



Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Round and round on the ball circuit

Cheers continued across the city and into the night as Barack and Michelle Obama made their way from event to event greeting well-wishers. Here are some highlights from four of the 10 official balls and a slew of unofficial ones.

The official balls

Obama Home States Inaugural Ball

Where: Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Why: A celebration of the president's home states of Hawaii and Illinois

Who: Hometown entertainment includes Chicago hip-hop artist Common and Hawaiian singer/songwriter Jack Johnson, plus Chicago trumpeter Don Cagen, vocalist Becky Cagen, and their orchestra

Seen & heard: At 9:04, the band struck up *Hail to the Chief*. "Aloha," President Obama said. "What's going on? This is a special moment because it represents our roots. . . . Together you have given us so much. So many of you (are) old friends. . . . We love you, and God bless you." The Obamas took a spin on the dance floor, he with his hand around her waist and she with her arm on his shoulder. Spotted: Oprah Winfrey, comedian D.L. Hughley, singer Akon and actress Hayden Panettiere.

David Meyer, 10, a Chicago fifth-grader, in black tux with parents Stacey and Douglas, noted it was not his first time in a tux, just his first inauguration. "Everyone's here for the same reason, Barack Obama, and everyone is so happy. It's kind of like an optimists club," David said.

Another potential club member: Harvard Law professor Laurence Tribe, for whom Obama was a research assistant, said he told people 10 years ago that Obama would be the first African-American president. "(He) has an extraordinary combination of brilliance, talent and charisma, (and an) amazing capacity to listen and understand." Another Tribe student, Chief Justice John Roberts, gave the oath of office.

— Sharon Jayson



By Jim Young, Reuters

Dynamic on the dance floor: Barack and Michelle Obama trip the inauguration fantastic to the strains of *At Last*.