

Perris News

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An American Celebration: The Obama Inauguration

The City of Perris welcomed in the new president Tuesday with a gathering that included City elected officials, ministers, members of the Chamber of Commerce and the founder of a museum dedicated to preserving Perris' African-American history and heritage.

About 50 people attended a special inauguration, dubbed "An American Celebration," at the Lake Perris Sports Pavilion, watching Barack Obama take the oath of office on several large-screen televisions.

That public event was one of four held throughout Riverside County and came about through the efforts of the City, Chamber of Commerce, Perris Community Partnership and the Dora Nelson African American Art & History Museum.

Several audience members photographed or videotaped the inauguration ceremony and a spontaneous round of applause went up when Obama took the oath of office as the country's 44th president.

"Wonderful, wonderful," said Alberta Mable Kearney, founder of the Nelson museum. "It's a great day." Kearney's daughter, Lovella Singer, called Tuesday "a blessed day to be alive, to be a witness to this incredible event."

Singer's work with the museum includes preserving, documenting and collecting African-American historical documents, photos and exhibits.

Several minister offered remarks before the swearing in. During and after the ceremony, several people appeared overcome by emotion, and a couple wiped tears from their eyes.

"This is the biggest day in history I have ever lived," said Jenice Haskin, a member of the Perris Community Partnership, a non-profit group that works to improve the lives of City youngsters and adults. "I expect good things. If we just work together, we have no choice but to return to the great nation we are."

Haskin thanked the City for bringing the participants together and paying for the venue.

"This community is united," she said. "Perris is a very old community but it has a lot of new people. This is a great event because it brings people from the business community, ministers, the public and the City together. We have all come together to make Perris the best City it can be."

Several members of the crowd were military veterans, including City Councilwoman Joanne Evans, a former Marine. Perris resident Yolanda Williams attended on behalf of the Inland Empire Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association. The group is working to build a monument to Buffalo Soldiers in Riverside National Cemetery.

Formed after the Civil War, Buffalo Soldiers were black Army servicemen who fought Indians in the west but also built roads and bridges, strung telegraph wire and mapped the region.

Williams said Buffalo soldiers were role models in their day, just like Obama is today. Decades before Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about his dream for a color-blind America, Buffalo Soldiers were knocking down racial barriers with their selfless service, she said.

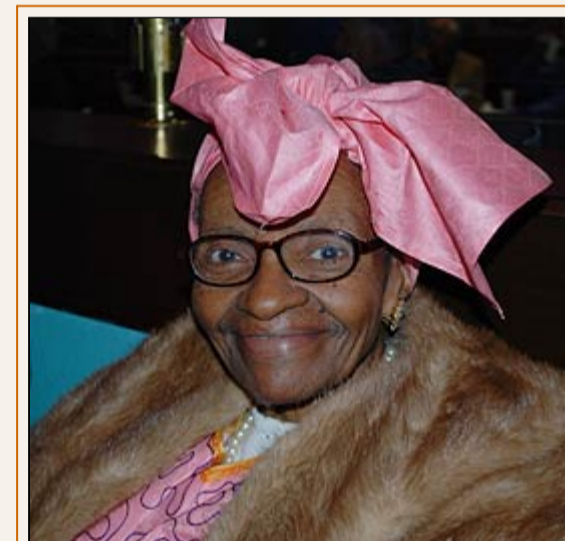
"The dream is a reality today," Williams said. "We all share in it. Barack Obama is president not because he is a black man, but because he is a good man." Perris mayor Daryl Busch led the group of elected officials, which also included Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley.

"The City is proud to be a participant in this special occasion," Busch said. "It's a great event and a great day in the history of our nation."

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City workers look on as Barack Obama takes the oath of office.



Alberta Mable Kearney, founder of the Dora Nelson African American Art & History Museum in Perris, beams during the inauguration ceremony.



Former Marine and Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans salutes during the playing of the National Anthem. Evans was one of about 50 people who attended a Perris-sponsored gathering to celebrate the inauguration of Barack Obama.



Gilbert Williams videotapes the proceedings.