

# All generations must carry Obama's change forward



IT SEEMS BY any standard, by any measure, last week's presidential election was important, perhaps even the most important we've seen in generations. So my tongue-in-cheek commentary is once again upstaged by reality.

I wrote last week that this election, like so many others, was being hyped to be the end-all, be-all election. They said this was the one, indeed this was the one.

It turns out "they" were right.

A whole lot of us voted last week. Long lines didn't discourage us. Incidental problems with voting machines and voting lists didn't deter us. In fact, no outside stuff got in our way.

And did we make history.

There are a few occasions when the world stops and we have to chisel the date on the inside of our skull. Collectively, the world is marking Nov. 4, 2008, as a historic date, and we are responsible.

When we elected Sen. Barack Obama to be

our next president, we gave credence to everything we've talked about for the past 230 years.

I can't begin to understand the emotional victory African-American voters feel right now, but I share that joy for our nation's future.

It's just like I don't really feel all the emotions that happen when a missing child is returned home, or an accident victim is saved, but I still share the joy.

While I was watching and reading all the news coverage of the election, I was overwhelmed by the emotional response to Obama's victory by some pretty stoic faces.

The first to get my attention was Juan Williams.

Williams is a national correspondent for National Public Radio and Fox News. His political insight is usually delivered with little emotion and invariably deals with the intricacies of political nuance and backstage thinking.

But last week, last Tuesday night to be specific, Williams couldn't help himself. He was caught up in the moment and it was hard for him to speak to the historic election of an African-American as our next president. Williams is African-American.

Then later that evening I watched as President-elect Obama delivered his victory speech to the world and couldn't help but to notice Rev. Jesse Jackson's reaction to the message and the moment.

Jackson was openly weeping. Jackson's emotions were noteworthy.

The cynic in me wondered how the camera found Jackson, and then I wondered if Jackson was overwhelmed with joy or maybe another emotion. After all, Jackson has been working hard for the Obama moment his whole life. But let's give him the benefit of the doubt and hope

Jackson's tears were flowing because he knew his mentor, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was looking down from heaven and smiling.

I'm not a very emotional person. The only time I get choked up is when my daughters really need me. Most of the other times in life, I'm able to step back and detach myself. That's not exactly a personality trait that I'm proud of, but it's me.

But, as a dispassionate observer, I am overwhelmed at the emotional buy-in our nation has pledged to our 44th president,

especially young adults.

We've been losing young voters to apathy for decades. They've disdained voter registration and active participation in the process because there was no connection between the political process and their lives. That is not only an indictment of politics, but politicians, as well.

Now President Obama comes along and lights a fire among young would-be voters and other disenfranchised non-participants, and we are on the brink of a new level of public participation in the political process that harkens back to the earliest days of our republic.

The responsibility to make certain this hopeful enthusiasm doesn't die the death of neglect is left to all generations.

We, the older set, must cheerfully embrace this new social form of governing. You, the younger set, must willfully commit to follow through with idealistic fervor and continue the dream.

It's really that simple. •

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