

Forum

Inauguration speech gives hope to masses, reminds America of what it is and could be

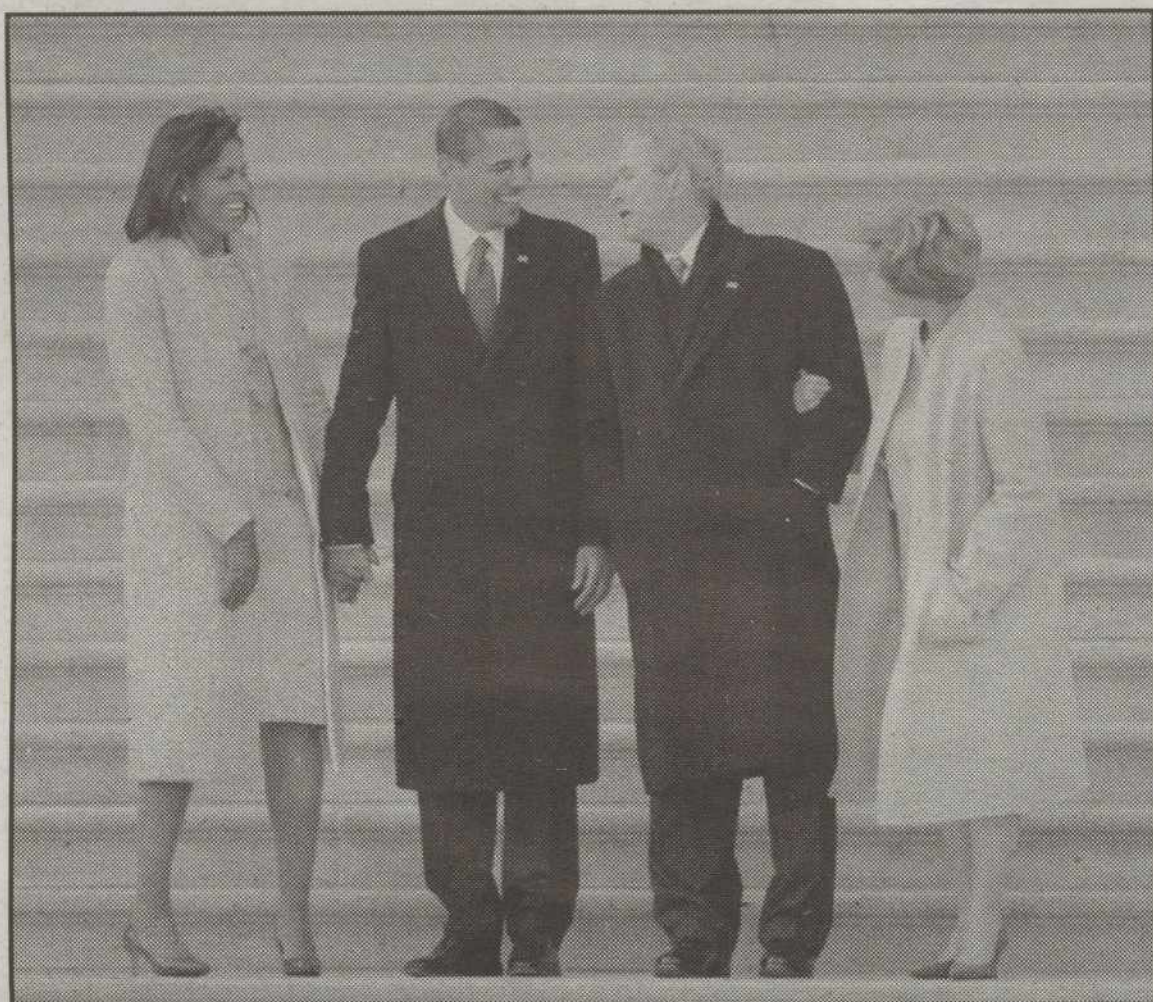
■ CALLEY LATHROP

Staff Reporter

Ever since the man announced his candidacy almost two years ago, Barack Obama has endured much skepticism and criticism from Republicans and Democrats

political figures...those no longer matter. Many people lost hope, lost faith that this nation can be repaired.

Yes, our nation is crippled. However, we are not broken. That was one of the best points the President made.



President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle prepare to send off George and Laura Bush, former President and First Lady, on the steps of the Capitol on Jan. 20 after Obama's inauguration. Almost two million people attended the inauguration, with over 38 million viewing from home. Photo courtesy of Boston.com

alike. However, when President Obama addressed the nation on the morning of Jan. 20, none can deny that a feeling of hope, and of change, was felt throughout the nation.

The words "hope" and "change" have become a cliché over the past few years, especially during the long presidential campaign. The nation's economy has been crippled. The reasons, war, recession and abuse by

This was not a pat-on-the-back "poor us" speech, but a call to action and a reminder of how far this nation has come since its birth in 1776.

There has definitely been a change in the way people treat those who are different over the last 10, 20 or even 50 years. "It's not so much a matter of things being different now than they used to be, but when I was younger the seeds of acceptance were being planted. Now, we are seeing

the fruits of that," Rhonda Case, French teacher, said.

"So let us mark this day with remembrance, of who we are and how far we have traveled. In the year of America's birth, in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by dying campfires on the shores of an icy river. The capital was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood," Obama said.

It was very important that Obama recognized those who have made this country what it is today. He reminded us of the core qualities that make America a good country, not a bad one. Blame was not dished out in mass like it could be, emphasizing the fact that yes, the past should be remembered, but the future that we ultimately control is in

our hands.

And what about the rest of us? Employees, students, parents, teachers? It's time for change, obviously. This nation has only come so far in such a short span of time because of the hard work of our ancestors, people who knew changes were necessary in their homes and communities gave part, or all of themselves, to help mold a better America.

It is not all about the government and influential political figures. It is time for ALL of us to stand up, dust ourselves off and work towards positive change if we want to be remembered as the generation that saved its nation.

"For as much as government can do and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which

this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours. It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child, that finally decides our fate," Obama said.

It is a teacher's dedication to the guidance of this generation, the teaching of not only facts and information, but lessons that will be vital in creating change, and continuing the positive legacies of our ancestors. It is a student's ability to recognize when there is need to defy age stereotypes and be the leaders that are so desperately needed. Obama's message of action rings true, even in WLHS.

Minimum wage increase: Bigger isn't always better

■ LEXI WELP

Staff Reporter

As the new year arrived, people were hoping for different things: better grades, trying to get in shape or maybe earning a drivers' license. Another change this year is that the minimum wage in Oregon has increased to \$8.40, a 45 cent jump from the \$7.95 minimum last year.

Each year, minimum wage fluctuates to accommodate the inflation in the United States, which means as minimum wage continues to rise, the value of the dollar continues to fall. With the current state of the economy it seems like this situation is just getting worse.

According to employmentpolitics.com, the federal minimum wage, which is the minimum wage for all of the United States, increased to \$5.85 two years ago, and then to \$6.55 a year ago. It is scheduled to increase to \$7.25 this summer.

The federal minimum wage is the base for all 50 states and each state can fluctuate depending on the circumstances specific to each state. One of the perks of living in Oregon is our minimum wage. It is one of the highest in the country. With gas prices on the rise again and prices for daily

living expenses, such as food, skyrocketing, no one really seems to notice just how lucky we all are.

For me having a raise is great and I'm not

complaining; \$8.40 an hour with no bills to pay. This is pretty much the case for many high school students, especially students in West Linn. Many students are saving for college or buying that shirt they've always wanted.

However, not everyone is looking at the positive side of this new increase. Imagine if you have bills to pay; you are living on your own and practically everyone in your company seemed to have just received a raise. I think it is reasonable to say that the cost of running that business just went up meaning that cutbacks sadly are also increasing.

So how are we going to fix this problem? There is a

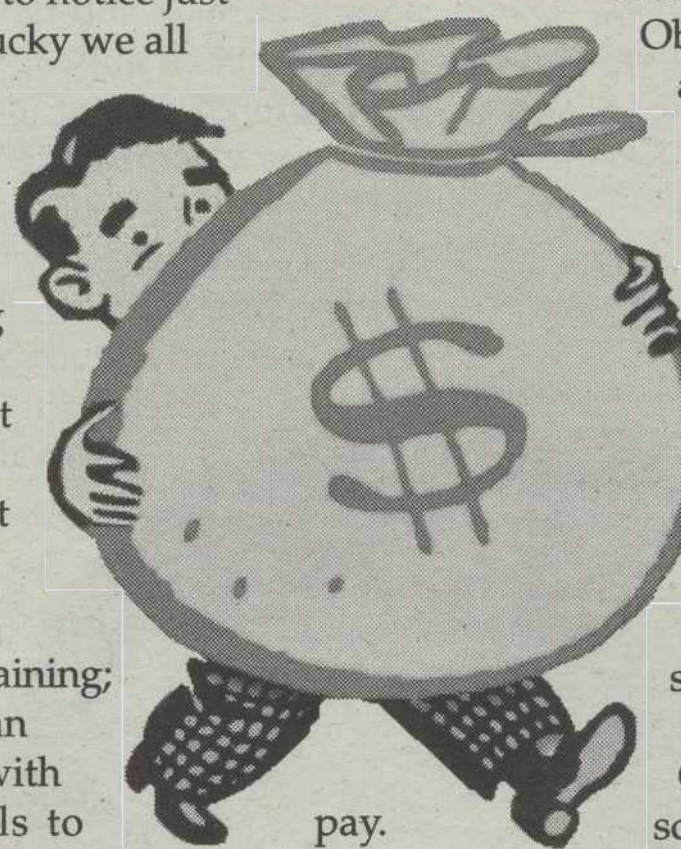
possibility that those trying to fix it could potentially just make it worse. Barack

Obama wants to address the issue with another minimum wage raise, according to yahoo.com. His idea is to bump up minimum wage to \$9.50 to support the families

which are struggling the most. However, Cambridge scholars say

that this is coming very close to the bad outweighing the good, and that there is much more to consider than just those low income families.

The problem of minimum wage fluctuation, I believe, starts with the economic crash, and has much more to do with our failing businesses and job security. It is inevitable that things are going to get worse and employees are going to be laid off. For now, I think it is best to enjoy the perks while there still are some and put away some of those precious earnings for the bumpy ride ahead; it looks like it's going to be a long one.



Amplifier

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