LAMN_ 01-20-2009_ A_ 1_ A1_ LA_ 1_
TSet: 01-19-2009 22:45

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009

Los Angeles Times

75¢ DESIGNATED AREAS HIGHER © 2009 62 PAGES

latimes.com

COLUMN ONE

The long shadows of an old avenue

Once, the historic stretch bookended by the White House and Capitol would have been closed to Obama.

FAYE FIORE
REPORTING FROM WASHINGTON

When Barack Obama takes his triumphant ride up Pennsylvania Avenue on Tuesday, he will retrace the path of Ku Klux Klan marches and roll past the ghosts of hotels and movie theaters that used to turn away people like him.

This historic stretch, bookended by the Capitol on one end and the White House on the other, has witnessed many of the milestones that made an Obama presidency possible. The Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 were signed here.

But it's doubtful that even a Harvard-educated wonder can get his arms around the scope of the civil-rights drama that has played out on this 1.2-mile slice of real estate.

There are places more infamous for their scars — Selma, Birmingham — but none captures the sweep of the story the way Pennsylvania Avenue does, where laws were passed to enslave people and laws were passed to free them, and at least a dozen of Obama's predecessors would sooner have considered him a piece of property than a peer.

Nearly every president has made this ceremonial trek since Thomas Jefferson did it on horseback. But never has the setting been as connected to the nation's shame as much as its glory.

"That juxtaposition is the way I always think of Pennsylvania Avenue — a place of great possibility and of great evil," said Lonnie Bunch, director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. "It is a mirror of

[See **Pennsylvania,** Page A16]

CAROLYN COLE Los Angeles Times

PREPARING FOR HISTORY

On the eve of President-elect Obama's inauguration, Capitol police patrol the area. The transition of power begins this morning, when Obama and his wife, Michelle, meet with President and Laura Bush at the White House.

Bush commutes terms of convicted border agents

Republican lawmakers led an aggressive effort on behalf of the 2 men, who shot a smuggler.

JOSH MEYER
REPORTING FROM WASHINGTON

In one of his final acts in office, President Bush on Monday commuted the controversial prison terms of two former U.S. Border Patrol agents convicted of shooting an unarmed Mexican drug smuggler who fled across the Rio Grande, away from a van loaded with 743 pounds of marijuana.

The clemencies were granted without input from the Justice Department, one of several controversial cases in which the White House did not go through the standard review, according to current and former Justice Department officials.

Bush's grants of clemency for Jose Alonso Compean and Ignacio "Nacho" Ramos were prompted by sustained pressure from Republican lawmakers — along with some Democrats — in California, Texas and other border states.

The former agents' case had been a cause celebre among advocates of a more hard-line approach to securing the border against illegal immigration. Lawmakers and conservative groups had aggressively pushed for pardons for the two men.

Compean and Ramos were convicted of shooting admitted drug smuggler Osvaldo Aldrete Davila in the buttocks as he fled a van loaded with marijuana in 2005. They testified at their trial that they thought Aldrete Davila was armed and that they had shot him in self-defense. But the prosecution said there was no evidence linking Davila to the van, that the agents had not reported the shooting and that they tossed their shotgun casings into the Rio Grande to hide the evidence.

The agents were found guilty of assault with a dangerous weapon, violating Aldrete Davila's civil rights and defacing a crime scene.

Much of the evidence against the agents came from Aldrete Davila, who was granted immunity. He has suffered lasting effects from his injury.

The Justice Department announced the commutations in a brief statement that included no explanation, as is traditional in such executive

[See **Commute,** Page A17]

INAUGURATION

Television coverage of Barack Obama's inauguration begins today as early as 2 a.m. PST. Obama is to take the oath of office at 9 a.m., then will address the nation. The event will be aired on all networks and many other channels.

FRANCINE ORR Los Angeles Times

CELEBRATION: Dalis Williams, 8, shows her support at the Kingdom Day Parade in Los Angeles, marking Martin Luther King Jr. Day. **B1**

OBAMA PLANS A SWIFT START

Repealing an abortion aid policy, setting a timeline for Iraq and closing Guantanamo top the list, aides say.

PETER NICHOLAS AND CHRISTI PARSONS
REPORTING FROM WASHINGTON

In one of his first acts as president, Barack Obama is planning to lift a rule that prevents federal money from going to international family planning groups that counsel women on abortion or perform the procedure.

Obama's repeal of the abortion aid policy is one of several executive actions he will take soon after his inauguration today, according to Obama transition aides. He is also considering lifting Bush administration restrictions on federally funded stem cell research.

Obama's first month in the White House will be busy. On Wednesday — his first full day as president — he is expected to meet with military advisors and order them to submit plans for withdrawing combat troops from Iraq within 16 months.

That pledge was a staple of his campaign speeches, and aides said he would follow through. But Obama also has promised to heed advice from ground-level military commanders, some of whom think the 16-month timetable is too rushed. So the deadline could slip.

Within days of taking office, Obama will order the closing of the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, a transition aide said. About 250 inmates remain at Guantanamo. The Obama administration plans to assess each one to determine where the prisoners should be sent. The review could take months, so the prison won't be closed right away, the aide said.

Next month, Obama will convene a "fiscal responsibility summit," where participants will discuss the spiraling

[See **Obama,** Page A16]

Terror law used on unruly air travelers

RALPH VARTABEDIAN
REPORTING FROM OKLAHOMA CITY

PETER PAE
REPORTING FROM LOS ANGELES

Tamera Jo Freeman was on a Frontier Airlines flight to Denver in 2007 when her two children began to quarrel over the window shade and then spilled a Bloody Mary into her lap.

She spanked each of them on the thigh with three swats. It was a small incident, but one that in the heightened anxiety after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks would eventually have enormous ramifications for Freeman and her children.

A flight attendant confronted Freeman, who responded by hurling a few profanities and throwing what remained of a can of tomato juice on the floor.

The incident aboard the Frontier flight ultimately led to Freeman's arrest and conviction for a federal felony defined as an act of terrorism under the Patriot Act, the controversial federal law enacted after the 2001 attacks in New York and Washington.

"I had no idea I was breaking the law," said Freeman, 40, who spent three months in jail before pleading guilty.

[See **Airlines,** Page A17]

ANJA NIEDRINGHAUS Pool Photo

AMID THE RUINS

A Palestinian man prays in the remains of his home in Beit Lahiya, in the northern Gaza Strip. Israel and Hamas abided by truce commitments and Israeli troops pulled out of the territory. **WORLD, A4**

Human rights lawyer is slain

Near the Kremlin, in broad daylight, the masked assassin also kills a Russian newspaper writer. **WORLD, A3**

Biden shushes wife on 'Oprah'

She said he'd been offered a choice between secretary of State and VP. **NATION, A12**

Goal in Industry

The city's 84 voters will be asked to back an NFL stadium. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Fiat may return

The Italian carmaker could take a big stake in Chrysler. **BUSINESS, C1**

Weather Page **B10**
Complete Index.....**A2**

TODAY'S SECTIONS

Section A, California, Business, Sports, Calendar

Printed with soy inks on partially recycled paper.

7 85944 00075 9

Their world looks darker through ad-covered windows

Tenants rail against signs blanketing office buildings, blotting out views and sunshine.

DAVID ZAHNISER

When Patricia Barragan opened her physical therapy practice in an office building on Santa Monica Boulevard, she picked the location in part because of the sweeping views.

With windows that look north toward the Santa Monica Mountains, the fourth-floor suite gave Barragan's clients a calming environment — until last month, when her landlord covered the north side of the building with a two-story "supergraphic" advertising a global bank chain.

"When I came to work after Christmas, I had this horrible orange drape that diminished the light in my activity room and my treatment room by almost 40%," she said. "The first patients who came in at 7 o'clock said, 'What is this? This is depressing. I don't want to be treated in these depressing rooms.' "

Barragan is one of a growing number of workers furious that supergraphics — large vinyl or plastic signs stretched across the sides of buildings — are darkening their offices, wrecking their views and alienating their customers.

The multistory images, which can be bigger than the biggest billboard, have moved to the center of a long-running debate about outdoor advertising in Los Angeles, with at least a dozen supergraphics popping up in the month since the City Council approved a 90-day ban on new outdoor signs.

The outcry comes as the council struggles to come up with rules for regulating new outdoor advertising that won't be struck down as a restriction of free speech. Although the fight over billboards traditionally had been waged between advertising companies and neighborhood groups, office workers have entered the fray in a noisy way.

After the supergraphic went up on her building, Barragan contacted her building manager, then her lawyer and then her councilman's office to demand that the sign come down.

At 11600 Wilshire Blvd., dental hygienist Susan Rider com-

[See **Signs,** Page A14]

Lives in pieces on shelves of a Russian pawnshop

Hocking heirlooms was unthinkable — till the financial crisis.

MEGAN K. STACK
REPORTING FROM MOSCOW

In the fluorescent-lighted dens of despair called pawnshops, bad luck is a commodity as casual as an aging cellphone or a grandmother's ring, held up for inspection, the sellers holding their breath to see what it's all worth.

You won't find Russia's petro-rich here, but you will find plenty of people who wouldn't have been caught peddling heirlooms to a pawnshop a year ago — people too prideful to say they've been ejected, at least temporarily, from the middle class. They creep in off the rusting snow banks and from calcified cars, turning gold and silver in their pockets, looking for cash.

On the walls of this Moscow pawnshop are pictures of dreams: a black-and-white shot of Paris, still-life portraits of gold bars and a chest of gold coins. "Attention," announces a sign. "Drunk clients will not be served."

Hounded by landlords, determined to bring the same sweets and vodkas to winter parties, turned away by banks,

[See **Russia,** Page A10]