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Obama's Inauguration Brings Mixed Feelings for Many Black LGBTQ Americans Inclusion

**By The Reverend Irene Monroe
BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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The last time a nation came to Washington and was mesmerized and stirred to action by the oratory brilliance of an African American man was at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963 when the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his legendary "I Have a Dream" speech. In that speech King said "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." King, a Baptist preacher and the Moses of the 1960's Black Civil Rights Movement, knew in a distant future that a Barack Obama would come, but not in his lifetime.

"And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!"

Those were Kings final words delivered on April 3 1968 at the Mason Temple (Church of God in Christ Headquarters), in Memphis, Tennessee. The following day King was assassinated.

With a nation then in moral chaos who would lead not only blacks in this country toward full equality, but all Americans?

Forty years later and the day after Americans will celebrate MLK Day 2009, our nation,

on January 20, will once again come to Washington, mesmerized and stirred to action by the oratory brilliance and leadership of an African American man to be sworn in as our nation's 44th President of the United States - Barack H. Obama.

With the election of Barack Obama as our country's first African American president, my enslaved ancestors who built the White House could have never imagined that one of their progenies would one day occupy it.

This New Year's Eve held important significance in the life of African-American churchgoers. Because of the many Watch Night services that took place across the country Obama's campaign slogan "Yes we can!" resonated from black pulpits, giving boundless hope that as African Americans we can make positive changes in our lives, such as stem gang violence, the AIDS epidemic ravaging the entire African-American community, the epidemic level of fatherlessness, and teenage pregnancy, just to name a few.

Watch Night services can be traced back to December 31, 1862, also known as "Freedom Eve," when African-American slaves came together across the nation to await the good news that President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had finally become law. And on that following day, January 1, 1863, a new life began for us even as the Civil War was still going on.

Whereas with the Watch Night service of December 31, 1862, my ancestor awaited the news of the Emancipation Proclamation to set them free, this year's Watch Night service was a celebration of setting America free from her millennial - long stain of racial bigotry that barred persons of color from seeking the highest office in the land.

This historic election inspires many of our black boys and girls not only to consider college but to one day consider running for president, too.

Obama has galvanized the country, bringing people of all races and ethnicities, sexual orientations, religions and cultures together.

Whereas King was the Moses of his people leading us to the Promised Land, Obama, as our Joshua, leader of the Children of Israel following Moses, is taking us there.

But on the day Obama will be sworn in, not all of us will feel this historic moment include us too. With Rich Warren, founder of the evangelical megachurch, Saddleback Church, in Lake Forest, California and supporter of California Proposition 8, which amended the California Supreme Court's ruling that gay marriage is constitutionally permissible, chosen to give the invocation at his inauguration, many LGBTQ Americans who voted for Obama feel thrown under the bus.

And like Bayard Rustin, the gay man who was chief organizer and strategist for the 1963 March on Washington that further catapulted Martin Luther King onto the world stage, who was not the beneficiary of King's dream, we too feel we will not be the beneficiaries of Obama's, especially LGBTQ African Americans.

And many of us are speaking out.

"President-Elect Obama, many of us will be at your inauguration. We will dance and

party and drink a toast to your success upon which so many hopes are tethered. But, you have to understand that we are once again coming to Washington DC to cash a check. Yes, like the 1963 March on Washington, organized by a black gay man, Bayard Rustin, we LGBT people have been given the same promissory note that is the heritage and pride of every American. The right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, "the riches of freedom and the security of justice." And this fierce urgency of now has been tainted by the choice of a man who is so deeply flawed that he equates the lifelong love and commitment of a same gender couple to be equivalent to incest and pedophilia," Sylvia Rhue, Director of Religious Affairs, National Black Justice Coalition wrote in an op-ed on the Huffington Post.

An African American cleric and ally to the LGBTQ community, Rev Kenneth L. Samuel, Senior Pastor of Victory for the World United Church of Christ in Stone Mountain, GA, told the Associated press that, "If Barack Obama or the King Center had selected Reverend Jeremiah Wright to speak at these auspicious occasions, more than a few persons would have become agitated to the point of having their heads explode. Why? Because many would have seen Reverend Wright's selection not as an invitation to dialogue, but as an affront to their national solidarity and their personal dignity. Apparently, anger about America's historic and current racism is totally unacceptable, while denial of equal rights based upon sexual orientation is not only to be tolerated, but also given center stage... Obama's hope and King's dream should inspire each of us toward a greater commitment to freedom and equality for all persons."

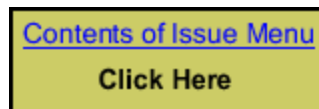
Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church, was selected to give the invocation at the kickoff event "We Are One" on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial January 19. While many feel the selection of Robinson is to placate the queer community, Robinson, however, opines differently about it. In an e-mail to his friend, Robinson wrote, "I am writing to tell you that President-Elect Obama and the Inaugural Committee have invited me to give the invocation at the opening event of the Inaugural Week activities, "We are One," to be held at the Lincoln Memorial, Sunday, January 18, at 2:00 pm. It will be an enormous honor to offer prayers for the country and the new president, standing on the holy ground where the "I have a dream speech" was delivered by Dr. King, surrounded by the inspiring and reconciling words of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. It is also an indication of the new president's commitment to being the President of ALL the people. I am humbled and overjoyed at this invitation, and it will be my great honor to be there representing the Episcopal Church, the people of New Hampshire, and all of us in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community."

For King, justice was more than a racial issue, more than a legal or moral issue. Justice was a human issue. And this was evident in King's passionate concern about a wide range of concerns. "The revolution for human rights is opening up unhealthy areas in American life and permitting a new and wholesome healing to take place," King once told a racially-mixed audience. "Eventually the civil rights movement will have contributed infinitely more to the nation than the eradication of racial injustice."

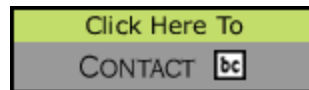
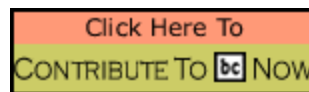
Hopefully, Obama's words "Yes we can!" will inspire us ALL to do so."

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