

The New York Times

Late Edition

Today, limited sunshine, a shower, high 63. Tonight, cloudy, scattered showers, patchy fog, low 55. Tomorrow, rain ends, remaining cloudy, high 62. Weather map, Page B19.

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OBAMA

RACIAL BARRIER FALLS IN DECISIVE VICTORY

Democrats in Congress Strengthen Grip

By ADAM NAGOURNEY

Barack Hussein Obama was elected the 44th president of the United States on Tuesday, sweeping away the last racial barrier in American politics with ease as the country chose him as its first black chief executive.

The election of Mr. Obama amounted to a national catharsis — a repudiation of a historically unpopular Republican president and his economic and foreign policies, and an embrace of Mr. Obama's call for a change in the direction and the tone of the country.

But it was just as much a strikingly symbolic moment in the evolution of the nation's fraught racial history, a breakthrough that would have seemed unthinkable just two years ago.

Mr. Obama, 47, a first-term senator from Illinois, defeated Senator John McCain of Arizona, 72, a former prisoner of war who was making his second bid for the presidency.

To the very end, Mr. McCain's campaign was eclipsed by an opponent who was nothing short of a phenomenon, drawing huge crowds epitomized by the tens of thousands of people who turned out to hear Mr. Obama's victory speech in Grant Park in Chicago.

Mr. McCain also fought the headwinds of a relentlessly hostile political environment, weighted down with the baggage left to him by President Bush and an economic collapse that took place in the middle of the general election campaign.

"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,"

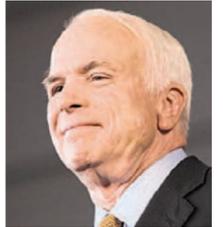
said Mr. Obama, standing before a huge wooden lectern with a row of American flags at his back, casting his eyes to a crowd that stretched far into the Chicago night.

"It's been a long time coming," the president-elect added, "but, tonight, because of what we did on this date in this election at this defining moment, change has come to America."

Mr. McCain delivered his concession speech under clear skies on the lush lawn of the Arizona Biltmore, in Phoenix, where he and his wife had held their wedding reception. The crowd reacted with scattered boos as he offered his congratulations to Mr. Obama and saluted the historical significance of the moment.

"This is a historic election, and I recognize the significance it has for African-Americans and for the special pride that must be theirs tonight," Mr. McCain said, adding, "We both realize that we have come a long way from the injustices that once stained our nation's reputation."

Not only did Mr. Obama capture the presidency, but he also led his party to gains in Congress. This puts Democrats in control of the House, the Senate and the



DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES

President-elect Barack Obama with his wife, Michelle, and their daughters in Chicago on Tuesday night.

THE CHALLENGE

No Time for Laurels; Now the Hard Part

By PETER BAKER

WASHINGTON — No president since before Barack Obama was born has ascended to the Oval Office confronted by the accumulation of seismic challenges awaiting him. Historians grasping for parallels point to Abraham Lincoln taking office as the nation was collapsing into Civil War, or Franklin D. Roosevelt arriving in Washington in the throes of the Great Depression.



The task facing Mr. Obama does not rise to those levels, but that these are the comparisons most often cited sobers even Democrats rejoicing at their return to power. On the shoulders of a 47-year-old first-term senator, with the power of inspiration yet no real executive experience, now falls the responsibility

of prosecuting two wars, protecting the nation from terrorist threat and stitching back together a shredded economy.

Given the depth of these issues, Mr. Obama has little choice but to "put your arm around chaos," in the words of Leon E. Panetta, the former White House chief of staff who has been advising his transition team.

"You better damn well do the tough stuff up front, because if you think you can delay the tough decisions and tiptoe past the graveyard, you're in for a lot of trouble," Mr. Panetta said. "Make the decisions that involve pain and sacrifice up front."

What kind of decision maker and leader Mr. Obama will be remains unclear even to many of his supporters. Will he be willing to use his political capital and act boldly, or will he move cautiously and risk being paralyzed by competing demands from within his own party? His performance under the harsh lights of the campaign trail suggests a figure with remarkable coolness and confidence under enormous pressure, yet also one who rarely veers off the methodical path he lays out.

"It leads you to wonder whether passivity is the way he approaches most things," said John R. Bolton, President Bush's former ambassador to the United Na-

Continued on Page P4

THE MOMENT

After Decades, A Time to Reap

By KEVIN SACK

ALBANY, Ga. — Rutha Mae Harris backed her silver Town Car out of the driveway early Tuesday morning, pointed it toward her polling place on Mercer Avenue and started to sing.

"I'm going to vote like the spirit say vote," Miss Harris chanted softly.



I'm going to vote like the spirit say vote, I'm going to vote like the spirit say vote, And if the spirit say vote I'm going to vote, Oh Lord, I'm going to vote when the spirit say vote.

As a 21-year-old student (on right in photo), she had belted that same freedom song at mass meetings at Mount Zion Baptist Church back in 1961, the year Barack Obama was born in Hawaii, a universe away. She sang it again while marching on Albany's City Hall, where she and other black students demanded the right to vote, and in the cramped and filthy cells of the city jail, which the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. described as the worst he ever inhabited.

For those like Miss Harris who withstood jailings and beatings and threats to their livelihoods, all because they wanted to vote, the short drive to the polls on Tuesday culminated a lifelong journey from a time that is at once unrecognizable and eerily familiar here in southwest Georgia. As they exited the voting booths, some in wheelchairs, others with canes, these foot soldiers of the civil rights movement could not suppress either their jubilation or their astonishment at having voted for an African-American for president of the United States.

"They didn't give us our mule and our acre, but things are better," Miss Harris, 67, said with a gratified smile. "It's time to reap some of the harvest."

When Miss Harris arrived at the city gymnasium where she votes, her 80-year-old friend Mamie L. Nelson greeted her with a hug. "We marched, we sang and now it's happening," Ms. Nelson said. "It's really a feeling I

Continued on Page P6

THE PROMISE

For Many Abroad, An Ideal Renewed

By ETHAN BRONNER

GAZA — From far away, this is how it looks: There is a country out there where tens of millions of white Christians, voting freely, select as their leader a black man of modest origin, the son of a Muslim. There is a place on Earth — call it America — where such a thing happens.



Even where the United States is held in special contempt, like here in this benighted Palestinian coastal strip, the "glorious epic of Barack Obama," as the leftist French editor Jean Daniel calls it, makes America — the idea as much as the actual place — stand again, perhaps only fleetingly, for limitless possibility.

"It allows us all to dream a little," said Oswaldo Calvo, 58, a Venezuelan political activist in Caracas, in a comment echoed to correspondents of The New York Times on four continents in the days leading up to the election.

Tristram Hunt, a British historian, put it this way: Mr. Obama "brings the narrative that everyone wants to return to — that America is the land of extraordinary opportunity and possibility, where miracles happen."

But wonder is almost overwhelmed by relief. Mr. Obama's election offers most non-Americans a sense that the imperial power capable of doing such good and such harm — a country that, they complain, preached justice but tortured its captives, launched a disastrous war in Iraq, turned its back on the environment and greedily dragged the world into economic chaos — saw the errors of its ways over the past eight years and shifted course.

They say the country that weakened democratic forces abroad through a tireless but often ineffective campaign for democracy — dismissing results it found unsavory, cutting deals with dictators it needed as allies in its other battles — was now shining a transformative beacon with its own democratic exercise.

It would be hard to overstate how fervently vast

Continued on Page P4

08 ONLINE

■ The latest state-by-state results: the presidential contest and House, Senate and governors' races.

■ The Caucus blog: updates from The Times's political staff.



■ Interactive graphics: the electoral map, voter profiles and analysis.

■ Video, audio and photos: reactions from the voters and the campaigns.

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PRESIDENT-ELECT

THE LONG CAMPAIGN

Journey to the Top

The story of Senator Barack Obama's journey to the pinnacle of American politics is the story of a campaign that was, even in the view of many rivals, almost flawless. After a somewhat lackluster start, Mr. Obama and his team delivered. They developed a strategy to secure the nomination, and stuck with it even after setbacks. PAGE P1

SENATE

NORTH CAROLINA

Elizabeth Dole Is Out



After leading by a double-digit margin, the Republican Senator Elizabeth Dole, left, was defeated by State Senator Kay R. Hagan. In the campaign's final week, Mrs. Dole came under criticism for an advertisement that linked Ms. Hagan to a group called the Godless Americans. PAGE P12

VIRGINIA

Mark Warner Wins

Extending the Democrats' advantage in the Senate, former Gov. Mark R. Warner of Virginia easily won his race to replace John W. Warner (no relation), a retiring Republican. PAGE P12

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Sununu Is Defeated

Another leading Republican, Senator John E. Sununu, was ousted by a wide margin by Jeanne Shaheen, the former New Hampshire governor whom he beat in 2002. PAGE P12

HOUSE

CONNECTICUT

G.O.P. Stalwart Falls

Representative Christopher Shays, the last Republican House member from New England and a political Houdini who escaped previous Democratic attempts to topple him, was defeated by a political novice, Jim Himes. PAGE P15

NEW YORK

LEGISLATURE

Democrats Take Senate

Democrats won a majority in the New York State Senate, putting the party in control of both houses of the Legislature and the governor's office for the first time since the New Deal. Voters ousted two Republican senators whose combined years in office spanned more than half a century. PAGE P15

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