember that Obama is the 44th piece of the puzzle that makes up our history, rather than the first, and that in many of those pieces there has been greatness."

Most of all, though, an energized audience celebrated the rise of a president "whose father, less than 60 years ago, might not have been served at a local restaurant."

"Yes we can. Yes we did. Yes we will," Tahirah Foy '10 said.



"I believe that Obama's election and inauguration represents change in the beliefs of many Americans. For many African-Americans, it is somewhat proof that the sky is the limit. On the other hand, many people now call this a post-racial society. I believe that it is incredibly naive for anyone to think that this is a post-racial society, and to think that the issue of race will magically disappear with the election of one black man. Oh, by the way, is he really black?"

Justin Spurley '10



"It is like the dream being realized on many levels. I have this organic feeling about him as my leader. He needs my energy and my support, and he has it. It's an inspiring thing to feel that he listens to our voices and feels our pain. He knows what's going on. I felt divorced from the last regime. We were crying out about issues that were important to us, and he wasn't listening... This is not just the wish, dream, desire and need of the black community. It's the desire of the soul of the nation... Students can't just give lip service to this momentous change. They need to examine their own lives and see how they can participate."

François Clemmons, Artist-in-Residence

"With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents and endure what storms may come."

— President Obama

# A NEW BEGINNING

reflections on the inauguration of the 44th president

## the view FROM D.C.

Members of the Midd community chime in from the capital city



Leslie Lim '10

So there I was, up before dawn itself had risen, hauling myself out of bed. After all, what would I tell the grandkids? Grandma was in D.C. during the most unprecedented presidential transition, but she wanted to sleep in, so she didn't go down to Barack Obama's inauguration? No way.

As I rode the busy trains and walked the streets cordoned off for pedestrian use, I felt an excitement stirring within. Much like the childhood pilgrimages I had made to Disneyland, people came in happy hordes, wearing the signs of their devotion proudly. Except instead of Minnie Mouse ears or Goofy hats, they came in the form of Obama t-shirts, pins, flags, bookmarks and even bottled water.

The excitement was palpable, despite the freezing temperatures and hours of waiting. The jumbo screens replayed the acts from Sunday's inaugural concert and flashed to shots of police-escorted cars approaching the Capitol.

Like a movie you enjoy all the more because the people around you react and express the emotions you are feeling, standing on the Mall, seeing Barack Obama inaugurated, was indeed quite thrilling. Despite our distance from the actual event (next to the Washington Monument, so far down the Mall that we couldn't even see the Capitol), I was proud to be part of something historic that day. See kids? Grandma did something cool.

Liz Sutcliffe '10

At 6:30 a.m., the jumbotrons near the WWII memorial were deserted. Now at 11:15 a.m., people are packed together, standing room only. It was a repeat of Sunday's concert at the Lincoln Memorial — plus free pretzels. Oh, and a couple hundred thousand more people who had been pouring in like an army of ants since sunrise. The occasional subtitle blips on the jumbotrons provide entertainment, like the misnomer about cheese and applause. Or maybe it was cheers and applesauce?

On my right is a group from Chicago; on my left, a group from Texas. Never before have I felt such a sense of equality and empowerment across racial lines in a city that is still very much segregated.

I have spent the past few months here attending Georgetown, which is in a section of the city that refused to put a Metro stop in because, according to hearsay, the "black people could be kept out." Standing at the inauguration, all is at ease and I feel like I am finally allowed to share hand-warmers and crack jokes with the Texan ladies next to me, something I have not felt comfortable doing while riding buses through the District.

Sanja Pedersen-Green '07

I had hoped to spend the morning of the inauguration munching on quiche and sipping mimosas rather than dealing with the mass of humanity down at the National Mall.

Unfortunately, when I got to my Metro station, it had just shut down without explanation. I later discovered this was due to several train malfunctions and because someone had fallen onto the tracks.

A bus took me across the 14th Street Bridge, and I spent the next hour testing every Metro stop between there and Union Station. I would guess that on my way, I encountered several hundred thousand people. And although I was very cold from wearing a skirt and weary from my estimated four-mile walk in uncomfortable shoes, I couldn't help but be proud, infected by the incredible energy of several million people inexhaustibly excited about the democratic process. Even though many of us walked many miles or endured packed trains and buses, it didn't seem to faze anyone.

I've never seen an energy like that which has been in the air in D.C. the past couple days. I certainly hope this kind of positivity continues to exist even after Obama. I can't help but think that this is how the process should be.

## MY STORY one editor's experience

Brian Fung, Editor-in-Chief

They came before sunrise. First by the hundreds—then by the thousands. Out of the predawn darkness they materialized, like shadows, ghosts drifting towards a single destination. A single person.

They descended on Washington with a common purpose, bound together by their shared hope for a better tomorrow. The man who gave them that hope would become president of the United States in a few short hours—but it wasn't time yet. And so they waited.

All two million of them.

At 4:30 a.m., standing on the corner of M and 21st, NW, I watched as spectator after spectator passed by on the sidewalk. Red, white and blue were plentiful in supply. One couple had had the foresight to bring a stepladder to stand on. Police SUVs swept down the darkened, empty streets, sirens blasting and lights flashing for nobody in particular. On the opposite corner stood a huddle of Army soldiers, trying to keep warm.

The city that morning held an intangible energy, as if the day itself could hardly wait to begin. Never have I seen the city so full of joy—indeed, never have I seen the city so full, period. And I was born here!

The expectant silence of night quickly gave way to the triumphant outbreak of sunrise. I made my way to Capi-

itol Hill, and hit crowds "as thick as Times Square on New Year's Eve," as one friend put it. I ditched my van to forge ahead on foot.

It took 30 minutes to push through one intersection.

There, just as D Street met 1st, people from all walks of life had come to meet each other. The close-quarters contact brought out a whole cross-section of human nature. Friendships of circumstance sprung up everywhere. One man paused to dislodge another person's wheelchair from the curb. Others took to standing on lampposts and directed traffic—or tried to. Meanwhile, mothers impatient with the jostling began wailing like their freezing children—and the street vendors did a fine job hawkling memorabilia of dubious quality.

I finally made it to 3rd and Constitution, less than a half-mile from the Capitol. Standing virtually in front of the building, I could make out tiny specks of people in the stands. Closer to where I stood, others crowded into the grassy patch before the Capitol Reflecting Pool.

I didn't stay long; the crowd was too dense. Instead, I extricated myself and found an empty rooftop. Perched eight stories high, I finally sat back.

And watched two million people make history.

## What about Obama's inauguration excites you the most?

"I was in France for a semester, and even before the election really got going, all people talked about was Obama, and how excited they were. I also like that he plays basketball. I'm looking forward to seeing him play Sarkozy, and maybe Putin can bring a Russian game."

— Matt Westman '09



"I woke up this morning and felt better about life. I feel proud. I've never had this much patriotism. Obama inspires me to be a better American."

— Aaron Smith '09



"I identify myself as a conservative, and I voted for John McCain. But I'm so proud of our country today."

— Kristen Gura, '11.5



"The first time I get to vote, I understand and believe in everything he said. That whole 10-minute speech, I understood everything he said. I see the change."

— Melida Maldonado '11



"I'm just really excited that Obama can bring new hope for the future, and it's exciting to see a person of color in the White House. I hope he'll do more for social justice, and bring people together."

— Manuel Carballo, Associate Director of Admissions



Students, faculty and staff gathered in FIC to watch Obama be sworn in.