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Final Edition

**The Dream is alive; Obama draws parallels to MLK, blasts records of McCain, Bush**

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DENVER -Embarking on the final leg of his historic presidential run, Barack Obama on Thursday invoked the promise of Martin Luther King in a pledge to end "the broken politics in Washington and the failed presidency of George W. Bush."

Before nearly 90,000 flag-waving supporters in an open-air NFL stadium, Obama accepted his party's nomination in a quest to become the nation's first African-American president -- 45 years to the day after King delivered his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

Introduced by Sen. Dick Durbin, Obama spoke sweepingly about the plight of the working class, of waitresses surviving on tips, of families awash in credit card debt and coping with $2,000 a year less since the beginning of Bush's presidency.

"Tonight, more Americans are out of work, and more are working harder for less. More of you have lost your homes, and more are watching your home values plummet," Obama said.

"These challenges are not all of government's making. But the failure to respond is a direct result of a broken politics in Washington and the failed presidency of George W. Bush," he said.

"America, we are better than these last eight years. We are a better country than this."

Interrupted dozens of times by applause as flash bulbs flared, the 47-year-old U.S. senator from Hyde Park resurrected King's memory and quoted from his 1963 speech to draw a modern-day parallel.

" 'We cannot walk alone,' the preacher cried. 'And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back,' " Obama said. "America, we cannot turn back. Not with so much work to be done."

Before Obama's prime time speech, he was preceded by two of King's children and the last surviving speaker from King's Aug. 28, 1963, March on Washington.

"Tonight, we have gathered here in this magnificent stadium in Denver because we still have a dream," said U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), who shared the dais with the Baptist minister 45 years ago.

"With the nomination of Sen. Barack Obama tonight, the man who will lead the Democratic Party in its march toward the White House, we are making a down payment on the fulfillment of that dream," Lewis continued.

Obama used his 44-minute speech to sharpen his attacks against Republican rival John McCain in the first open-air acceptance address by a presidential nominee since John F. Kennedy in 1960.

"John McCain has voted with George Bush 90 percent of the time," Obama said, his voice echoing through cavernous Invesco Field. "I don't know about you, but I'm not ready to take a 10 percent chance on change."

Obama, who served eight years in Springfield and is still in his first term in the U.S. Senate, addressed criticism about his experience.

"I realize that I am not the likeliest candidate for this office. I don't fit the typical pedigree, and I haven't spent my career in the halls of Washington. But I stand before you tonight because all across America something is stirring," Obama said. "What the naysayers don't understand is that this election has never been about me. It's about you."

And when it was over, his family joined the nominee, whose life story stretches from Kenya and Kansas to Hawaii and Chicago as Brooks & Dunn's country hit "Only in America" blared from the speakers.