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A Day of New Beginnings for Michelle Obama and Her Daughters

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WASHINGTON — On Inauguration Day, President Obama, his wife, [Michelle](#), and their daughters, [Malia](#) and [Sasha](#), became the first black family to move into the White House.

As the television cameras rolled, Americans caught their first glimpses of the Obamas as the new first family. In intimate moments and evocative scenes, they laughed and celebrated in a day full of history and larger-than-life imagery.

There was Sasha, the bright-eyed 7-year-old daughter of the newly minted president, smiling into her father's face and giving him an emphatic, orange-gloved thumbs up.

There was Mrs. Obama, in a lemongrass-yellow dress and matching jacket designed by Isabel Toledo, smiling and holding hands with her husband as they started their day at a prayer service at St. John's Episcopal Church.

And there were both Obama girls, grinning and clapping and fidgeting as they sat in the shadow of the Capitol, waiting for their father to take the oath of office.

Malia, 10, wearing a blue coat and black scarf, snapped photos for posterity. Sasha, in a pink coat and orange scarf, stuffed her

hands into her pockets. The girls sat between their mother and grandmother, [Marian Robinson](#), as history unfolded before their eyes. And what resonated for many people watching was the sheer ordinariness of a happy family in extraordinary times.

“A part of what this family is going to do is to show that families of color are not so different,” said Nikki Brown, an assistant professor of history at the University of New Orleans.

“That’s what I see, when I see them on TV: a working father, a working mother, a grandmother that cares for the babies, children that are doing well in school,” Ms. Brown said. “That’s a narrative that the country is still trying to create a language for, normal families of color.”

These days, of course, the Obamas are far from ordinary.

Movers carried their belongings into the Executive Mansion on Tuesday — mostly toys, clothing and mementos from Chicago. Friends and relatives came from across the country to celebrate.

Senators, former presidents and other dignitaries greeted the family with kisses, hugs and tears. A cheering, flag-waving crowd of more than a million offered a rapturous reception.

And high school bands marched through the streets in their honor, drums pounding, trumpets blaring as the Obama family clapped and danced.

“She’s on top of the world, my goodness, ecstatic,” said [Valerie Jarrett](#), a close friend, who described the incoming first lady’s

emotions in the days before the inauguration.

“Of course, there’s a certain nervous anticipation,” Ms. Jarrett said. “The first lady is one of the most watched women in the world. It’s an awesome responsibility.

“But Michelle is Michelle,” she said. “She’s comfortable in her own skin. She’s as grounded as ever.”

The Obama girls, for instance, were dressed in outfits from J. Crew, a moderately priced retailer favored by Mrs. Obama, her aides said. Mrs. Obama’s olive green gloves also came from J. Crew.

On Monday, the girls sang and danced with their mother to live performances by [Miley Cyrus](#) and other performers, including the [Jonas Brothers](#), at an inaugural concert for military families and their children.

Patrons at a local bar, who watched the inaugural festivities on television Tuesday, said they were pleased to see the Obamas trying to instill a sense of normality in the girls’ lives.

“Michelle said the kids are still going to make their beds,” a woman working in the kitchen said, referring to Mrs. Obama’s comments in a recent television interview. “She wants them to grow up normal.”

Yet the Obamas also seemed comfortable in their powerful new roles.

Mrs. Obama, who consulted with Mrs. Bush about raising

children in the White House, presented Mrs. Bush with a parting gift and the two shared a limousine to the Capitol.

Mrs. Bush is planning to write her memoirs, and Mrs. Obama gave her a pen engraved with Tuesday's date and a leather-bound journal inscribed with a quotation that read: "There will come a time when you believe everything is finished. Yet that will be the beginning."

For the Obama family, of course, Tuesday was all about new beginnings.