

President's Column

By Lynn Kotler, CRDC President

What a strange ride it's been. In 2000, courtesy of the Supreme Court, Bush won the presidency. The country was torn apart by the politics of the election. Eight years later, under a banner of change and unity, we watched Obama take the oath of office. Like eight years earlier, people were crying, but this time it was tears of joy.

Unable to go to Washington D.C., I watched the inauguration on a big screen TV with hundreds of others in front of the federal courthouse in lower Manhattan. The energy level, the emotion, the happiness was not just palpable, it was explosive. We, like the millions gathered in D.C., were euphoric. Euphoric at the societal change represented by Obama, as well as with the opportunity to move forward as a nation.

The Bush presidency, in a peaceful exchange of power that should be envied worldwide, has come to a close. While history books will be written and rewritten, it seems clear that Bush's presidency was filled with deceit, a foreign policy driven by pre-emptive strikes and toppling the "bad" guy (who happened to own a lot of oil

and had a spat with Bush's Daddy), and the demise of civil rights.

Fortunately, a new chapter has begun. Within days of his inauguration, President Obama has closed America's (yes, America's) secretive CIA camps and issued policies expanding the Freedom of Information Act, which provides citizens with the right to know. It is a presidency premised on transparency, equality and civil liberties.

Obama faces a time in history like never before. Despite the difficulties ahead, Obama has, thus far, united Americans. He's called on each of us to pitch in and help move this country forward. An inspiring message for all, and one which, as it happens, is the very basis of this organization.

So in the spirit of our President, I call on all of you to participate. The Obama Administration cannot do it alone. Each of us bears the responsibility and the power to make change in our own lives, in our community and in our country. It will take time before we see change, especially in our economy, but we have reason to hope, be optimistic and feel relief; something that has been missing for the past eight years.

I Had a Purple Ticket

An Account of the Presidential Inauguration

By Tom Schuler, CRDC District Leader, 75 AD

I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the inauguration celebration in Washington, DC. What a festive time it was for the entire county, and the high spirits and energetic mood in the nation's capital was contagious. I was joined on the trip by a few very good friends and some colleagues from work, and together we spent four thrilling days celebrating the inauguration of our new President Barack Obama.

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GENERAL MEETING

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19
7:00 P.M.**

Hudson Guild, 441 West 26th St.
(btwn 9th & 10th Aves)

ON THE AGENDA:

Guest Speaker, Ira Glasser

The War on Drugs: The Fourth Amendment Under Siege.

Ira was Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union for 23 years, until his retirement in July 2001. Currently he serves as President of the Board of Directors of the Drug Policy Alliance, an advocacy group that speaks to the harms associated with War on Drugs. Ira and his wife have lived in Penn South for over forty years, and he was an early member of CRDC.

Also On The Agenda:

Club Election Of Officers And Members-At-Large

Nominated at our January Meeting:

President: Lynn Kotler
Vice President : David Caraway
Treasurer: Paul Groncki
Secretary: Linda Longstreet

Members-at-Large – Six to be Elected:

Andrew Berman • Jesse Campoamor
Maarten de Kadt • Natasha Dachos
Paul Goetz • Gloria Sukenick

Further nominations will be taken from the floor for uncontested offices.

IN ORDER TO VOTE your 2009 dues must be paid. Current members may pay at the February meeting. New members must be a member in good standing for 30 days.

I Had a Purple Ticket continued from pg 1

While we attended parties, receptions, dinners and the concert on the Mall, we were all looking forward to the actual swearing-in ceremony. We were so grateful to Representatives Nadler and Maloney and Senators Richard Durbin and Diane Feinstein, who provided tickets to the entire group, enabling us to witness the proceedings first hand.

With the crush of people in town for the event, we vowed to be up bright and early to get to our designated areas. My friend Donna took this literally, as she called us at 5:30 a.m. saying she was ready. By 7 we were dressed and ready to go ... we were layered in ski wear, wool sweaters, thermals, double socks and down coats ... the weather would not be an issue for us.

Tickets were color-coded, with yellow, orange, green, blue and purple assigned to the grounds of the capital and silver to the Mall. Most of our group had purple with a few in yellow and silver. Each color had a designated subway station to exit from that would lead to the appropriate entrance and security checkpoint. Upon arrival, there were a few hundred folks ahead of us, but we were confident we would soon be as close to the proceedings as our purple tickets would permit.

Initially we were behind metal barricades (packed like sardines) with little or no supervision. Mixed in the group were little children, a woman in a wheelchair, a young woman who was seven months pregnant and her husband who was on crutches. Also among the group, were other ticket holders as well as those with no tickets at all, not a good sign. As time wore on, the crowd grew larger and patience was growing thin as the gates were still not open.

At this point we were instructed by the police to move to the 3rd Street tunnel, which would facilitate an easier entrance through security. Upon our arrival into the tunnel we knew something was VERY wrong. Thousands were already there, and it seemed there was no way we would all get onto the capital grounds to watch the swearing-in even with a ticket. We proceeded to the end of the line, which at this point was several miles, and exited out the other side, as others continued to stream in behind us. Some in our posse left, saying they did not see how we would get in and would rather see it on TV than miss it altogether. My friend Austin and I decided to take a chance and wait a bit longer. On line we met the young pregnant woman and her husband on crutches. They were from Virginia and had been a part of the Obama campaign early on.

We met two elderly women who asked if we knew anything, sadly we did not. Even with all these people, the tunnel lacked any supervision, police presence and toilet facilities, but spirits remained high. As we continued to wait for any information or movement of the line, we learned more about the two elderly ladies. They were both in their 80's and had made the trek to DC from South Carolina, one of them, Essie May, was a descendant of slaves who lived in a small town where she was the deputy mayor at one time. She talked of the pride she felt this day and it brought tears to her eyes and those around us as she spoke. She said that even at her advanced age there was no way she was going to miss this. She smiled as she told us she even bought the new fur coat she was wearing for the special occasion.

As the line inched forward we began to have hope we would still get to our assigned area before the ceremony began. We began to see daylight as we got closer to the tunnel's entrance. We helped Essie May up the incline to the street and hoped there would be a Portasan close by for the pregnant woman, who by now had been on her feet more than four hours. Once reaching the street, we were told the purple section had been closed, Essie May and her friend said, "How could this be? We have tickets?" I didn't know how to respond, I knew this was so important to her but wanted to help the pregnant lady to the bathroom (I never did learn her name). Austin suggested to them that they might want to head back to their hotel to see it on TV. The streets were chaotic, with little or no direction.

Austin and I decided to head over to the Willard Hotel and watch the parade with friends. We thought if we hurried we would at least hear President Obama's speech. We were able to make our way to E Street after a few detours, and ran. While we were running we could hear Aretha Franklin singing. By the time we reached the Willard, Joe Biden was just about to take the oath of office, we were offered a glass of champagne and we were able to see the entire ceremony. When the rest of our friends gathered back at the hotel, we told them of our experience.

We later learned that no one in the tunnel had even been admitted, some 5,000–7,000 ticket holders, maybe more. News reports stated that once directed into the tunnel by police, we were forgotten. Senator Feinstein, who oversaw the inauguration events and the distribution of tickets, issued an apology to all those ticket holders who were denied access. Back in New York, a friend asked, "Are you mad?" I replied "I'm not mad ... I'm sad that Essie May and her friend didn't get in."

Senator Gillibrand?

By Carla Nordstrom, CRDC Member

Three years ago, a group of well-meaning upstate activists came together in a Google group to figure out how to unseat the Republican congressman of the 20th CD in New York. Pulling together this group was a challenge because the district is a gerrymandered hodge-podge. The district stretches from Lake Placid near the Canadian border, down the Hudson River, where it slithers around each small city to north of Poughkeepsie. From there, it heads west about 100 miles to the environs of Oneonta. Similar to Jerry Nadler's 8th district, which stretches from the Upper Westside of Manhattan to Coney Island, the 20th CD puts together a constituency with different interests and no place to gather. The district was designed specifically for a Republican.

Many of the people who joined 20Trueblue were opposed to the war in Iraq and wanted a congress member who was committed to ending the war. They strategized to find a candidate that all could support, contribute funds to, and work for. After a couple of false starts, a young beguiling lawyer from Hudson threw her hat into the ring. Kirsten Gillibrand professed to be a fiscally responsible Democrat. Her position on the Iraq war was vague. She didn't want to neglect the troops and was against putting permanent military bases in Iraq. Gillibrand basically took the ball, ran with it, and became the designated candidate. As one of the people who participated in the early e-mail exchanges, the decision to make her the candidate was fast, and 20Trueblue rallied to support her run for Congress.

In 2006, Gillibrand won the election against the Republican incumbent. The fact that John Sweeney had some late-breaking personal difficulties in a year that voters worried about ethics probably had more to do her win than the combined effort of those who worked for her.

When she got into office, the new congresswoman was more conservative than many of her anti-war supporters realized. She became involved with The Blue Dog Coalition, a group of fiscally conservative congressional Democrats who call themselves centrist, but are also known as obstructionists. The Blue Dogs helped President Bush achieve immunity in the FISA bill. Gillibrand is proud of her conservative voting record and has voted against citizenship rights for illegal immigrants, has supported the Bush tax cuts, and voted to fund the war in Iraq. She is also a darling of the NRA and votes against gun control legislation.

What is worrisome about the elevation of Kirsten Gillibrand to the Senate is she may think that she earned this promotion because she did a good job. True, her positions on issues are changing faster than a speeding A train. She opposed gay marriage until just recently when she realized that she supports gay marriage. We'll see what happens with her position on gun control when she realizes that the majority of people in this state support gun regulation.

The selection of Kristen Gillibrand for the Senate is creating havoc in the 20th Congressional District. Democrats are not strong or well-funded, and are scrambling to find a candidate that they can nominate and elect within a month or two. The anti-war progressives who launched Kirsten Gillibrand's political career have been marginalized because the decision of who the candidate will be is decided by the Democratic County Chairman. It is possible with this choice that Governor Patterson just delivered a new seat to the Republican minority in Congress.

Within the next few years the congressional districts in New York State will be changed based on the census of 2010. Kirsten Gillibrand and her political ascent is an issue for New York because congressional districts are drawn to keep elected officials in office, not to form communities of voters with similar interests. It is going to be interesting to see if a conservative Democrat from a gerrymandered Republican district can represent the interests of all New Yorkers. I fear that this could be a problem.

Get Your Daily Planner Out!

You don't want to miss the following:

The Hudson River Park Trust ("Trust"), in conjunction with the Hudson River Park Advisory Council and Manhattan CB4, will hold a Public Meeting and Hearing regarding the proposals for the redevelopment of Pier 57.

Date: Thursday, February 12, 2009

Time: 5:30–6:15 pm: Informal Display of Proposals

6:15–6:30 pm: Introductions and Overview

6:30–7:30 pm: Presentations by Development Teams

7:30 pm: Start of Public Hearing

Location: Hudson Guild Auditorium at Fulton Center, 119 Ninth Avenue between 17th–18th Streets

Chelsea Waterside Park Association Annual Meeting

Date: Wednesday March 25

Time: Reception 6:00 pm, Presentation 7:00 pm

Guest Speaker Joshua David, High Line's Co-founder, will present a slide presentation on the High Line, scheduled to open in sections beginning in July.

Chelsea Reform Democratic Club Annual Brunch

Saturday May 16, Nisos Restaurant 12 Noon–3:00 pm

and

CRDC's Annual Street Fair

Saturday May 23rd, 6 Avenue btwn. 14th & 23rd Streets
Look for our blue tent starting at 11:00 am.

PO Box 1120
Old Chelsea Station
New York City, NY 10113-1120

Chelsea, Madison Sq., Flatiron, Rosehill



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Get Your Daily Planner Out

*Upcoming events you
don't want to miss*

Thank You From Hudson Guild

*from Hudson Guild Executive
Director Ken Jockers*

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*The following thank you from Hudson
Guild was sent to CRDC President
Lynn Kotler.*

On behalf of Hudson Guild and the more than 14,000 people we serve, thank you and the entire Chelsea Reform Democratic Club (CRDC) for generously collecting hats, scarves and gloves/mittens for participants of the guild's Youth Services program.

All of us at Hudson Guild greatly appreciate the time and effort that CRDC spent to ensure that the kids in our program have the proper outdoor garment to keep

warm this winter season. Everything CRDC delivered to us was distributed the day that it arrived!

Please share this message with the your members. Their generosity this holiday season was greatly appreciated.

Ken Jockers

Executive Director



*Club members at the inauguration of Barack Obama:
Council Speaker, Chris Quinn; District Leader, Tom Schuler;
Vincent Maniscalco and Edward De Bonis.*