

Breaking News: Barack Obama Inaugurated

I don't know where you live, but here in Germany it's not really **breaking news** that Barack Obama was **elected** to be the forty-fourth President of the United States.

Obama **campaigned** on a **platform** of “Change,” and, as an American, I have to admit that change is necessary, even if I'm not sure that Obama and I have the same changes in mind. Still, we agree on the problems: America's image in the world (I live in Germany, I know what Germans think of the U.S.), and the American health care system and the cost of health insurance. One of the key phrases of his **campaign** was “Hope.” I certainly *hope* that he delivers the kind of *change* everyone needs.

Since November, it has been clear that Obama would be the next President. Since November, however, he has been nothing more than another American, though he's a very famous—and popular—American. Today, he will be **inaugurated** in a ceremony, called the **inauguration**, in which he will become President.

Here in Germany—and, I think, in all of Europe—it seems as though President Obama is as popular as a rock star. There is a lot of talk of a new era in **trans-Atlantic** relations. How do you feel about the new President? Do you even care? Was the election big news in your country? Do you expect a lot of change from President Obama?

Vocabulary

Breaking news: You know the word “news.” “News” is what you read in a newspaper. But, in order to be in today's newspaper, the “news” has to be at least a day old, so that the paper has time to learn it, write it, and print it. The “newest news,” the news that's happening *right now*, is breaking news. Breaking news is when they interrupt your favorite TV show to tell you what is happening *right now* somewhere in the world. The last breaking news that I can recall seeing on television was on September 11, 2001.

Elected: Believe it or not, Obama is not the King of America. He's the President, and you get to be President when more people vote for you than for the other guy. The voting process—including the

months of competition before the actual vote—is called an election. To elect is to pick someone based on a vote. And an elected official is someone who is chosen through an election.

Campaign: President Obama was **elected** by 53% of American voters. It's impossible that his voters were all good friends of his, but they did know *something* about him. For months before election day, Obama was giving speeches and making advertisements in television to inform voters about him, and what he wanted to do as President. This work—and the many people who helped him do it—is called his campaign. The Obama campaign was famous for its use of the Internet, and its ability to reach younger voters. To campaign is a verb, meaning to try to persuade people to vote for you. By any measure, Obama campaigned well.

Platform: Before the **election**, the Obama **campaign** had to tell voters, what he would do when he was President. This involved making what we call “campaign promises.” The changes he promised to make—from the Iraq war to health care—are his platform. A **campaign platform** is the list of things that a politician promises to do, if he's **elected**. Obama's platform was big, but the promises that most people remember are the Iraq war and health insurance.

Inaugurate / Inauguration: When a King receives his crown, we say his is coronated. But the President—though he has a lot of power— isn't a King. He only has his office for four years at a time. Still, the ceremony in which he receives his office is important. It's his inauguration. Before the inauguration, Obama is just another American. After the inauguration, he will be the President of the United States.

Trans-Atlantic: The “Atlantic” is the ocean between the east coast of the United States and Europe. When a ship crosses the Atlantic, we say it makes a trans-Atlantic journey. Anything that goes across the Atlantic can be trans-Atlantic. When I fly to my parents in the States, it's a trans-Atlantic flight. “Trans-Atlantic relations” however, refers exclusively to relations between the United States and Europe. The Atlantic is between South America and Africa, but the relations between the two continents aren't normally called trans-Atlantic.