

# The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r

An independent weekly internet magazine  
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,  
social justice and peace - Providing commentary,  
analysis and investigations on issues affecting  
African Americans and the African world.

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**Cover Story**  
**The Inauguration in the Shadow of Gaza**  
**The African World**  
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I have found it difficult expressing my emotions in connection with the inauguration of President Obama. In the face of the jubilation, particularly but not exclusively among African Americans; in the face of the hopes and fears; in the face of severe crises across the USA and the planet; it has been difficult for me to express my sentiments.

Yes, this is an exciting and historic moment. Of that, there is little question. I, like most other African Americans I know, never conceived that we would see a Black person assume the Presidency. Looking at the Inauguration ceremony one could not help but remember the countless demonstrations that have been held on the Washington, DC Mall, including but not limited to the famous 1963 March on Washington, that have demanded the expansion of democracy and fought to guarantee that someone of color would have the right and the opportunity to assume the Presidency of the United States.

I have also been overwhelmed by the excitement and energy that emerged from the Obama campaign, an energy that I am convinced can be part of the force that builds a broad progressive movement.

Yet, despite all of this, in the background to this historic moment there is Gaza. No, not just the immediate Gaza crisis—as horrific as that is—but the on-going oppression of the Palestinian people and the continuous erosion of their lives and their human rights. The Gaza crisis which we have watched unfold over the last several months, and the military action taken by the Israelis most recently with the vocal and silent support of the USA, hovers like an apparition over the events in Washington, DC and

the elation around the USA, an apparition that many people seem to ignore.

In the USA there is a tendency in mainstream circles, and indeed within the general public, to draw lines of separation between the domestic and the international. President Kennedy, for instance, who eventually made steps towards supporting Civil Rights legislation as well as signed into effect an executive order permitting federal workers to unionize, at the same time oversaw near continuous aggressive actions against Cuba, the Congo, and not to mention intervention in Laos and Vietnam. Yet Kennedy is viewed as the great "liberal" in US history as if nothing that he did overseas matters very much, at least to those of us in the USA.

So, in inaugurating the 44th President of the USA we face a dilemma. While President Obama offers proposals for domestic reform, including jobs, a fight against foreclosures and some form of national healthcare, we await to see what he will actually do in the realm of foreign policy. He promises US withdrawal from Iraq, yet redeployment to Afghanistan. He promises to talk, rather than shoot at, other nations with which the USA has differences. At the same time, he chooses—and the timing is very curious—to poke at Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez who had gone out of his way to extend a hand of friendship to the United States.

And then there is Gaza. US complicity in these atrocities will never be forgotten by the people outside of the USA; nor should it be. US weapons are being used to take the lives of Palestinians. The USA has remained silent when civilians, including installations of the United Nations, have been attacked by the Israelis. And in this, President Obama remained silent, supposedly because there can only be one president at a time, and he did not wish to interfere with the actions of then President Bush.

So, here we are, and I find that there are few people with whom I can express my feelings, so I have chosen to express them with you. Yes, I am as excited as the next person about this moment in time. I wish the new President of the USA the best of luck. And I will support President Obama and his program of change when it advances the interests of the people of the USA and the world. But my reservations come to the surface in this way: now that he is President of the United States, we need him to dramatically alter the relationship of the USA to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. No US weapons; no US economic support to a criminal regime that is violating one international convention and resolution after another.

If this is to be a period of change that we can believe in, it must be change that we can see. Palestinians must be free and they must have our support. In this regard we need a form of courage and leadership from the 44th President of the United States unlike anything that we have seen in recent times.

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