

U.S. President Donald Trump holds a document as he issues executive orders and pardons for January 6 defendants in the Oval Office at the White House on Inauguration Day in Washington, D.C. on Monday.

CARLOS BARRIA/
REUTERS



Black community reacts to contrast of Trump and MLK

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Rochester Democrat and Chronicle | USA TODAY NETWORK

Darnae Pauley found herself struck by the stark contrast between President Donald Trump's inauguration and the observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

As a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority and an advocate for literacy in the Black community, Pauley reflected deeply on the significance of these events.

"Many marginalized people will be losing civil rights in many different ways. This is marking the beginning of a new part of history," Pauley said.

During the 40th annual MLK Day Celebration, hosted by the Greater Rochester Martin Luther King Jr. Commission on Monday, Pastor Sebrone Johnson emphasized the importance of community unity in shaping the future and creating the history they envision.

"We must not allow these shattered dreams to extinguish our hope," Johnson said. "Instead, we must rise together to forge a path forward. King taught us that change is not merely a dream; it is a collective effort."

Some locals, such as Cecil Johnson, treasurer and media specialist for the Black Republican Club of Rochester, attended the inauguration event, sharing that it was a historic moment for the country.

"I am going with the hope and expectation that our country can shift from progressive policies that create poverty, destruction, and death to one of ownership,

empowerment, and creativity," Johnson said in the days leading up to Trump being sworn in.

Many opted to boycott the inauguration, spurred by a widespread text message circulating across the country and in Rochester, calling for a blackout of the television broadcast.

"I think we need to arm ourselves with education, advocacy, and unity at this point. I think the text tried to do that, but it's very passive," Pauley said.

Abdul Bounds, a Rochester resident, attended Trump's inauguration to witness firsthand the fulfillment of promises made to the country.

"I look forward to hearing what plans he has for African Americans in this country and how we are going to succeed," Bounds said. "He called it out. He said, 'Y'all are always looked at as last when y'all built this country.' At the end of the day, we're all Americans."

A common thread among many is the anticipation of observing how a new president's actions will impact everyday communities and how those communities will respond.

"I think we need to understand that this is going to be a more aggressive history," Pauley said. "If we can reform some of MLK's ideologies, take action and control the changes we want for our community, and inspire through education, we can make a good amount of change."

This story includes reporting by staff writer Kerria Weaver.

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