Democratic Senator Barack Obama has won the 2008 presidential election and will be sworn in as the first black president of the United States on January 20, 2009.

"It's been a long time coming, but tonight... change has come to America," the new president told a thrilled crowd at a gathering in Chicago. His rival John McCain accepted defeat, and called on his supporters to help the next president. The outcome of the election shows that American people are strongly unhappy with the status quo, and that they are slamming the door on the country's racial history.

Mr. Obama appeared with his family, and the new Vice President Joe Biden, before a crowd of tens of thousands in Grant Park, Chicago. Many people in the crowd cried as Mr. Obama spoke. "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer," he said.

He said he had received a call from Mr McCain whom he praised as a brave and selfless leader. He had warm words for his family, telling his daughters: "Sasha and Malia, I love you both more than you can imagine, and you have earned the new puppy that’s coming with us to the White House."

But he added: "Even as we celebrate tonight, we know the challenges that tomorrow will bring are the greatest of our lifetime - two wars, a planet in peril, the worst financial crisis in a century. "The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. But America - I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there."

Mr Obama won the key battleground states of Pennsylvania and Ohio, before getting the 270 Electoral College votes. Then came the news that he had won Florida, Virginia and Colorado - all of which voted Republican in 2004 - turning the map from red to blue.

Mr Obama got about 52.3% of the popular vote compared with Mr. McCain's 46.4%.

About 130 million Americans went to vote - more than for any election since 1960. The Democrats also increased their majority in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Words

- accept = *annahmen*
- appear = show yourself
- battleground = here: something you have to fight for
- brave = fearless
- celebrate = feiern
- century = a hundred years
- challenge = something difficult = Herausforderung
- crowd = many people who are together in a small area
- defeat = *Niederlage*
- doubt = to think that something may not be true = zweifeln
- earn = verdienen
- electoral college = group of people from each state who get together to elect the President
- founder = the people who were the first to live in America and start a new country = Gründungsväter
- gathering = meeting
- increase = to make bigger
- key = very important
- majority = Mehrheit
- map = Landkarte
- outcome = result
- peril = danger
- popular vote = the votes by the people themselves = direkte Stimmen
- praise = admire
- receive = get
- selfless = if you care about other people more than about yourself
- slam = shut very loudly
- status quo = the situation as it is now
- steep = opposite of flat = steil
- supporter = helper
- swear-sworn = a statement that you make when you take on an official position
- thrill = very excited, happy