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Big Picture . Local Focus

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We asked you to tell us what Barack Obama's inauguration as president means to you, and you responded with eloquent essays, poems and even paintings commemorating this moment in history.

'Hope for the best and worst of us'

By Timothy Nunes

While American politics often seem synonymous with conflict and polarization, vitriol and disharmony, this year's election was like no other in recent memory. Strong women running as candidates for both parties, a longer-than-usual primary season, states traditionally labeled one "color" voting for another party's candidate.

And after all was said and done, after all the political posters were placed, all the commercials aired and all the debates over, we Americans, for the first time in U.S. history, chose a candidate of African-American descent to lead our country. Historic times, indeed... But what does it mean to the average American?

Well, I'd like to think of myself as an "average American", with poor, Dust Bowl roots on one side and immigrant roots on the other... "A mutt," if you will, to quote our president-elect.

I'm also a father with wishes of unbridled opportunity for my daughter, and a friend of some from whom the American dream of equality for all is still being withheld to this day.

My roots have taught me to appreciate all this great country can give, while my experiences have convinced me that we still have so much more to strive for.

All of which is to say that, though it may sound a bit trite after a seemingly endless election season, this year's presidential election has left me with hope. Hope for the best and worst of us, the fools and sages, the haves and have nots. We "Americans."

May God have mercy on us all, and most of all upon our next president, Barack Obama.

- Timothy R. Nunes lives in Lisle