

Bush hails Obama's 'historic' triumph

President Bush today hailed the 'historic' victory of his successor as Barack Obama prepared to unveil his team after being crowned America's first black president.

Just hours after his extraordinary victory, the 47-year-old senator was already at work firming up key appointments.

And while Mr Obama remained closeted at home in Chicago, it was down to an uncharacteristically eloquent George W. Bush to express the sentiments of much of the nation.

Speaking in the White House Rose Garden, he described his successor's triumph as 'a dream fulfilled'.



Stunning win: President-elect Barack Obama kisses his wife Michelle after a landslide victory

Obama wins historic US election

Barack Obama has become the first black US president after a landslide election victory. The 47-year-old Democrat led his Republican rival John McCain by 297 votes to 139 as he passed the magic number of 270 needed to win the presidency at 4am GMT. Later projections showed he won by 349 votes to 162.

Mr Obama promised change and a new dawn of leadership.

Speaking after sweeping a series of key battleground states in a landslide electoral college victory, he pledged to be a president of all Americans and vowed to overcome challenges which were "the greatest of our lifetime", including two wars, a global economic crisis and a planet in peril.

"I promise you, we as a people will get there," he said.

Cheered on by tens of thousands of supporters in Chicago's Grant Park, Mr Obama took to a stage lined with US flags with his his wife Michelle and young daughters Malia, ten, and Sasha, seven, at his side.

Mr Obama told those whose support he had not won: "I hear your voices, I need your help and I will be your president too."

He said he would listen to his opponents, adopt a multilateral approach to world affairs and told those watching outside the US that "our stories are singular but our destiny is shared".

"The new dawn of America leadership is at hand," he said.

"To those who would tear the world down, we will defeat you. To those who seek peace and security, we support you.

"And to all those who have wondered if American's beacon still burns as bright, tonight we've proved once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, opportunity and unyielding hope.

"That's the true genius of America. The road ahead will be long, our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year, or even in one term, but America I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there.

"I promise you, we, as a people, will get there."

Many in the crowd were crying and even political pundits on major US TV networks wiped tears from their eyes as the man who could transform race relations in America ascended to the highest office in the land.

Conceding defeat in his home state of Arizona, Mr McCain said: "The American people have spoken and they have spoken clearly. This is an historic election."

Mr McCain joined outgoing president George W Bush in calling Mr Obama to congratulate him personally.

Mr Obama, a first-term senator from Illinois, will be sworn in as the 44th US president on January 20, 2009.

The win by Mr Obama, the son of a black father from Kenya and white mother from Kansas, comes 45 years after the high point of the equality movement led by Martin Luther King Jr.