

JANUARY 17 - 20, 2009

B'S INAUGURATION JOURNAL



Four Fabulous Days in DC

As some of you already know, I was one of the millions who made the trip to Washington, DC, for the Inauguration of President Barack Obama. I was sure he was going to win, so I made my plane reservations in October and booked the guest room of good friends Lindley and Terry in Silver Spring, MD, so I'd be sure to have a place to stay. I hoped I would get tickets to the Swearing In Ceremony and one of the Official

Inaugural Balls where the Obamas would appear, but my chances looked slim at the outset. Getting through the mounds of materials that came in through mail, email and word of mouth, following up on leads and trying to figure out what I should pursue and what was a waste of time was a tedious task. I was somewhat overwhelmed by it all and began to wonder if I'd make it to any of the big events. I decided I'd take my

chances and would be happy just to be there while history was being made. Thanks to some good friends like Belva Davis and some good luck, I was successful and got to have the experience of a lifetime. The following pages are some of the highlights and some photos. There are more pictures on the photo page of my website at

www.barbara-only.com.



WITH BELVA DAVIS OUTSIDE THE CAPITOL

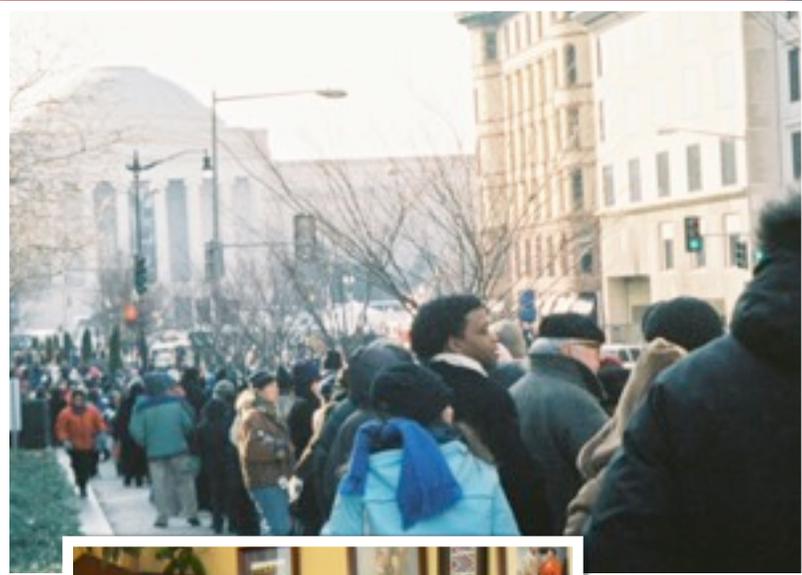


WITH DAPHNE MUSE AT HER PRE-INAUGURAL PARTY



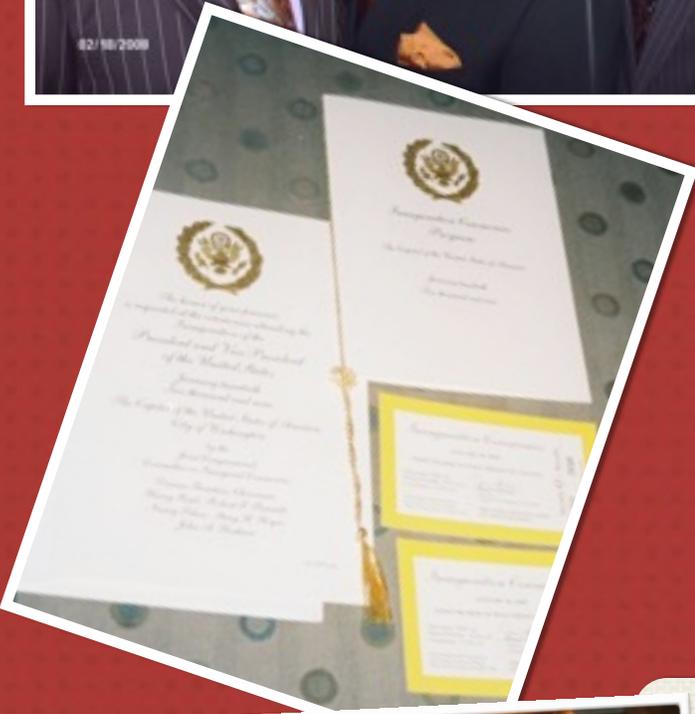
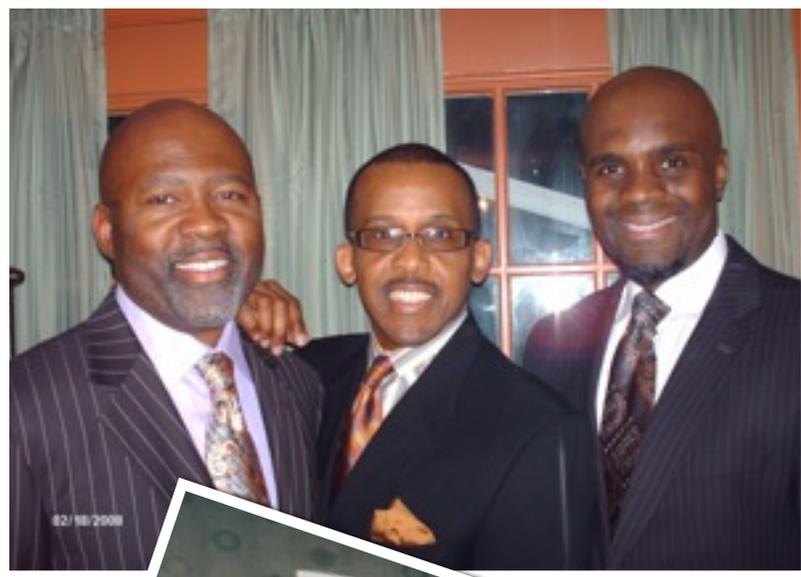
WITH MY HOSTS, LINDLEY AND TERRY, AT THE NABJ PARTY

INAUGURATION WEEK PHOTOS



1. CROWDS, CROWDS EVERYWHERE -- WAITING TWO HOURS PLUS FOR A TICKET TO THE INAUGURATION
2. GETTING CHUMMY WITH A DUPLICATE PRESIDENT OBAMA (IN PAM'S BORROWED MINK)
3. WITH FREDRIKA NEWTON IN CONGRESSWOMAN BARBARA LEE'S OFFICE
4. AT THE NABJ RECEPTION WITH PRESIDENT BARBARA CIARA AND ACTOR GYNN TURMAN
5. SHARP SISTERS FARAI CHIDEYA AND HER MOM, CYNTHIA, WITH CHRISTINE HARRIS AND ME BEFORE THE CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC PARTY BASH

MORE INAUGURATION PHOTOS



1. MY HOSTS AND FELLOW PARTY GOERS -- JUST THREE WILD AND CRAZY GUYS -- JONATHAN, TERRY AND LINDLEY
2. AT THE FABULOUS HOME OF LONG-TIME FRIENDS, REGGIE AND DIANNE FELTON
3. AN ACTUAL OFFICIAL INVITATION TO THE SEATED, UP-FRONT SECTION OF THE INAUGURATION FOR FARAI AND HER MOM
4. THE FANTASTIC BOOTS THAT SAVED MY FEET
5. HAVING COCKTAILS WITH INGRID, MICHELLE OBAMA'S PERSONAL MAKE UP ARTIST

Just a bit of the hectic schedule...

After picking up my tickets for the Western Ball and the California Bash--two different locations, two long lines--I went to the home of Daphne Muse's brother, Vincent, for a party where we all feasted on Daphne's homemade gumbo, blue corn cornbread and Madeleine cookies--YUM, YUM!! The house was filled with interesting people, great conversation and anxious anticipation of the big event still ahead on Tuesday. By now the temperature had dropped to below 20 degrees--glad I brought two warm coats! --and while I had been going non-stop all day, the day wasn't over yet. Later, we went to a poetry reading and then a club for munchies and drinks. It was 3:30 a.m. before I got some sleep ... and I still had 2 more days to go before Inauguration Day!



SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 2009

The highlight of this day was getting my ticket to the Western Inaugural Ball--one of the official ones where the Obamas would make a stop. Luckily, I had to wait in line for only about 45 minutes! Believe me, compared to the time I spent in other lines later, that was short! And a big surprise at the ticket booth: my Bay Area friend Lisa Chung was there as a volunteer. I wish I could have gone to the Neighborhood Ball with all the big stars like Beyonce, Denzel and Mary K., but those tickets were hard to get. In fact, everyone wonders if any neighborhood folks actually got them at all.

Sunday started out a little slower than Saturday, so I had a chance to sleep in until about 10 a.m. But I had two different kinds of events, both in DC, and would need to change clothes in between. The dilemma: where to change? My friend Christine had the solution. She and Farai were renting an apartment in the City and luckily for me, it was only blocks away from my brunch location. So two other brunch guests dropped me off, I changed clothes and then we all headed out to the Democratic Party's California Bash. Cabs were impossible to get, but Lindley came to the rescue and picked us up. We had to stuff ourselves into his car, but we made it and had another night of great partying and dancing.



One bonus of the day was that I squeezed in just a few minutes late in the day to do a bit of shopping--yeah, you know I love to shop--and I found a lovely little boutique where I bought this most unique Obama shirt made by Wilbourn Sisters Designs, Inc. (www.wilbourneexclusives.com) Needless to say, I wore it on Inauguration Day. It even has a hood and is quite warm.

To sum up Day One: it was a busy schedule, somewhat exhausting, but full of good food, friends and fun.

After the MLK Day brunch, the real test of stamina began. I headed out for the Rayburn Congressional Office Building to pick up my Swearing In Ceremony ticket. It took a while to get there by Metro and on foot and when I did, the line was blocks long. I waited for about two hours in the cold with Belva and Bill before we got our tickets. Then I was off to change clothes for an evening cocktail reception put on by the NABJ. By the time we got a taxi and inched our way across town, I had no time left to get my clothes pressed, so I had to go on a 45-minute emergency shopping spree to buy a dress, shoes and panty hose. It was a challenge, but I made it and after changing in the ladies locker room at C-SPAN TV, my friends and I headed out on the Metro to the NABJ party, which was jam packed with people--including the Governor of New York.



MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 2009

Since this was MLK Day, there were tons of activities everywhere. I quickly realized that I couldn't do everything I wanted to do because just getting from place to place took five times longer than usual. That's because there were crowds and long lines everywhere.

Today I was in DC by 8:30 a.m. to attend a Books and Brunch event at Clyde's Restaurant in Gallery Place. The food was plentiful and scrumptious and the five African-American female authors who spoke, including rapper MC Lyte shown here, were all inspirational and thought provoking.

Inauguration Day dawned bright and sunny, but very, very cold.

However, the anticipation of what was ahead kept me pretty warm—that and a whole lot of layers of clothes and walking for miles in the best boots I've ever owned. They were cute, comfortable and kept my toes toasty warm. After getting stuck in a line of folks that was at least 10 across and hundreds deep, I decided to forego The Mall and watch from the Newseum, for which I had bought a ticket as a backup. However, when I got there, the line was blocks long and had been closed off by police!!! It looked as though I was going to miss the big event and my heart sank. I tried talking the police

It was about 18 degrees on Inauguration Day, with a wind chill of around 8 to 10—believe me, that's cold!!!

and the US Marshalls into letting me in line, showed them my ticket, did everything I could think of, but they just pushed me and the other folks trying to get in back. I looked at my watch and time was running out. It was almost 9:30 and if I wasn't going to get into The Mall or the Newseum to see the ceremony, then I had to make a decision about walking several blocks to the Metro and heading back to Silver Spring. I started back, but then thought that I had come all this way to see Obama take the oath. I was going to try again. I went back to the same US Marshall and this time he asked who was with me. When I said I was alone, he let me go under the tape and into line. Of course I was not inside yet. I stood in the cold for another two hours and finally got inside just as Mr. Obama was walking out onto the Capitol steps--YAAAAA!!!

THE DAY AND THE BALL



FREEZING AS I WAIT FOR THE CEREMONY TO BEGIN



WARM INSIDE THE NEWSEUM CHEERING OUR NEW PRESIDENT



THE BIDENS THANK THE CROWD AT THE BALL



J-LO IS A SURPRISE GUEST WITH HUBBY MARC ANTHONY



some final thoughts and observations...

So I won the battle and got inside and had a front row seat to watch the Inauguration. Now it was time to go back into the crowd, make my way to the Metro, get back to Silver Spring, change into my evening attire, get on the Metro again, walk to the Convention Center and be in place so that I could catch a glimpse of the new President and First Lady at the Western Inaugural Ball. It was another challenge, but this would be my last official event and I really wanted to see the First Couple.

I got to the ball around 7:45 p.m. After eating a bit of pasta and veggies, getting my official picture taken and grabbing one drink, I staked out a spot in the ballroom where I stood for three hours in my high-heeled party shoes. While waiting for the Obamas, I got to see, listen and dance to the salsa of Marc Anthony and his surprise guest, his wife, J-Lo. The dancing did make my feet feel a bit better, but I, along with all the women standing near me, took off our shoes and let the cold concrete floor soothe our aching feet. One note about Inaugural Balls: unless you buy the big bucks tickets, you don't get a seat.



The Obamas didn't make it to our ball until about 11:15 p.m., but it was worth the wait because I was very near the front

and got some good pictures of them as they danced. They really are a beautiful couple and seem to be very much in love and to genuinely enjoy each other. They made the night magical. The President thanked us all then bid the cheering crowd farewell after about a fifteen-minute stay--long enough for all of us to feel we had gotten a special treat. The ball I attended was the sixth of their ten Official Ball appearances. I was about 20-25 feet away when I took the photos of them I included in this journal. That made my three hours of standing on a concrete floor in high heels worth it! One other thing that made this sighting special: earlier in the week, I had the pleasure of meeting and having cocktails with the woman who helped Mrs. Obama look so beautiful--her personal make-up artist!

On Inauguration Day, there were at least two million people on The Mall and thousands of others throughout the city of Washington, DC, and neighboring cities. Although DC has a reputation for being violent, according to news reports, there was not one single police report of violence for the hours covering the Inauguration and parade and maybe not even for the whole day.

If you ever need a pair of boots that will keep your feet warm during hours of cold weather, I highly recommend the ones I wore: London Fog's Weather or Not Thermolite Insole boots. The style is called "Divine" and they certainly were. My feet--especially my toes--are always the first part of my body to get cold and they never got cold once during the whole trip. That is amazing!! I bought the boots a 1/2 size larger so I could wear thick insulated socks and it all

worked quite well. Also, those hand warmer thingies do work, but don't do much for your fingertips. Mine felt like they were going to fall off as I waited in the single digit cold. And if you ever go to an Inaugural Ball, take a pair of flats and put them on, eat dinner before you go, bring money for drinks, stake out your spot early if you want to see the First Couple up close and personal and most of all, have a divine time--just as I did.

Finally, everyone asks me what was my most moving moment. It was when the cameras took the long, wide shot of The Mall with all of those millions waving American flags. That brought tears to my eyes when I thought about how often black folks have been mistreated and denied in this country and how so many had come to witness this proud moment in American history. Everywhere I went in DC, there was a festive air. People were happy and kind and altogether hopeful and optimistic. I hope this is just the start of a new way of living and loving in America.

Peace & Happiness, Barbara

