



The Washington Post

NEWSSTAND 50¢
HOME DELIVERY 41¢

Weather

Today: Rain. High 64.
Low 51.
Thursday: Mostly cloudy.
Low 63. High 52.

Details, B6

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2008

M1 M2 M3 M4 V1 V2 V3 V4

Obama Makes History

U.S. DECISIVELY ELECTS FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT

DEMOCRATS EXPAND CONTROL OF CONGRESS



BY NIKKI KAHN — THE WASHINGTON POST

President-elect Barack Obama, with wife Michelle and daughters Sasha, 7, and Malia, 10, greets more than 100,000 people celebrating his victory in Grant Park, in his home town of Chicago.

HOW HE WON

Measured Response To Financial Crisis Sealed the Election

By ANNE E. KORNBLUT
Washington Post Staff Writer

Sen. Barack Obama, so steady in public, did not hide his vexation when he summoned his top advisers to meet with him in Chicago on Sept. 14.

His general-election campaign had gone stale. For weeks, he had watched Sen. John McCain suction up the oxygen in the race, driving the news coverage after the boisterous Republican convention in St. Paul, Minn., and suddenly drawing huge crowds with his new running mate, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin.

Convening the meeting that Sunday in the office of David Axelrod, his chief strategist, Obama was blunt: It was time to get serious.

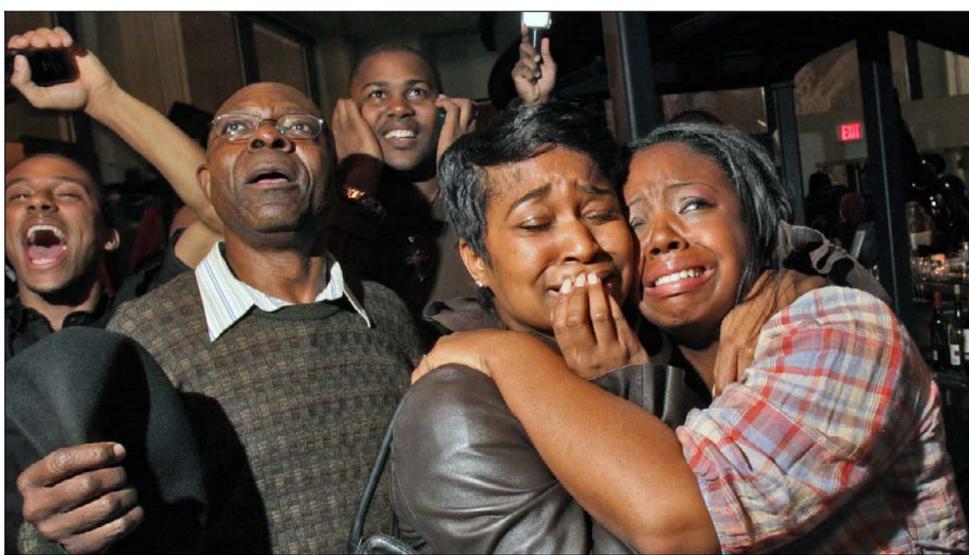
"He said, 'You know, maybe we can just win it on the issues. But I don't think so,'" recalled senior adviser Anita Dunn. With the debates approaching and just seven weeks until the election, "his charge to everybody was 'Guys, we're back in combat mode,'" Dunn said.

And then, the next morning, a global earthquake hit: Lehman Brothers, the giant investment firm, filed for bankruptcy, triggering the biggest corporate collapse in U.S. history and an international financial meltdown, and transforming the presidential race.

It was a moment neither the senator from Illinois nor his advisers had anticipated, but one for which they were uniquely prepared. In the days that followed, the newly chastised Obama team became more aggressive, with a message they had refined over the summer. The candidate himself, criticized as too cool, too cerebral and too detached, suddenly had the opportunity to show those qualities to be reassuring and presidential.

For McCain, already struggling with the economic

See OBAMA, A34, Col. 1



BY BILL O'LEARY — THE WASHINGTON POST

At an election party at Busboys and Poets, Tiffany Payton and Barbara Mack, right, embrace as CNN declares Obama the winner.

A DAY OF TRANSFORMATION

America's History Gives Way to Its Future

By KEVIN MERIDA
Washington Post Staff Writer

After a day of runaway lines that circled blocks, of ladies hobbling on canes and drummers rollicking on street corners, the enormous significance of Barack Obama's election finally began to sink into the landscape. The magnitude of his win suggested that the country itself might be in a gravitational pull toward a rebirth that some were slow to recognize.

Tears flowed, not only for Obama's historic achievement, but because many were happily discovering that perhaps they had underestimated possibility in America.

When the novelist Kim McLarin watched her vote being recorded at her polling station in Milton, Mass., she stood still for a moment with her 8-year-old son, Isaac. "My heart was full. I could scarcely breathe," she said. "What I've been

forced to acknowledge is there has been a shift — it's not a sea change. But there's been a decided shift in the meaning of race. It's not an ending. It's a beginning."

What kind of beginning it is, Americans were wrestling with late into the night, some popping champagne and others burdened with unease. Would enduring strains of intolerance lose their power or gain rebellious steam? Could new hope be harnessed to create new solutions? Is America ready to pull itself together or resigned to live divided? The campaign that began for Obama 21 months ago had raised in stark terms whether America was ready for a black president. Last night's answer — a resounding yes — raises the next question: How much more change will America embrace?

When McLarin learned last night that the nation had voted

See TRANSFORMATION, A33, Col. 1

By ROBERT BARNES
and MICHAEL D. SHEAR
Washington Post Staff Writers

Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois was elected the nation's 44th president yesterday, riding a reformist message of change and an inspirational exhortation of hope to become the first African American to ascend to the White House.

Obama, 47, the son of a Kenyan father and a white mother from Kansas, led a tide of Democratic victories across the nation in defeating Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona, a 26-year veteran of Washington who could not overcome his connections to President Bush's increasingly unpopular administration.

Standing before a crowd of more than 100,000 who had waited for hours at Chicago's Grant Park, Obama acknowledged his own accomplishment and the dreams of his supporters.

"If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer," he said just before midnight Eastern time.

"The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America — I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you — we as a people will get there."

The historic Election Day brought millions of new voters, long lines at polling places nationwide and a new era of Democratic dominance in Congress, even though the party fell short of the 60 votes needed for a veto-proof majority in the Senate. In the House, Democrats made major gains, adding to their already sizable advantage and returning them to a position of power that pre-dates the 1994 Republican revolution.

Democrats will use their new legislative muscle to advance an economic and foreign policy agenda that Bush has largely blocked for eight years. Even when the party seized

See ELECTION, A38, Col. 1

THE AGENDA

Hard Choices And Challenges Follow Triumph

By DAN BALZ
Washington Post Staff Writer

After a victory of historic significance, Barack Obama will inherit problems of historic proportions. Not since Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated at the depths of the Great Depression in 1933 has a new president been confronted with the challenges Obama will face as he starts his presidency.

At home, Obama must revive an economy experiencing some of the worst shocks in more than half a century. Abroad, he has pledged to end the war in Iraq and defeat al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. He ran on a platform to change the country and its politics. Now he must begin to spell out exactly how.

Obama's winning percentage appears likely to be the largest of any Democrat since Lyndon Johnson's 1964 landslide and makes him the first since Jimmy Carter in 1976 to garner more than 50.1 percent. Like Johnson, he will govern with sizable congressional majorities. Democrats gained at least five seats in the Senate and looked to add significantly to their strength in the House.

But with those advantages come hard choices. Among them will be deciding how much he owes his victory to a popular rejection of President Bush and the Republicans and how much it represents an embrace of Democratic governance. Interpreting his mandate will be only one of several critical decisions Obama must make as he prepares

See AGENDA, A30, Col. 1

THE VOTERS

Discontent Draws Record Turnouts

Pages A26-A29

THE TRANSITION

New Administration To Assemble Quickly

Pages A30-31

THE REPUBLICANS

McCain Supporters Belatedly Witness History

Washington Sketch, A36

THE CONGRESS

Mark Warner Wins Senate Seat

Pages A39-41

LOCAL RESULTS

Maryland Approves Slot Machines

Pages A42-45

INDEX, A2



0 70628 21100 3

Contents © 2008 The Washington Post 3