

Michelle Obama's Contribution to Society

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In Michelle Obama's most recent novel, *Becoming*, she states "Who are we and who do we want to become?" This question to herself was vital in her decisions as to what becoming the

first African American First Lady in America and how she would contribute herself to society. Through her accomplishments, such as becoming a “role model for women, advocating for healthy families, service members, higher education and international adolescent education” (Michelle Obama), she has successfully become, not only a highly respectable individual, but a role model as to how the First Lady should act and contribute to her nation. According to her novel, she discussed that she knew her skin would affect her position as the first lady. To me, how she pushed herself to stand out because of those differences and not only overcoming but exceeding the expectations past a more vulnerable state than many other First Ladies', they are the very reason she had such a positive influence on society. I believe Michelle Obama to be the greatest impact as a positive role model and was admirably successful in her duty as First Lady.

Certainly with great power comes great responsibility and this was a serious matter for Michelle. She recognized that her family was going to be “put under a microscope”. This meaning because their family became the first African American leaders, their actions and reasoning would be held to a higher liability for criticism or false enhanced accusations if a mistake were made. As the first lady, her immediate approach to this title was to exceed the expectations. The first steps into the white house she was expected to decide decor or “look pretty” for Barack. She was determined to provide service to her nation beyond the standard expectations and they did that with their \$100,000 decoration “advance” and put it back into the nation. The steps her and her husband took towards not only proving their competency as every President must prove to properly leading the nation had vital impact on racism around America. Not only was citizenship evaluated, but profiling of young black individuals and their relationship to the police. “The organized demonstrations, protests and outrage of a new generation of civil rights activists turned the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter into the clarion call for

a new social justice movement. Black Lives Matter activists have forcefully argued that the U.S. criminal justice system represents a gateway to racial oppression, one marked by a drug war that disproportionately targets, punishes and warehouses young men and women of color. In her bestselling book "[The New Jim Crow](#)," legal scholar Michelle Alexander argued that mass incarceration represents a racial caste system that echoes the pervasive, structural inequality of a system of racial apartheid that persists."(Obama's Effort to Heal Racial Divisions and Uplift Black America). The entire family was at risk to be affected by this problem. Some priorities Michelle spoke in her novel how she decided to delegate decorative First Lady tasks to other trusted individuals. Before anything could be really accomplished out of Michelle's goals to exceed expectations, assessing their safety and putting measures in place once Barack began his Presidency took precedence. Along with safety measures to adjust to, her daughters Malia and Sasha were realizing what it meant to be watched publicly. Not only would their skin effect how accountable they were for any failures or mistakes in the Whitehouse, their parenting became hand and hand being criticized under that microscope as well. Michelle created a bigger goal for herself than any other First Lady on top of higher stakes any other First Lady has had to face.

An event took place, showing the effect of this prediction, with the Queen of England. Michelle didn't want to distract from her efforts but Michelle ended up touching the Queen and hugging her. This was an outrage to the public, but she ended up bonding with her. In her eyes, all she was doing was politely interacting with another human being. Since the Queen hadn't said otherwise and gestured towards her the same she didn't consider anything to be an issue. An article written back in 2009 states, "One must certainly touch the Queen if the monarch offers her hand (though you should return this not with a firm handshake but just a touch). On Wednesday, Michelle Obama put her hand on the Queen only after the Queen had placed her own hand on the

First Lady's back as part of their conversation. So there is room for theological argument as to whether the American reciprocity of touch was allowable given the social dynamics of the situation. (...) Still, the sight of anyone apparently touching the Queen with anything more than a limp handshake is enough to send the British (...) twittering.” (Chua-Eoan, Howard) Michelle knew that despite the outbreak in her actions, she needed to go to the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School as planned and make a good impression on everyone. I really valued this approach Michelle took to the opinions of the press and the public. It's one of the reasons I find her most admirable to hold herself high, but it didn't come without a price. Michelle faced self doubt in just about every scenario she came across. She discussed in her book further how she felt the need to walk on eggshells if everything wasn't planned accordingly, but one of her biggest adjustments to make were to typical protocols and bending them enough to allow them to keep their family valued. This included what outfits she wore to these events and how she presented herself. Her biggest doubt she had faced through all of this was most importantly if her family could succeed in these new surroundings.

However, she did overcome these barriers. She was successful in her efforts towards school and her impact on children. In *American Grown*, Michelle talked about planting the White House garden with children and discussed the impact across the country and to healthy choices for families. She fought against childhood obesity and created school lunch and nutrition programs. Not only did she advocate for these movements, but she preached it in her own home with her own daughters. According to her novel, she made the time continue to parent her children and didn't hold house staff accountable to her children's or responsibilities. She told the house maids the girls were responsible for making their own beds every morning, told the girls to never ask for more than what was needed and be polite and don't ask anything they couldn't do

themselves, but they didn't need to ask permission to go outside and play and still be children and enjoy life. "The truth was that in all of this the girls and I were supporting players, beneficiaries of the various luxuries afforded to Barack -- important because our happiness was tied to his; protected for one reason, which was that if our safety was compromised, so too would be his ability to think clearly and lead our nation." (Obama, Michelle).

Through the story of *Becoming*, her experiences as the first black First Lady have shown exemplary leadership. She was a mother first, wife second, and role model third. Her actions with the Queen, the expectations put on her daughters, and the courage she had to overcome the expectations put on her from our nation given the judgement to the color of her and her families skin. To me and many others, she is remarkable for how she still chooses to contribute to society and impact children since 2009. Education, health, and equality were all vital to her success in overcoming the standard expectations of a First Lady and set an example as to how the First Lady should contribute to society and support the President. This is why I believe Michelle Obama to be the greatest impact as a positive role model and was admirably successful in her duty as First Lady. I wonder what her potential could be as first female President and how she would work to exceed those expectations to go beyond what's expected and care for those in need.

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