

For once-powerful Republicans, there were two ways to get through today's inauguration -- and neither was entirely without pain.

Some, like former White House aide Suhail Khan, opted to stay in town and witness first-hand the historic transition, even though it meant hearing rebukes from the incoming president and sometimes worse from the inaugural crowd.

"The one sorry note were the **boos for President Bush, Vice President Cheney and Justice Roberts,** " said Khan, who was among a group of former Bush aides standing just a short distance from Obama as he was sworn in by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr.

"And singing the goodbye song," Khan said. "That was uncalled for."

Others GOP stalwarts, such as Ralph Reed, for former head of the Christian Coalition, made the conscious decision to stay away. But that only offered only so much protection.

"Even on television, it was a lot more emotional to watch George W. Bush depart the capital than I thought it would be," Reed said. "It's been more than 12 years that I have been involved with the Bush family political team, and it was difficult to watch it come to an end."

Inaugurations tend to be dominated by celebratory imagery, and Tuesday's event was a spectacle of historic dimensions.

Millions of Americans came to the nation's capital to witness Barack Obama's swearing-in on the mall, to catch glimpses of the nation's first African-American president in a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue, or put on black tie for the constellation of evening balls.

But there is another side to the quadrennial ritual, an undercurrent of disappointment among those who are being replaced or watching their influence wane.

One of the city's most influential Republican lobbyists, Dirk Van Dongen, left D.C. for New York City and watched the speech on television, glad to have left the traffic jams and sidewalks filled with Democrats.

"This is their party," Van Dongen said. "And they should have an open and clean playing field to celebrate their victory."

Other Republicans fled their homes Washington for extra-long weekends in Aspen or Palm Beach.

Some who stayed found drink and sustenance at lobbyist-sponsored parties along the parade route, such as one hosted by the Carmen Group, a bi-partisan Washington lobbying firm, which

took over the upper floors of National Council of Negro Women on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Others attended a rooftop inauguration party sponsored by Prism Public Affairs.

One of the firm's members, Stuart Roy, aide to former GOP House leader Tom DeLay, called the event a complete success. "We ran out of vodka and eggs," he said.

Obama seemed to add to the sting for Republicans on Tuesday by including in his inaugural address a series of unusually pointed critiques of his predecessor, even as President Bush was sitting just a few steps away.

At one point, Obama said that the "time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions" had passed.

At another, he vowed to reject the "false choice" between safety and civil liberties, saying that American power does not "entitle us to do as we please."

Even so, some staunch Republicans said their frustration with the outcome of last November's election was tempered this time by the historic nature of the transition.

Khan, for instance, said he found much to like about Obama's speech, noting that it sounded "conservative themes, like the need for individual responsibility and not depending solely on government."

Reed said he was unhappy with some of Obama's remarks in his inaugural address.

But nevertheless, Reed said that as he watched the speech on television from his office in Atlanta, he felt a mix of awe at the swearing in of the first African-American president, along with some sadness at the departure of a chief executive he believes has been underappreciated.

Besides, Reed said, the feeling of being politically marginalized is tempered by the memory of what happened after Bill Clinton was sworn in 16 years ago.

"We watched on television thinking we were seeing the greatest political talent since John F. Kennedy and feeling that we would be in the wilderness forever," Reed said. "And yet, two years later, we Republicans had the biggest off-year election victory in history" and took control of Congress.

"My sense now is that it is never as bad as you think it is when you lose and are removed from power; and its never as good as you think when you win," he said.

[Source...](#)