

INAUGURATION THE 44TH PRESIDENT

The swearing-in of Barack Obama will be a unique event whose import won't be lost on the San Diegans who will be in Washington to witness it



Kim Wolfe-Powell and her husband, Michael Powell, are among the 240,000 people with tickets to the swearing-in of President-elect Barack Obama, whose likeness appears on a cutout in their Poway home.

On the road to history

By John Wilkens, STAFF WRITER

The hundreds of local residents traveling across the country to witness President-elect Barack Obama's inauguration come from different walks of life, but many are making the trip for the same reason — history.

To Dolores Van Rensalier, the history is personal. She sees in Obama a struggle with racial identity similar to hers.

To Geoff Patnoe, the history is political. He will be attending his fourth presidential inauguration.

And to 34 students from La Jolla Country Day School, the history is a project. They are going to Washington not only to watch, but also to record interviews for the school's new digital archive.

They'll be part of a crowd expected to reach into the millions Tuesday that will fill the National Mall and line the parade route along Pennsylvania Avenue. For many, only seeing Obama sworn in as the nation's first black president will be believing.

"To me, it's akin to when man landed on the moon," said George Mitchell, 88, a Webster resident. "It's something I never thought would happen, certainly not in my lifetime."



Obama's mixed race speaks to Dolores Van Rensalier. Raised to believe she was white, she later learned of her great-grandfather, a black abolitionist, and her grandfather (left), a World War I serviceman.



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A cause for joy: Obama's election struck somewhere deep inside for Union-Tribune courts reporter Dana Littlefield. Our Region, B1

Fellow trailblazers: A lifelong Democrat and a lifelong Republican understand the obstacles Obama overcame. Currents Passages, G1

Obama's Mount Vernon: A tour of his homelands would span three countries and six states — from Kenya and Kansas to Hawaii and Hyde Park. Travel, I-1

Words of change: Listen for clues in Obama's address on how he might capitalize on his historic rise. Dialog, F1

Obama ties past to future on train to D.C.

President-elect echoes American giants during trip from Philadelphia

By Jennifer Loven and Nancy Benac ASSOCIATED PRESS

ABOARD LOCOMOTIVE 44 — Tracing Abraham Lincoln's historic path to Washington, President-elect Barack Obama launched a four-day inaugural celebration yesterday before thousands of chilled but cheering on-lookers from Philadelphia to the nation's capital. He promised to bring the country "a new declaration of independence" — free from small thinking, prejudice and bigotry.

Obama invoked a grand heritage of American giants as he appealed "not to our easy instincts but to our better angels," an echo of Lincoln's first inaugural address. He took note of the enormous challenges that lay ahead and promised to act with "fierce urgency," a phrase often used by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Riding a vintage rail car on his whis-



Joe and Jill Biden joined Barack and Michelle Obama yesterday aboard a vintage train car in Wilmington, Del., en route to Washington, D.C. Chip Somodevilla / Getty Images

tle-stop trip to Washington, Obama carried with him the hopes of a nation weary of war, frightened of economic chaos and searching for better days.

Busy Day One: Obama schedules talk on Iraq with top military commanders. A5

Vice President-elect Joe Biden joined the journey en route, with wife Jill from their home in Delaware, and spoke for many when he said he was excited and ready for Tuesday.

Then, sobered by the challenges of governing, Biden added: "I think it's Wednesday we need to be ready."

Obama was smiling and confident throughout the day and across the miles, reaching at each stop for history's lessons. In Philadelphia, he noted the risks taken by the men who declared America independent from Britain. In Wilmington, he applauded the state that first ratified the Constitution. And in Baltimore, he hailed the troops at Fort McHenry who beat back the British navy and inspired the poem that became "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Two new polls find that Obama is riding a powerful wave of optimism into the White House, with Americans confident he can, in time, turn the

SEE Obama, A14

Israelis call a cease-fire in Gaza war

Troops to stay; Olmert says Hamas 'suffered major blow'

By Steven Erlanger NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

JERUSALEM — Israel declared a unilateral cease-fire in Gaza late yesterday but said its troops would remain in place for now.

After 22 days of war against Hamas and the deaths of more than 1,200 Palestinians and 13 Israelis, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that "we have reached all the goals of the war, and beyond." Speaking to the nation late last night, he said Hamas had "suffered a major blow" and that if it continued to fire rockets into Israel, "the Israeli army will regard itself as free to respond with force."

Hamas, battered but hardly broken, said it would continue fighting as long as Israeli troops occupy Gaza. And Israeli officials said a new flurry of rocket launches, to prove that Hamas was neither cowed nor defeated, was likely for at least a short time.

Heavy Israeli bombardment continued throughout the day yesterday, and in an attack that brought scathing criticism from the United Nations, Israeli tank fire killed two brothers, ages 5 and 7, taking shelter at a U.N. school in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya. About 1,600 displaced Gazans have taken shelter at the school, run by the U.N. Relief and Works Agency.

U.N. aid officials raised questions about whether the attack and others like it should be investigated as war crimes. The Israeli army said it was investigating

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Banks buoyed by bailouts are still reluctant to lend

By Mike McIntire NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

As the incoming Obama administration decides how to fix the economy, the troubles of the banking system have become particularly vexing.

Congress approved the \$700 billion rescue plan with the idea that banks would help struggling borrowers and increase lending to stimulate the economy, and many lawmakers want to know how the first half of that money has been spent before approving the second half. But many banks that have received bailout money so far are reluctant to lend, worrying that if new loans go bad, they will be in worse shape if the economy deteriorates.

Indeed, as mounting losses at major banks such as Citigroup and Bank of America in the past week have underscored, regulators are still searching for ways to stabilize the banking system. The Obama administration could be forced early on to come up with a systemic solution, getting bad loans off balance sheets as a way to encourage banks to begin lending,

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Immigration agents casting their nets beyond fugitive list

By Leslie Berestein STAFF WRITER

The hazy violet light of dawn is just appearing in the eastern sky one recent morning as a team of immigration agents steps quietly onto the front porch of a rickety wooden house in Escondido tucked next to a thrift shop.

Wearing vests and jackets labeled "police," the agents knock on the screen door. A couple of minutes go by before a short, stocky man in a red tank top appears, his dark hair in disarray as if he had been roused from bed.

"Somos policia," one of the agents begins in Spanish. "We're police. Do you mind if we come inside to talk to you?"

It is a scene that has become increasingly common in immigrant communities. Since 2003, a growing staff of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents has been charged with removing hundreds of thousands of people nationwide who have not complied with deportation orders.

ICE officials credit the policy with significantly

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U-T VOICE | MICHAEL STETZ A lot of San Diego readers think the idea of paying for trash service stinks. But shouldn't these times of budget imbalance call for fairness in fees? Our Region, B1



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