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THE INAUGURATION OF BARACK OBAMA

# 'It's like I'm in a dream world'

## Detroiters took long path to D.C.

BY KATHLEEN GRAY • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • JANUARY 19, 2009

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WASHINGTON -- In and out of jail more than half of his life, Edward Collins of Detroit never thought he would be in Washington, D.C., this week to witness the inauguration of President Barack Obama.

But with the help of a new sense of spirituality and purpose, combined with the kindness of a suburban family, Collins made the journey that will allow him to witness the swearing-in of the nation's first African-American president.

"It's like I'm in a dream world," he said today as he mingled with hundreds of other Michiganders at a Michigan congressional delegation open house at the Library of Congress. "It's amazing and inspired."

Collins' trip began in May of 2006, when he was released from the Ryan Road Correctional facility in Detroit, after serving - off and on - 33 years in prison for car theft, robbery and breaking and entering homes.

"I was in the revolving door," he said, noting his downward spiral began when his mother died when he was 14. "I gravitated to the street and it was easy for me to become a parasite."

He credits his turnaround to a sense of spirituality he gained during his last stay in prison, meeting the monks of the Capuchin soup kitchen, and encountering Kim Spaniola, a Troy



A Michigan Congresswoman to the left, and her husband, Edward Collins Jr., at the inauguration of Barack Obama.

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resident who is a volunteer at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen.

He started working at the soup kitchen, staying at a house operated by the Capuchin Monastery and becoming friends with Spaniola's family. Three generations of Spaniolas - father Francis Spaniola, a former state representative from Corunna, son Tony Spaniola, 50, and his wife, Kim, 49, of Troy and grandson Nick Spaniola, 21, a student at the University of Pennsylvania- have been coming to Washington for inaugurations for years.

"I saw this family and the bond they had," Collins said. "It's all about developing healthy relationships."

For the last two months, Kim Spaniola has helped set up a bakery in Detroit "On the Rise," run by the Capuchins and staffed by Collins. With the inauguration just weeks away, the Spaniolas knew they had to have another person along for the ride.

"We invited him as our guest," Kim Spaniola said. "it's kind of a family thing for us and Edward is a part of our family."

So the family drove from Michigan on Saturday and will spend Tuesday standing with a million or so other people watching Obama take the oath of office.

"The essence of the Capuchin program is to help people who have been disenfranchised and give them the opportunity to change their life," Collins said.

Dressed in a black suit, black and yellow tie, his braids tied neatly behind his head, Collins spoke of living on his own for the first time and the promise of the future.

"I finally got my life together," he said. "It's fantastic."

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**rjlellipop** wrote:

We have "Sarah Palin" to thank for much of this.....LOL  
01/19/2009 2:43:15 p.m. EDT

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**psyche510** wrote:

Replying to maxxpixx:

*King was not fighting for a BLACK man to be allowed to reach his potential, he was fighting for ALL men to be able to be what and*

*who they were, without the filter of race constantly trumping all else. He would have wanted the hosannas to come for a man who was exceptional, not one whose skin color was the exception. He succeeded because he was a HUMANIST, not a racist. And, frankly, the mania surrounding this inauguration can't be seen as anything but racism. All the Detroiters who are in a frenzy because a BLACK man is becoming President, should understand that they're guilty of exactly the same blindness QUOTE]*

*You are correct about King but still seem to be missing the point. Racism is alive and well. You try to make it appear that whites are no longer racist but it is the blacks who are racist. Unfortunately, this is a conversation not worth having on the message boards. It would be too difficult to convey a viewpoint in less than 1000 characters.*

01/19/2009 2:37:26 p.m. EDT

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**maxxpixx** wrote:

King was not fighting for a BLACK man to be allowed to reach his potential, he was fighting for ALL men to be able to be what and who they were, without the filter of race constantly trumping all else. He would have wanted the hosannas to come for a man who was exceptional, not one whose skin color was the exception. He succeeded because he was a HUMANIST, not a racist. And, frankly, the mania surrounding this inauguration can't be seen as anything but racism. All the Detroiters who are in a frenzy because a BLACK man is becoming President, should understand that they're guilty of exactly the same blindness as those who would want to stop him from being elected BECAUSE he's black. If you're happy that a black man is there, you've completely missed the point. King's dream was to have a COLORBLIND society. It's obvious by the reaction to Obama, that if ONE group of us still feels that him being where he is plants THEIR flag, King's mountaintop is still a little above our reach.

01/19/2009 2:29:00 p.m. EDT

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**Juggalotus** wrote:

Replying to KTee77:

*but they also recognize that Obama is qualified and will do a good job.*

Lets wait and see. People thought Carter would do a good job too.

01/19/2009 2:26:30 p.m. EDT

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**isay2** wrote:

Well Collins is where he belongs, Washington DC along with all the other thieves, except we call them Congress instead of Convict!

01/19/2009 2:19:24 p.m. EDT

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