

## **On Hope and Change: Obama Builds a Legacy!**

by Dr Robb Musgrave

Barack Obama made history when he was sworn in as the 44th U.S. President. Obama invoked the spirit of Martin Luther King as he called on Americans to serve and rebuild their country ahead of his inauguration. He hailed the civil rights leader as "not just a dreamer, but a doer" who worked tirelessly for change.

Obama viewed his election as the culmination of what Dr King lived and died for. "Tomorrow, we will come together as one people on the same Mall where Dr King's dream echoes still." The inauguration, at the Lincoln memorial, will use Lincoln's Bible to reprise Dr King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech, prompting Mr. Obama, the son of a black Kenyan father and a white mother from Kansas, to recall "...the dream of a King, that their children might be judged by their character's content". Mr. Obama spent 16 January, participating in and promoting a day of community service, echoing President John F. Kennedy's 1961 exhortation to "ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country".

President Obama, who was elected on a slogan of "change", built his campaign on grassroots activism. In 2004, Senator Obama signed a \$1.9 million deal to author 3 books. The first to date, "The Audacity of Hope", discusses his political convictions and brings together these strong values of hope and change. He has shown a remarkable ability to be linked into the wonderful legacies of important previous US leaders.

Obama has a deep well of popular goodwill to draw from. A recent poll found 80% of Americans are optimistic about the next four years under the former Illinois senator, most also expressed patience about how long it might take him to turn the economy around. Patience will be a necessary part of this very testing period.

Although he spent much of the election campaign trying to stop himself being identified – and marginalised – as a black candidate, in recent days Mr. Obama has publicly embraced the historic mantle of the first man of his race to reach the Oval Office.

"There is an entire generation that will grow up taking for granted that the highest office in the land is filled by an African American", he recently told *The Washington Post*. "I mean, that's a radical thing. It changes how black children look at themselves. It also changes how white children look at black children. And I wouldn't underestimate the force of that." He urges universal health care, and if elected president, promises implementation by the end of his first term.

The World stands on the edge of very difficult times with clear direction and major decisions needed. It is a massive time for leadership, particularly in the free world. We can only trust that "cometh the times- cometh the man" and offer up our best wishes to President Obama, going forward. Who would choose to be Mr President in these current circumstances?

Inspirationally, a letter President Barack Obama has written to his daughters, Malia and Sasha, begins to define his own personal legacy. The headline on the letter to his girls reads, "What I want for You, and Every Child in America."

The President's letter speaks engagingly of the responsibilities and joys of fatherhood. He mentions that, when his two children came into his world, "I soon found that the greatest joy in my life was the joy I saw in yours. And I realized that my own life wouldn't count for much unless I was able to ensure that you had every opportunity for happiness and fulfillment in yours."

He then recites his wish-list for America's children: schools worthy of them, the chance to go to college, good jobs with good pay and benefits, a cleaner, safer planet, the peaceful settlement of differences. It's a litany of superlatives that are hard to object to.

Obama further states that he wants "every child to have the same chances to learn and dream and grow and thrive" that his daughters have had. In his letter to his daughters, Obama also writes of the Declaration of Independence, and his grandmother telling him "about the men and women who marched for equality because they believed those words put to paper two centuries ago, should mean something." That is the same document that declares that all men are created equal, and that life is an unalienable right. An example highlighting a multi-generational exchange (in this case four generations), of what is important to those who are important - a fundamental for creating living legacies.

From today, we are all entering a New World, one to be built on hope and change. It is important we are vigilant in looking at how change will affect our own hopes and dreams. Remember we are here to support you on your journey and to assist others in creating their living legacies.