

Charlene Kobrine believes anything is possible now.

It didn't matter that the lawyer from Newport Coast, who is black, could barely see or hear President Barack Obama from her ticketed spot on the West Front of the Capitol. Once he took that oath of office everything changed, for her and for her children.

"My kids will never forget this," she said of Sam, 10 and Kevin, 8. "It means that they can actually see someone and aspire to this position. Not that they're going to be president of the United States. But it's nice to know that you can look up and see someone like you who can make it this far."

Hundreds of people from Orange County braved the late-January cold of Washington, D.C. They came because they were activist Democrats. They came because they wanted their children to experience the spectacle of the orderly change of power from one chief executive to the other.

They came because they knew they'd be part of history if they did.

And there were. They walked miles, waited on long lines that snaked around the Capitol on Tuesday. Some joined the masses on the National Mall which filled up hours before the bunting-draped platform. The lucky ones had one of the 240,000 tickets to the swearing in of the 44th president.

"It's an honor just to be there," Kobrine said. "I got tears in my eyes, starting with Aretha (Franklin) and then again when he stepped forward to take the oath of office."

Obama did not sugarcoat the challenges he faces as he moves into the Oval Office. But he also did not underestimate the nation's ability to meet them.

"Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real," he said. "They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America - they will be met.",

Luke Connor walked – and ran – more than six miles to the Capitol from his dorm at Georgetown University to make sure he would be there to hear those words.

"It's just insane how many people are here," said the freshman from San Juan Capistrano. He wore two pairs of pants, two pairs of socks, two fleeces and a jacket to prepare for the subfreezing temperatures.

Shortly before the ceremony began, a chant of "O-bam-a O-bam-a" erupted from the hundreds of thousands on the Mall. But the seats directly in front of the podium, reserved for media and VIPs including Jay Z and Beyoncé, made only a muted effort to join in. Seated in that section was rapper and entrepreneur Sean Combs — who shared his frustration with all within earshot, pointing out how loud folks were in Mall.

"We got to get loud over here," he said. "We gotta make some noise."

Some who traveled to the nation's capital will have to see the replays of Obama's oath and speech.

Pam Worrell of Huntington Beach wasn't one of the lucky ones who had tickets. But she was determined to be here anyway to witness this nation-changing event.

What Worrell didn't know was that her husband had gone on E-bay and scored a ticket for her to the inaugural parade. The 5,000 tickets for parade seats went for \$25 a pop. Worrell's cost \$100.

Worrell waited hours and hours for the parade to begin. It started late.

She left after seeing the Obamas and Bidens. But it was from a distance. The Obamas, as has become custom, got out of the limousine and walked a ways down Pennsylvania Avenue. But just before they reached Worrell's area, they got back in the car. She saw them, but not close enough to take the pictures she dearly wanted to bring home.

For one Orange County couple the day was a mixture of disappointment and elation.

Davida Hopkins Parham and her husband, Thomas, left their Capitol Hill hotel at 6 a.m. But as it neared 11 a.m., a half-hour before the program was to begin, they were still not close enough to their assigned gate to be sure they could get in.

"We had purple tickets and it was just a nightmare, Hopkins Parham said. All the tickets were colored-coded to coincide with the entrances. The Parhams – and thousands of others — got routed to the Third Street tunnel by some security officials and hours later they were still there.

They ended up back at their hotel and watched on television.

"For us we had this mixture of disappointment and happiness," said Hopkins-Parham, who was an Obama delegate to the Democratic National Convention. "We do feel like we were still here bearing witness. And like Kobrine, their children were on their minds this day. They were grateful that their two daughters had tickets for a different entrance and they did get in to the inaugural.

For thousands, like Kobrine and the Parhams, this was their first inaugural.

The same was true for Rep. John Campbell, who was not in Congress when President George W. Bush was sworn in. The Irvine Republican didn't support Obama. But he said the historic nature of this presidency and the expectation that the speech would be great contributed to his decision to attend.

"He's clearly the best orator of our age right now," said Campbell, who sat on the platform with the other members of Congress, the Cabinet, governors, including California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, and other special guests.

"It was a very good speech," Campbell said. "But you have to go beyond just speaking. Now the real work begins."