

# Elizabeth Alexander's Obama Inaugural Poem Form

Yes We Can

Inaugural Images January 20, 2009

On MLK Service Day eve two electric candles on our window sill  
illuminate the night, joining candles around the world  
empowering peace and protection for Obama before a New Day.

Before a well-behaved, jubilant crowd of 1.5 million people  
huddling for warmth on the sun-shimmered mall, Obama states 35-word oath  
after the bumbling Republican Chief Justice miscues.

Facing waving, cheering throngs watching twenty-mega screens  
forceful Obama speaks his Inaugural Address for change  
and for the challenges of the "fierce urgency of now". All are responsible.

Vibrant intensity behind reassuring smile, confident stride,  
value-laden words, Barack Hussein Obama  
becomes our 44<sup>th</sup> President of hope over fear.

Despite the chill, people stand for hours grinning, cheering, crying  
with anticipation and expectation. Flags of many nations held high,  
salute the shift in American priorities.

Preachers, poet, Aretha Franklin frame his speech.  
Family and politicians stand with him on the platform  
behind bullet-proof glass thawing frigid moments.

With Cheney wheel-chaired, Bush hears Obama ambush their agenda.  
At the airport, recently gracious, Bush embraces Obama  
before Bush leaves for Crawford, Texas with hugs, handshakes and boos.

Hundreds of thousands cluster ten deep on Pennsylvania Avenue  
lined with security as our President climbs out of "The Beast"  
for a less-protected walk on his new path.

Behind the viewing stand the Obamas watch  
the long-marching parade in honor of a smooth transition  
of power before heading to the White House.

In Corvallis deli six-poets, part of a nationwide Inaugural Celebration  
join in poetic collage with music and an open mic  
adding to Elizabeth Alexander's "Praise Song for the Day".

The President and First Lady dance the two-step  
to Etta James' "At Last" at ten diverse balls.  
Barack in white bow-tie and tuxedo woos Michelle in Jason Wu white gown.

In Corvallis Senior Center balloon bouquets bounce at Democrats Inaugural Bash.  
Obama slides and posters on walls surround all-ages dancers in Obama tee shirts and jeans,  
some long skirts and dancing shoes to contra, hip-hop, rock and roll, waltz.

The work begins. Bush's pending orders rescinded. Direction and policies change.  
The bloom of hope and joy—heart-harbingers of spring  
thrust green after a cold, hard winter beginning.

Inaugural Day—such a historic, triumphant event  
where content of character is more important than skin color  
where competent, dedicated skill could release American dreams.

Yes we can now quilt a patchwork of

equality	diversity	responsibility
unity	solidarity	creativity
opportunity	liberty	integrity
service	sacrifice	justice
tolerance	abundance	competence
optimism	action	compassion
global-good	hard-work	hope
truth	trust	happiness
grace	peace	love

Linda Varsell Smith

### Elizabeth Alexander's Obama Inaugural Poem Form:

14 three-line stanzas with a one line coda. In this poem I put the coda line in a patchwork quilt pattern. No syllable counts.