

God Moves In Mysterious Ways His Wonders to Perform: Reflections on the Inauguration

Not long after the 2008 Presidential election, I received a message on my cell phone from the President elect. I returned the call and when he answered I said, "I'd like to speak to the man who will be the 44th President of the United States." He said, "I believe that would be me brother Lowery". He told me he called to see if I would give the invocation or benediction at the Inauguration. I paused, then asked him to let me check my schedule. After a half second pause, I told the president elect I believed I could work it in.

A few days later it appeared in the paper that I would be doing the benediction. I started getting calls from friends telling me that they would rather I do the invocation. I told them to leave Mr. Obama alone; he knew how to run an inauguration. I had to explain to them that when I did the benediction, I'd have the last word!

So many people told me that when I'd stand on the capitol steep way January 20, 2009 and looked down the mall, I could view both the Washington monument and the Lincoln Memorial. Mine eyes were too dimmed to reach the memorial though they did discern the monument. Never mind, the eyes of my soul saw them both, and the ears of my recollection heard the voice of a 34 year old preacher summon a nation to rise from the valley of race and color to the mountaintop of 'content of character'. And there I stood, though cold and trembling, not only living to see that day, but matriculating in the curriculum! A ceremony that was part and parcel of the nation's 2009 response to the summons delivered in 1963! No way you could have convinced me in March, 1965 as I delivered the 'demands' of the Selma to Montgomery march for Voting Rights to Alabama Governor George Wallace, that in January 2009, I would deliver the closing prayer at the inauguration of the 44th President of these United States. ...God moves in a mysterious way!

Every citizen in the nation ought be experiencing a 'metamorphosis,' an epiphany, a regeneration! There's no way I can ever be the same. I have never liked the song we have chosen for our national anthem: The Star Spangled Banner! I usually cringe when I hear it with its bombs bursting and rockets glaring. We should do better (like Oh Beautiful for Spacious Skies) but I confess that when the band played it following my prayer at the inauguration, it was never so melodious. In spite of its militaristic nature, it was more tolerable

and even for that one time beautiful! The song of course was the same, but I had changed! My country had changed! I had a new level of respect. We had climbed out the pits of race and clan and onto the hillsides of hope and character and competence. It is not the end of where we ought not be, nor the end of where we ought be...but it should be the 'joy of a new beginning' of where we ought to be going! Every American should at least be as joyful as people in other nations seem to be. And it ought be reflected in our behavior. In our attitudes. We should be thankful that a majority of voters did not yield to the temptation to be ruled by race and color rather than character and content.

No, we are not post-racial, as the Harvard police-professor fiasco clearly reminds us. But, we should relate to each other with a post inauguration attitude: new levels of respect and appreciation. new spirit of thanksgiving for a God who moves in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform.

Particularly in the arena of law enforcement where the historicity is horrific should we relate to each other with cognizance of the history and awareness of the need for a new future.

In such a scenario, the Officer would have said," Excuse me sir, but we had a call about a possible break-in here and we are checking it out. May I please see some identification?

Professor: "Well, there is no break-in and here is my identification and as you see I live here and teach at the university."

Officer: "Very well. We want to be sure that everything is OK. Have a good day!"

Professor: "Thank you! And, you have a good day too."

President: No comment.

Radio clowns: No comment.

American people: Let's move on to health care reform and economic recovery...and the joy of a new beginning!

"God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform: He plants his footsteps on the sea and rides upon the storm!"