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A Contemporary Leader's Biography: Dr. Michelle Obama

In Fulfillment of

LEAD 704, The Leaders Role in the 21st Century

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July 11, 2020

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Abstract

“Global leadership is the process of influencing individual , groups and organizations (inside and outside the boundaries of the global organization) representing diverse cultural, political, institutional systems to contribute towards the achievement of global organization’s goals”(Matthews, 2016, p.40). Their connectedness and interdependence are imperative for a leader to impact the global economy. As the biography of former first lady Michelle Obama, the pervasiveness of her leadership skills enabled her to build the necessary relationships and partnerships, that allows her to influence across cultural boundaries, ultimately impacting and influencing the global economy as an intellectual resource.

A Contemporary Leader's Biography: Dr. Michelle Obama

Michelle Obama is the wife, life partner of the 44th President of the United States of America, Barack Obama. She became and continues to be a favorite icon and influential leader for not only this country's citizens, but nation-wide. Her experiences as a loving wife and mother, in high power careers in a legal practice as an executive in the University of Chicago Medical Center and public non-profit organizations have enabled her to support her husband's political career, launch initiatives on social issues such as poverty, healthy living and education, influencing both children and adults, male and females, the rich and poor, as one of America's most influential, living female leader's to date.

Early Life

Birth and Family

Born in 1964, Michelle LaVaughn Robinson was raised on the on the South side of Chicago with very humble beginnings. She lived in a small home, with her brother, Craig, and

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her parents, Fraser Robinson a city pump operator, and her mom Marian, who stayed at home to care for the family. Michelle and her brother shared the living room as their sleeping quarters, shared their meal, read and played games together, typical of small close knit families in that day. In her home, their emphasis was the unity and love of family, along with education.

Her family was her world, the center of everything she knew. Everything that mattered, and what she knew was within a five block radius, from Sunday school, to the candy store to gas station along with the drive-through theater. When Michelle took piano lessons, her family would make trips into the city for the piano recitals, to visit the Art Institute, or to see a play. The car ride in her dad's Buick, was a more cherished event that strengthened their family relationships as they talked and travelled. At one point, many in her neighborhood were moving out of the neighborhood, into the suburbs, to a "better life", as crime, sex, life choices about race, inequality and politics dominated the world within, and inner city life declined. According to Werhane (2000), "what matters are social relationships; family, religious, and community traditions; and values, deeply held values about what is important and treasured, that is, those social goods a community cannot give up without sacrificing more than its lack of material well-being"(p. 359).

"Michelle was exposed to church and was encouraged to find her own basis for faith by thinking for herself" (Slevin, 2015, p. 45). The freedom granted to make her own decisions was grounded in the framework of honesty, hard work and self-discipline, which are all characteristics of admired leaders that was instilled in her at an early age, otherwise punishments were rendered, but the goal was always one of free thinking. Her parents recognized the greater possibilities at the fingertips of Michelle, as she stepped into the world, thus an "independence of mind was not only an asset but a necessity" (Slevin, 2015, p.46). Her father instilled and

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demonstrated integrity, telling her, “you don’t want to do things because you’re worried about people thinking they’re right; you want to do the right things. You grow up not worrying about what people think about you”(Slevin, 2015, p.49).

As a child, she rarely chose to play outside after school, nor did she invite friends over, but she could observe all that was going on from her bedroom window. Michelle preferred to stay inside to play with her dolls and blocks, to avoid the messiness on the streets. When she became angry about school issues, she voiced and channeled her frustrations through her mother, who quietly listened and lobbied the school to test the higher performing students. A week later they were promoted to third grade.

Soon after her mother encouraged her to go outside to engage with other children, to build her social skills. By age ten, out of boredom she ventured outside on her own, following her brother around the neighborhood, until she established her own relationships.

Education

Michelle started Kindergarten at Bryn Mawr Elementary school in 1969 with an advantage of having learned to read by the age of four, which subsequently enabled her to skip second grade, as noted above. However, the highlight in kindergarten was when Michelle was reading and froze when it came to the word White. Embarrassed by her faltering, the next day she asked her teacher for a do over. After her teacher told her no, she demanded the do over. Advocating for herself, at this early age, she successfully read each word, proudly claiming and exhibiting her gold star that was placed onto her shirt. Having a drive to achieve, by sixth grade, Michelle entered into her school’s gifted program, where accelerated courses in biology were completed, and she learned French. She went on to attend the first magnet high school for gifted students, Whitney M. Magnet High School. She served as student government treasurer and

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graduated in 1981 as class salutatorian. Though her parents “standards of achievement were very high, they emphasized effort and attitude over grades”(Slevin, 2015, p. 41), promoting freedom of speech.

Her college matriculation began at Princeton University in September 1981, where words of inspiration came from President William Bowen, encouraging them “to aim high and advocating learning for its own sake, not merely as a means to some more prosaic end. Live life generously, in service to others, asserting that the most worthwhile goals are often elusive and almost always just beyond reach”(Slevin, 2015, pp. 71-72). Michelle had her ups and downs, frustrations and triumphs, as most black college students do in a predominately white institution as they combat racism through authentic self -representation, respect, and dignity, all of which fueled her drive to remain consistent, persistent, competitive, never to give up, thereby graduating *cum laude* in 1985 with a B.A. in Sociology. She proceeded onto Harvard Law School, graduated with her J.D. (Juris Doctor) in 1988. While a student there, she participated in demonstrations, petitioning for the hiring and inclusion of more minority students and staff, gaining experience as a political activist and more skills, while increasing her confidence and consciousness within, and the world within her sphere of influence.

What stood out the most was her experience, what “W.E.B. Du Bois termed two-ness, a perpetual struggle to reconcile her blackness with her Americanness, feeling like a visitor on campus”(Slevin, 2015, p. 74). Racism was real, and affirmative action brought its complications to the scenario, with Michelle navigating the deep channels of change. These experiences were developing Michelle’s capacity to master the balance of “respectability and authentic representation of self” (Gamble, 2017, p. 60).

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Passing the Illinois bar exam was not an easy feat for Michelle, she failed on her first attempt, something that she never experienced in matriculation as a student, except if you consider her inability to spell the word white as a failure. She “felt ashamed, thinking she had let down every person who had ever taught her, encouraged or employed her. In retrospect, she believed it was the disinterest she felt all through law school, the burn out of being a student, being bored with subjects that struck her as being esoteric and far removed from real life” (Obama, 2018, p.155), which revealed her passion for wanting to be around, helping or serving people, rather than touting books, dealing with the academics of a career. She went on to pass the Bar exam on her second attempt, using the experience of this failure as a testimony, a steppingstone toward the journey of her future.

Early Career

Lawyer

After graduating from Law School, Michelle worked as an associate in the Law firm, Sidley Austin, specializing in marketing and intellectual property. However, after losing her dad at the early age of 55, she felt an urgency, realizing life is too short and not to be wasted. Stating, “if I should die, I don’t want to be remembered for the stacks of legal briefs I’ve written or corporate trademarks I’ve defended. I feel certain I have more to offer the world. It was time to make a move” (Obama, 2018, p.146), time to lead. It was at Sidley, that she met Barack Obama.

Unsure of where she was headed and where she would land, she made the leap. She sent out her resume and letters of introduction all across Chicago, to heads of foundations, Universities and non-profit community based organizations. To her it was more about social networking, building relationships to find out what was possible, and how others went about. Realizing having a degree would not necessarily unfold a career, that fulfilled her heart. She

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asked questioned to just about anyone she networked with, about what type of work is possible for a lawyer, who did not want to practice law.

On visiting Art Sussman, in house counsel for the University of Chicago, a man her mother once worked for as a secretary. In retrospect, she realized that she had never visited this elite University sitting in her back yard, on the South Side of Chicago. There was a cultural disconnect. Based on South Side mindset as a youth, “elite meant not for us” (Obama, 2018, p.148). Ironically she and her brother applied and were accepted into elite colleges. Then, the thought occurred to her, she would have made a great “University of Chicago Student if the school had known about me and I had known about the school, if the town-gown divide hadn’t been so vast” (Obama, 2018, p. 147).

At that point, she felt purpose coming to fruition. According to Michelle, “The combination of where I came from and what I’d made of myself gave me a certain, possible meaningful perspective. Being black and from the South Side, what I suddenly saw, helped me recognize problems that a man like Art Sussman didn’t even realize existed” (Obama, 2018, p. 147). It was years later, that she transitioned into a position at the University of Chicago.

However, three years later she left her corporate law career, to pursue public service, working for the city and Mayor Richard Daley as an assistant commissioner of planning and development for Chicago. Prior to her acceptance of this position, Michelle did her homework. Through relationship building, she was first introduced to Susan Sher, who was practicing law with the Chicago city government. She had bailed out many corporate lawyers, but after hearing Michelle’s heart, not to practice law, she referred her to “Valerie Jarrett a newly appointed deputy chief of staff for the major of Chicago, with deep connections across the African American community”(Obama, 2018, p. 148). A twenty minute reservation with Valerie, turned

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into an hour and a half, with Michelle asking the necessary and appropriate questions about the work, the mayor's responsiveness to his employees, testing the suitability of the work for her and vice versa.

Due to her upbringing, experiences and culture , Michelle had little tolerance or faith for politics which made her hesitant to accept the job offer as an assistant to the major, and the pay decrease did not help. For Michelle, politics had traditionally been used against black folks, as a means to keep us isolated and excluded, leaving us undereducated, unemployed, and underpaid” (Obama, 2018, p. 151).

However, Michelle knew that Valerie was someone she could learn from, someone she needed to stick close to. With intrigue, intuitive instincts, she felt the acceptance of this job offer might nudge her to a whole different future from the one she had planned. Step by step, God was preparing, and unfolding his plan, and she embraced and entered through every door of opportunity prepared for her. While at city hall Michelle's coworkers described her as flexible, practical, capable of navigating through problems. With confidence and through her strong value system, she had a strong sense of what she wanted to do and would pursue it until its completion, despite of resistance and other uncertain storms. According to Bill George (2009), Michelle, in following her “True North, she was prepared to guide her organization through severe situations because she knew who she was. Her self-awareness, self-confidence, and resilience to take the responsibility for failings, leading others through rapidly unfolding, often unfolding, sequence of events” (p.2).

In pursuing her gifts and passions, in 1993, she answered the call, in spite of her qualifications, or lack thereof, becoming the executive director for the Chicago Office of Allies, a non-profit leadership training program that develops skills on how to build relationship and

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achieve results. The goal was to give the Allies (the recruits) a drive to continue working in the nonprofit or public sector, thereby helping to build a new generation of community leaders, with global effects. Michelle was noted to have an ability to be understood, anywhere she went. Thereby, representative of a “leader’s responsibility to serve as a role model, to mentor the next generation of leaders, and to make sure that continuous opportunities for learning and development are provided. As she strengthened herself she enhanced her ability to strengthen others” (Rosenbach, Taylor & Youndt, 2012, p. 101).

Three years later, Michelle joined the University of Chicago as associate dean of student services. She went on to develop the first community service program, and 2002 she went on to work for the University of Chicago, as executive director of community relations and external affair, broadening and preparing her capacity to serve the public. In 2005, Michelle was appointed a vice-president of the same office, while serving as a board member of Chicago Council on Global affairs. In serving and transitioning in six different roles, with different capacities, in 15 years, she was developing self-awareness, professional skill, integrity, grit and resilience, preparing for future endeavors, stretching herself in fresh new ways, exemplifying the “three dimensions of orientation to a global mindset:

1. A Way of Being

- Openness
- Collaboration
- Flexibility
- Cosmopolitanism

2. Knowledge

- Sense-making

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- Information integration
- Analysis

3. Behavior

- Expression
- Enactment of orientation
- Knowledge

Which are integrated by learning process that involves the use of individual resources and global environment.” (Matthews, 2016, p.38)

Marriage (Wife)

Before marriage, obviously came the courtship, but Michelle was leery of mixing business with pleasure. It was at Sidley, that she met Barack Obama, as his advisor during his summer internship. On this first summer’s visit, she was impressed as he moved easily between different worlds, with a sense of purpose that was not tied to wealth, corporate status or success. After a corporate picnic, they ate ice-cream, he asked if he could meet her family, as well as kiss her. From that point on they spent the rest of the summer together, learning of and from each other.

At the funeral of one of Michelle’s friends, she rested her head on Barack’s shoulder. Barack wrote, “I promised Fraser Robinson that I would take care of his girl. I realized that in some unspoken, still tentative way, she and I were already becoming a family”(Slevin, 2015, p. 133). In the process of finding themselves, pursuing their future, marriage was on Michelle’s mind, and she was not shy in letting it be known that she was ready. On July 31, 1991, day that

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Barack took his Bar exam, they went out to celebrate his success over dinner, he also proposed marriage, two years after dating, they were married on October 3, 1992.

Mother

Michelle gave birth to their first daughter on July 4, 1998. Barack found himself engaged in politics, commuting to Springfield when legislation sessions were in. Michelle found herself with an infant, a demanding job and an often absent husband. Therefore, she reduced her hours and pay. To Michelle finances became an issue though their joint income reached \$240,000. Money was going out faster as they could make it. The strain and stress was real with this young family. Michelle felt as though she was running the family and household singlehandedly stating, “this does not feel like an equal partnership. Frequently telling him he only thinks of himself, stating, “ I never thought I’d have to raise a family alone” (Slevin, 2015, p. 171).

With a strained marriage, Natasha, their second daughter was born on June 10, 2001. At three months Sasha, aka Natasha, contracted meningitis for which she was rushed to the hospital. After a spinal tap and antibiotics, she recovered, Barack was awakened, and their marriage revived.

While on maternity leave with Sasha, a new job opportunity came up. With no babysitter, she bundled up Sasha and took her to the interview. When she set in front of the hospital president, she declared, pertaining to Sasha, “this is my life” (Slevin, 2015, p. 176), being impressed, he met her terms to be the next Vice president at University Community Service Center.

After the election of President Barack Obama, Malia and Sasha was ten and seven years old respectively. Through all the drama in the process of reaching the Whitehouse, Michelle knew her priority was as “MUM-in- chief” (Jere-Malanda, 2008, p.8) to her daughters, ensuring

they remained healthy and grounded. Michelle guided and nurtured her girls through the presidency, trying to keep things as normal as possible. Her now, well-adjusted young adult daughters have gone off to college, leaving their parents as empty nesters.

First Lady years

Unknowingly, Michelle found herself to be first-lady in training, when she supported her husband's senate campaign. She went on the campaign trail, spoke up for her husband, raised money and took the girls when necessary. Her first appearance in the national spotlight came when she was at the side of her husband at the Democratic National Convention in 2004, for which he was elected as a U.S. Senator from Illinois that November.

Juggling the work and family affairs, when Barack decided to run for Democratic president nomination, Michelle scaled back work commitments in 2007 to support, and attend to her husband's campaign and family obligations, but in return, Barack had to quit smoking. Again and again she was out on the trail, with a mission to demystify Barack, focusing on the Obama's as real, down to earth people, rather than their accomplishments and resumes. Despite the rough terrain navigated, Barack's quest became her quest, which was solidified when Barack won the nomination, and was elected the first black, 44th President of the United States in November 2008, for he had an audacity to hope.

In seeking a second term as President, again Michelle submitted herself once again to her husband's campaign diligently, giving talks, making personal appearances, becoming an icon herself among American families, men and women alike. In November 2012, Barack was re-elected for a second term as a U.S. President. The entire family accompanied him as he delivered his victorious acceptance speech.

Foundation

The Obama Foundation, Community Leadership Corps was founded in 2014 guided by the principle that ordinary people, working together can change the world. Its mission is to inspire people to take action, empowering them to change their world. The Obama foundation also hosts, My Brother's keeper Alliance, Fellowship, Scholars, Girls opportunity Alliance, Leaders: Africa, Leaders: Asia-Pacific and the Obama Foundation Summit, which influences, encourages, explores innovative, creative ideas, that foster change by challenging problem solving through critical thinking, while empowering rising leaders through a collaborative, leadership experience.

Michelle' Notable Speeches

Michelle, through out her career, gave many rich and powerful speeches, especially as the first lady, bringing her not only praise for her inspirational, practical, down-to-earth oratory skills, but criticism for being outspoken, but she learn how to "go high", when negativity was at its all-time low. A few mentionable speeches include:

2012 Democratic National Convention, September 4, 2012

In this, one of her first national speeches, she stated how she was inspired by people, who reminded her how blessed we are to live in the greatest nation on earth, it was a privilege and honor to serve, as your first lady.

She went on to show her humanity, as a wife first, than first lady, supporting, and edifying her husband, a man, whose character has not changed all the years that she has known him, emphasizing that Barack understands the American Dream, he also can relate to the struggles to achieve the dream, consequently, in the deep recesses of his heart, his goal is to make a difference, in the lives of all people.

2016 Democratic national Convention, July 25, 2016

Michelle campaigned for the former first lady, senator and secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, who became first women democratic nominee for the American Presidency. Though she had run against Barack in 2008, Michelle saw the bigger vision, for a progressive America, giving Hillary Clinton her full support. One of her eloquent quotes during that time was:

“...I wake up every morning in a house that was built by slaves, and I watch my daughters, two beautiful, intelligent, Black young women playing with their dogs on the White House lawn. And because of Hillary Clinton, my daughters, and all our sons and daughters, now take for granted that a woman can be president of the United States” (Biography.com Editors, 2020).

She stated, “I trusted Hilary because she understood the demands of the presidency and had the temperament to lead, because she was qualified as any nominee in history” (Obama, 2018, p. 407). At the same time she spoke out against the bullies addressing Donald Trump without mentioning his name, encouraging everyone not to stoop to their level. Emphasizing that words matter, the hateful, divisive language does not reflect the true spirit of America, appealing to America to take a stand, with dignity, stand for their rights, the values that this country has sustained for generations. Stating, “Dignity has always gotten us through, when they go low, we go high” (Obama, 2018, p. 407).

Ironically, the Obama family were living in the white house 50 years after the civil rights movement, and 150 years after the abolition of slavery. The family visited the “Door of No Return on Goree Island, a former slave trade post. Michelle stressed that slaves had built the Executive Mansion. In doing so, the Obamas brought home the message that their presence in the White house has not erased their roots” (Morabia, 2017, p. 20). Lauret (2011) believes, with

Michelle's visibility, "we can now appreciate her role as First Lady in the White house, as one who speaks from a position deeply rooted in African America, and from self-representation to an American public discourse that has become more representative as a result" (p. 117), globally.

Final Speech as First lady, January 13, 2017

On this last speech as first lady at the white house, you felt Michelle's heart, her passion for young people, especially as a humble leader, she was grateful, and honored her position, but was more concerned about her service to us the people, holding herself accountable for every step she took, and word spoken. Then she spoke to the hearts young America;

"I want young people to know that they matter, they belong. So don't be afraid. You hear me, young people? Don't be afraid. Be focused. Be determined. Be hopeful. Be empowered. Empower yourself with a good education. Then get out there and use that education to build a country worthy of your boundless promise. Lead by example with hope; never fear."(Obama, 2017)

Commencement Speeches

To Michelle, "commencement speeches were a scared spring-time ritual" (Obama, 2018, p. 404). She delivered many speech from high school to college ceremonies. As first lady, her last commencement speech was at University of Mississippi a HBS, emphasizing the need to always strive for excellence. When she spoke at the City College of New York, she emphasized the value of diversity and immigration by embracing and quoting the valedictorian sentiments, ""The sole irreplaceable experience came from learning alongside people with life experiences strikingly different from my own. I have learned that diversity in human experience gives rise to diversity in thought, which creates distinct ideas and methods of problem solving" (Obama, 2016, p.36). When in New Mexico, speaking to Native American students, she was

“emboldened, feeling the need to speak honestly and directly about what it meant to be marginalized by race and gender. From the context of hate in the news and the political discourse, she wanted to give them a reason to always hope. Stating, “I knew invisibility. I’d live invisibility. I came from a history of invisibility, mentioning her great-great-grandfather, was a slave, buried in an unmarked grave, offering a testament, that all things are possible, therefore it is possible to overcome invisibility. Lauret (2011) posits, for Michelle “the possibility of self-representation so successfully is also an act of speaking on behalf of others. When speaking from her own experiences, she also speaks for others not of her class, race, gender or political affiliation with little fear, despite the fact that she was repeatedly taken to task for being too outspoken”(p. 100).

Speeches on Topics of Interest

Social Media and impulsivity

Michelle passionately spoke about the responsibility of leaders at the Obama foundation, leadership summit, stressing the problems with being impulsive, expressing thoughts on social media, “for you will be called to account the actions you take” (Kouzes and Posner, 2010, p.162). Therefore, “when you have a voice, you can’t just say it any kind of way. You don’t just say what’s on your mind and tweet every thought. Most of your initial thoughts are not worthy of the light of day” (Obama, 2020).

Protecting Women from Sexual Harassment

After hearing about the increased moral decline and uncovering of sexual harassment cases of the rich and powerful, Michelle addressed the needs for all adults, all leaders to give our young children a voice at an early age, emphasizing, having a voice just doesn’t happen. It has to

be encouraged, and practiced, time and time again, than and only then, can victims of sexual abuse muster the words no, stop or don't touch me.

Why Voting Matters

In speaking with writer producer Shonda Rhimes, Michelle about this year 2020. Michelle elaborates, with all that has happened in this year, from COVID 19, to police brutality, racism, protests, and unemployment, many people are angry, frustrated, confused, scared, mourning the death of loved ones, the foundations of all of our lives have been touched. But in all that is happening, she finds hope. In thinking about the young people in these tumultuous times, she sates,

“ They are learning how fragile plans can be, they are learning very quickly that life can be unfair, it can be unjust, and more than anything, life is always uncertain. But if you live by the foundational truths, like honesty, compassion and decency, if you channel your frustration into our democracy with your vote and your voice, you can find your true north even in times of crisis. Even though there is a lot of pain out there, and that pain is very real, there is something that gives me hope. The hope that this generation will not only learn lessons earlier than ours ever did but apply them in ways that we never could..... We've all got to do the honest, uncomfortable work of rooting out racism and fighting for real justice. It starts with self-examination and listening to those whose live are different form our own. I hope we all have the strength to take the first step.” (Rhimes, 2020).

Causes and Accomplishments as First Lady

Michelle continues to support an array of causes and continues to contribute to the world through her uplifting, inspiring words, directing and influencing individuals and corporate America in fulfilling their dreams and aspirations, through practical, reasonable deliberate action.

Volunteering

During the first year of the Presidency, both Michelle and her husband volunteered in homeless shelters, and soup kitchens for the underserved population. She also made herself available in public schools, paying forward the message of education that she received from her parents and need to volunteer. Not only does that increase their viability for college entrance, but more importantly increases empathy and humility within, keeping you grounded, no matter where life takes you.

Organic Food

Diet and health remains very important to Michelle, subsequently, she supports the organic food movements, for which she instructed the white house staff to serve to all who visited.

In 2009 she worked with approximately 23 fifth graders in the D.C. school district, planting a large fresh vegetable. She had beehives installed on the South Lawn of the White House, all as an effort to fight childhood obesity.

Healthy Living Initiatives

Michelle remained committed to health, wellness and fitness, as a lifestyle. In 2012 she instituted a new fitness program as part of her Let's Move campaign. With the Olympic team and other sporting organizations, she exposed to young people, encouraging them to become involve, to get moving by trying out a new sport or activity.

For the first time, pending the COVID 19 pandemic, greater than 1.5 million will be participating in the Olympic and Paralympic sporting games. Michelle believes it usually takes just one exposure, one lesson, for interest to be activated and acted upon, for sport participation to be embraced.

Author

In 2012, Michelle released a book “American Grown,” sharing her experience of developing the idea and creating of the white house garden, along with the work and value in community gardening. She believes it is important to know where your food is coming from, and its impact on childhood obesity and health.

Her next book, “Becoming,” was published in 2018. She talks about all her life experiences which started on the South Side of Chicago, where she found her voice. “The audio version of Becoming won a Grammy for best spoken word album” (Biography.com Editors, 2020).

Deal with Netflix

Through their company, Higher Grounds Productions, Michelle and Barack signed a multiyear deal in 2018 to make films that inspire and change thought processes about the world that surrounds us. Their first venture, American Factory was released in August 2019 on Netflix. A documentary on a Chinese owned business in Dayton, Ohio, highlighting the differences in culture and business, enlightening the hearts and minds of people worldwide.

Storytime Series

Recently, during this COVID 19 pandemic, Michelle launched a live-stream series, Mondays with Michelle, reading her favorite children books.

In all that Michelle endeavors to do, she does in spirit of excellence, inspiring, empowering and serving others with empathy, while staying true to her True North, the principles and values that guides her through life as she navigates the complexity and the adversities of her world within and the world around her. This symbolizes according to Bielaszka-Duvernay (2008), “authentic leadership, which is marked by keen self-awareness and deeply held values that enable Michelle to lead with empathy, recognizing, sharing and supporting the goals of her followers, while empowering leadership as a servant, based who she is able to deeply connect with, despite the differences” (p.3), and motivating followers to take on the challenge, to lead, to make a difference, where ever you stand.

Conclusion

Michelle’s life and tenure as first lady exemplified an expression of love, sharing values of integrity, humility, empathy, freedom, equality, balancing family, career commitments, domestically and globally, to promote public health, economic health, inadvertently positioning all those she influenced to be competitive in the global market, “understanding that human intellect is a major power source required as the economic revolution rages on” (Smith,1999, p. 126). She epitomizes the cognitive complexity, the emotional resilience, cultural intelligence, motivational and inspirational factors, which allows an effective leader to not only interact with the global business environment, but to compete successfully, as a modest, yet influential change agent. She dares to live, leading change: She is bold enough to think global, to step out and lead, as Dr. Michelle Obama.

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