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Biden-Harris Era Begins

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late civil rights icon whom Harris often cites as inspiration, and Regina Shelton, who helped raise Harris during her childhood in the San Francisco Bay Area. The drumline from Harris' alma mater, Howard University, joined the presidential escort.

To mark the occasion, the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, the nation's oldest sorority for Black women, which Harris joined at Howard University, declared Inauguration Day as Kamala D. Harris Day.

Biden, in his inaugural address, reflected on the 1913 march for women's suffrage the day before President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration, during which some marchers were heckled and attacked.

"Today, we mark the swearing in of the first woman in American history elected to national office, Vice President Kamala Harris. Don't tell me things can't change," Biden said.

Harris has often reflected on her rise through politics by recalling the lessons of her mother, who

taught her to take on a larger cause and push through adversity.

"I was raised to not hear 'no.' Let me be clear about it. So it wasn't like, 'Oh, the possibilities are immense. Whatever you want to do, you can do,'" she recalled during a "CBS Sunday Morning" interview that aired Sunday. "No, I was raised to understand many people will tell you, 'It is impossible,' but don't listen."

Harris' swearing-in held more symbolic weight than that of any vice president in modern times.

She expanded the definition of

who gets to hold power in American politics, said Martha S. Jones, a professor of history at Johns Hopkins University and the author of "Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All."

People who want to understand Harris and connect with her will have to learn what it means to graduate from a historically Black college and university rather than an Ivy League school. They will have to understand Harris' traditions, like the Hindu celebration of Diwali, Jones said.

"Folks are going to have to adapt to her rather than her adapting to them," Jones said.

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Young Poet Inspires the World

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It was an extraordinary task for Gorman, who soon after finishing her poem helped inspire — along with Vice President Kamala Harris — the Twitter hashtag "#Black-GirlMagic" and was being praised by former President Barack Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama among others.

Gorman is the youngest by far of the poets who have read at presidential inaugurations since Kennedy invited Robert Frost in 1961, with other predecessors including

Maya Angelou and Elizabeth Alexander.

Mindful of the past, Gorman wore earrings and a caged bird ring — a tribute to Angelou's classic memoir "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" — given to her by Oprah Winfrey, a close friend of the late writer.

"I have never been prouder to see another young woman rise! Brava Brava, @TheAmandaGorman! Maya Angelou is cheering—and so am I," Winfrey tweeted. Gorman was also praised by "Hamilton" playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda, who tweeted "YES

poem," Gorman told the AP. She had said that she would not mention Jan. 6 specifically, but her reference was unmistakable:

"We've seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it,

Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.

And this effort very nearly succeeded.

But while democracy can be periodically delayed,

It can never be permanently defeated."

Invited to the inaugural late last month by first lady Jill

"We've seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it,

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--American poet Amanda Gorman

@TheAmandaGorman!!!"

Among the "Hamilton" inspirations in her poem: "History has its eyes on us," a variation of the "Hamilton" song "History Has Its Eyes On You."

Gorman, a native and resident of Los Angeles and the country's first National Youth Poet Laureate, told The Associated Press that she planned to combine a message of hope for President Joseph Biden's inaugural without ignoring "the evidence of discord and division." She had completed a little more than half of "The Hill We Climb" before Jan. 6 and the siege of the U.S. Capitol by supporters of then-President Donald Trump.

"That day gave me a second wave of energy to finish the

Biden, Gorman has read at official occasions before — including a July 4 celebration when she was backed by the Boston Pops Orchestra — and has previously met Michelle Obama and former first lady Hillary Clinton among others. She has also made clear her desire to appear at a future inaugural, in a much greater capacity, an ambition she stated firmly in her poem.

"We, the successors of a country and a time,

Where a skinny black girl, Descended from slaves and raised by a single mother,

Can dream of becoming president,

Only to find herself reciting for one."

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