



- Inaugural Ball Roundup 2009

By [Donna Freydkin](#), Andrea Mandell, Kelley L. Carter, [Korina Lopez](#), Kelly E. Carter, [Craig Wilson](#), [Cindy Clark](#) and [Elysa Gardner](#), USA TODAY

On inauguration eve, concerts, benefits and balls lure the young and not-so-young, the famous and not-so-famous.

Illinois State Society Ball

Where: The ballrooms of the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Why: To celebrate Obama's inauguration; Illinois is his home state.

Who: The entertainment featured New York's Bob Hardwick Sound Orchestra in the main ballroom. 1,800 people were expected for dinner and 5,000 for the opening reception. Guests at the event, thrown by the oldest of the many state societies, included Sen. Richard Durbin and Chicago Mayor Richard Daley. But impeached Gov. Rod Blagojevich was nowhere in sight.

Seen & heard: Attendees stood in line to have their photos taken in front of giant ice sculptures that spelled out "Chicago, Illinois," an image of the Illinois State Capitol and the Inaugural seal. All sorts of food from the Illinois State Fair was on hand, such as the Eli's Cheesecake on a stick and corn dogs. And, of course, Chicago pizza. — Craig Wilson

Kids' Inaugural: We Are the Future

Where: Verizon Center

Who: Queen Latifah, Demi Lovato, Miley Cyrus, the Jonas Brothers, Corbin Bleu, Rosario Dawson

Why: To help the tween set, including first daughters Malia and Sasha, celebrate the inauguration while also honoring military families.

Seen & heard: Michelle Obama and her daughters, along with Jill Biden, hosted the 90-minute concert, which aired on the Disney Channel. Obama greeted the crowd: "You kids are the futue of this great nation. We wanted you to be able to join in on the celebration."

She called on the audience to complete public service. "We need every American to serve their community. We can all do something special."

Given the A-list talent, the bash was the hottest gig in town Monday night. Thousands of tickets were given out to military families, as well as locals.

"One of the most exciting things about our new president is how he is going to affect the future, and the future is in the hands of these children," Latifah said before the show. "So I'm excited to share a night with the kids."

During the show, Cyrus sang *The Climb*, *See You Again* and *Fly on the Wall*, while Lovato sang *Get Back*. Bleu, meanwhile, performed *Moments That Matter* with a choir.

Before the show, Lovato called the election "the coolest thing that's happened. The Kids' Inaugural is a huge thing because it's representing our future." — Donna Freydkin

Al Gore's Green Inaugural Ball

Where: Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture

Who: Hosted by Al Gore with scheduled entertainment by Melissa Etheridge, will.i.am, Maroon 5, John Legend and Michael Franti. Blair Underwood, Lisa Ling, Shakira, Paul Reiser and Maria Menounos mingled with environmentalists and noshed on organic, locally grown hors

d'oeuvres.

Why: To celebrate more than 75 environmental, labor, civil justice, youth and business groups who are promoting green initiatives and creating green jobs.

Seen & heard: will.i.am is releasing a new album with Fergie in May called *The E.N.D.* Ominous? "No," said the musician. "It stands for 'The Energy Never Dies.'" The musician said performing on the Mall Sunday "was cold, but not as cold as rehearsal. That was freezing." — Andrea Mandell

Hip Hop Inaugural Ball

Where: Harman Center for the Arts

Who: LL Cool J, Don King, Nick Cannon, Young Jeezy, Russell Simmons, T.I., Mario, Tatyana Ali

Why: Hip Hop Summit Action Network chair Simmons said the charity event was to recognize "the outstanding contributions of T.I., LL Cool J and Young Jeezy in helping to turn out the largest young-adult vote in American history."

Seen & heard: In the private Hennessy Lounge, LL Cool J chatted about witnessing history. "I had to be here. It's not every day that the entire world gains consciousness. This is a victory for all Americans. (Obama) is not just the president of African Americans. He's the president of the United States."

— Kelley L. Carter

'Hey, America Feels Kinda Cool Again'

Where: The 9:30 Club, a popular music venue in D.C.

Who: A capacity crowd of 1,500 was expected at the Rock the Vote event, featuring Sheryl Crow, the Beastie Boys, Citizen Cope and Justin Jones.

Why: To celebrate the accomplishments of young voters; proceeds benefit Rock the Vote.

Seen & heard: The mood was fairly low-key until Crow took the stage. She sang Johnny Nash's *I Can See Clearly Now*, and the crowd of mostly twenty- and thirtysomethings sang along during the chorus: "It's going to be a bright (bright), bright (bright) sun-shiny day." The audience cheered when Crow said, "This is the thing I was looking forward to, besides tomorrow at 11:20." By the end of her set, she had the capacity crowd of 1,500 in the palm of her hand as she closed with Stevie Wonder's *Higher Ground*.

— **Kelly E. Carter, special for USA TODAY**

The Huffington Post Pre-Inaugural Ball

Where: The Newseum

Who: Arianna Huffington and designer Kenneth Cole hosted the event. Guests included Jessica Alba, Ben Affleck, Dana Delany, Teri Hatcher, Josh Groban, Sharon Stone, Rosie Perez, Herbie Hancock, Lisa Edelstein, Jamie Lee Curtis, Ashton Kutcher, Demi Moore, Robert De Niro and Pete Wentz.

Why: To celebrate change in Washington, the rise of new media, a renewed commitment to public service and the environment.

Seen & heard: Larry David cracked a joke about how he'll survive today's inaugural ceremony: "I'm going to put some diapers on. We'll be

sitting there for five hours. Has anybody thought about that?" Don King wore an appliqued jean jacket adorned with images of Mount Rushmore and the Iwo Jima memorial. "I'm wearing America," he said. MC Hammer, sporting a lilac tie and vest, said that when he heard Obama had won the election, "there were tears of joy, tears of restoration, tears of redemption."

Perez, in a black cocktail dress and 3½-inch heels, walked 9½ blocks from her hotel to the party: "My feet are killing me." For the inauguration, it'll be Ugg boots, long johns and jeans. "I'm leaving the lip gloss at home," she said.

Just before midnight, there was a New Year's Eve-style countdown complete with noisemakers and people screaming and kissing. Sheryl Crow rocked out for the crowd with *A Change Would Do You Good* and *Everyday Is a Winding Road*. Sting followed her onstage and sang *Englishman in New York* and *Brand New Day*.

—Olivia Barker

Creative Coalition Pre-Inaugural Dinner

Where: Teatro Goldoni restaurant

Who: Billy Baldwin, Josh Lucas, Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins, Connie Britton, Spike Lee, Kerry Washington, Alan Cumming, Maura Tierney, Kim Raver, John Kerry

Why: To welcome celebrity members of the Creative Coalition in town for the inauguration.

Seen & heard: Robbins didn't give his celebrity pals credit for getting Obama into office. "The celeb part is irrelevant here. Celebs have access, but it's not a celeb thing. Millions of people made this happen, not celebrities," he said. Topping his Obama wish list: "Once Obama gets past health care, I'd like to see arts programs back in schools."

Robbins' partner, Sarandon, called this inauguration the "most accessible." "The Obama girls are lovely and fun, and Michelle is strong,

smart and courageous," Sarandon said.

Kim Raver said she hopes Obama can get the economy back on track. What else does she hope Obama has on his to-do list? "Hopefully bring the troops home. Bring unity to the country. Get our health care system accessible to everyone. More funding for arts in schools."

—**Rebecca Heslin**

Manifest Hope: D.C. Party

Where: An exhibition space in Georgetown, where a special Obama-themed show was wrapping up.

Who: The entertainment included De La Soul, Santogold and Moby (in an Obama T-shirt). Among the hosts was R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe, who took to the stage and said, "Welcome to the last day of the Bush administration. You picked the right place to be!" Also hosting: Shepard Fairey, the artist behind the iconic *Hope* image, and actresses Heather Graham and Rosario Dawson.

Why: The exhibit was organized to spotlight the grass-roots efforts that were key to Obama being elected.

Seen & heard: Other celebs, including Adrian Grenier and Tim Robbins, were spotted in the artsy, casual crowd. "Obama symbolizes a wonderful unifying force," said Graham, "especially in such hard times around the world." At one point, Grenier and Graham were seen dancing backstage as college-age kids were shaking their booties near the intimate stage. Said D.C. resident Cassidy Karakorn: "I've lived my whole life in D.C., and I've never seen it so full of energy and hope. Obama makes me proud to be an American and even prouder to be a Washingtonian."

— **Korina Lopez**

'A Celebration of America'

Where: Kennedy Center

Who: Entertainment at the event, presented by Jazz at Lincoln Center via the Rockefeller Foundation, included Wynton Marsalis, Dave Brubeck, Bela Fleck, Derek Trucks, Dianne Reeves, Cassandra Wilson and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Why: To explore and celebrate the link between democracy and jazz.

Seen & heard: Marsalis jammed with various musicians and appeared in a series of filmed discussions with retired Supreme Court justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who also appeared onstage. Marsalis later said that today he'll be watching the inauguration proceedings on TV, "because I don't want to miss a thing." Angela Bassett, who was host with husband Courtney B. Vance, said: "I think we're all vibrating. There are goose bumps and tears. Tears are ready to fall. We all know this is something special and momentous. A brand-new beginning."

—Elysa Gardner

ServiceNation Breakfast

Where: Ballou Senior High School

Who: Ashton Kutcher, Demi Moore, Tobey Maguire, Maria Shriver, Martin Luther King III

Why: The event in Southeast Washington was to promote community service, billed as a "New Era of Service."

Seen & heard: "I didn't realize this would be such an emotional morning," a teary-eyed Maguire said.

"I get really nervous in front of people," he told the crowd, a mix of elected officials, advocates and children of all ages.

The actor, chairman of ServiceNation's Ambassador's Council, says he has recruited pals, including Leonardo DiCaprio, Ellen DeGeneres, Salma Hayek and Robert Downey Jr., to participate in "getting a citizens' movement to support (volunteerism) so the politicians can move it."

Kutcher and Moore introduced *The Presidential Pledge* video, which they produced with the help of a string of famous friends.

Promising "to be a servant to our president and all mankind," celebrities such as Cameron Diaz, Courteney Cox, Eva Longoria Parker, Josh Groban, Sean "Diddy" Combs, Aaron Eckhart and Dakota Fanning pledge to find service projects they're passionate about, skip plastic bags at the grocery store, turn the lights off, spread awareness of autism, find a cure for Alzheimer's and end hunger in America — and ask viewers to do the same.

"I'm inspired by Barack Obama — by his essence ... by who he is," Kutcher said. "People should be accountable." He introduced his wife, Moore, as "the person who's accountable for much of my happiness — my better three-quarters."

After the breakfast, volunteers in the crowd headed over to nearby Simon Elementary to pitch in on beautification projects.

ServiceNation, a coalition of 120 organizations, collaborated on the event with the Entertainment Industry Foundation, the force behind last year's star-studded *Stand Up to Cancer* telethon. — Cindy Clark