



Young inauguration goers happy to see Obama stay on as Commander-in-Chief

By: Francesca Chambers – January 21, 2013

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Young people from across the country flocked to nation's capital Monday to see President Barack Obama's public inauguration at the U.S. Capitol, braving temperatures in the 40s for more than five hours in order to be a part of the symbolic event. Even though the President's second inauguration wasn't expected to be as grand or as historic as his first, for young people who were eligible to vote for President for the first time last year, it was just as special.

Many attendees of the day's events were residents of D.C. or its border states of Virginia and Maryland, but others traveled long distances to see the inauguration, including Emma Nelson, Samantha Platnia and Lindsay LaCross, all 21, who drove 10 hours from the University of Vermont.

And while attendees of the festivities came from different places and backgrounds, many of them had the same thing in common: They were avid Obama supporters.

Although President Obama attracted substantially less youth support in 2012 than he did in 2008, he still handily beat GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney in this key demographic. The huge gap in youth enthusiasm for Obama versus Romney has since caused Republicans to come to the recognition that the party needs to take youth outreach much more seriously than it has throughout the last decade.

"The GOP is never gonna get the young vote," said Ryan Simon, a 25-year-old Obama supporter from Delaware who attended the inauguration. "That's not realistic," he said.

Eden Haile, a recent VCU graduate who is currently getting her master's at Georgetown University said that part of the GOP's problem is that Romney didn't even come to her campus – "Maybe he could have convinced me," she said.

The fact that Obama seemed to be all talk and no action in his last term also didn't seem to be the deterrent that the GOP hoped it would be, particularly to young people, who have a much higher jobless rate than older segments of the population.

Adam Streeter, a 21-year-old Berkeley, Calif. native and a junior at George Washington University, said that even though President Obama didn't fulfill all of his campaign promises from 2008, he understood that after passing Obamacare, the President was limited in what else

he could push through Congress until he was reelected. Streeter also said he wasn't too concerned about the dismal economy and he and his peers' ability to get a job when they graduate because, "I feel like by the time we'll be out it will be recovered, even though the recovery was slower than anticipated."

Generally, the young attendees noted that unlike President Obama, Mitt Romney just wasn't as personable.

"I didn't really trust Mitt; there's just something about him," Haile said, adding that she didn't like how rude he was to the President in the debates.

Brendan Cassidy, a 21-year-old Massachusetts native even described himself as fiscally Republican and "a little more conservative," but also said that the former Massachusetts Gov. had turned him off. "I didn't like Romney," he said.

For some young people at the inauguration, the GOP's stances on social issues were the reason they came out to support Obama at the polls and in D.C. today. Gay marriage and abortion were repeatedly named as reasons they had voted for President Barack Obama. The young voters also liked the President's focus on diversity and equality in his campaign – two themes he hit on hard in his inauguration speech this afternoon.

Stephen Simon, Ryan Simon's older brother, said that unlike the conservative movement, the Obama movement "mirrors America" and is based on "inclusivity." The GOP is "not really open to new points of view," he said. His brother added that many people in the party seem "set in their ways."

Streeter may have summed up the young Obama supporters' feelings about the 2012 presidential election best, however.

Obama talked about "stuff I don't think we would have heard in a Republican address," he said.