

= Michelle Obama =

Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama (born January 17 , 1964) is an American lawyer and writer . She is married to the 44th and current President of the United States , Barack Obama , and is the first African @-@ American First Lady of the United States . Raised on the South Side of Chicago , Illinois , Obama is a graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Law School , and spent the early part of her legal career working at the law firm Sidley Austin , where she met her husband . Subsequently , she worked as the Associate Dean of Student Services at the University of Chicago and the Vice President for Community and External Affairs of the University of Chicago Medical Center . Married in 1992 , the couple have two daughters together .

Throughout 2007 and 2008 , Obama campaigned for her husband 's presidential bid , delivering a keynote address at the 2008 Democratic National Convention , and speaking at the 2012 Democratic National Convention . She also spoke during the 2016 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia , where she delivered a speech in support of Hillary Clinton .

As First Lady , she has become a fashion icon , a role model for women , and an advocate for poverty awareness , nutrition , physical activity , and healthy eating .

= = Family and education = =

= = = Early life and ancestry = = =

Michelle LaVaughn Robinson was born on January 17 , 1964 , in DeYoung , Illinois , to Fraser Robinson III , a city water plant employee and Democratic precinct captain , and Marian Shields Robinson , a secretary at Spiegel 's catalog store . Her mother was a full @-@ time homemaker until Michelle entered high school .

The Robinson and Shields families trace their roots to pre @-@ Civil War African Americans in the American South . On her father 's side , she is descended from the Gullah people of South Carolina 's Low Country region . Her paternal great @-@ great grandfather , Jim Robinson , was a slave on Friendfield Plantation in South Carolina , the state where some of her paternal family still reside . Her grandfather Fraser Robinson , Jr. built his own house in South Carolina . He and his wife LaVaughn (née Johnson) returned to the Low Country after retirement .

Among her maternal ancestors was her great @-@ great @-@ great @-@ grandmother , Melvinia Shields , a slave on Henry Walls Shields ' 200 @-@ acre farm in Clayton County , Georgia . Melvinia 's first son , Dolphus T. Shields , was biracial and born into slavery about 1860 . Based on DNA and other evidence , in 2012 researchers said his father was likely 20 @-@ year @-@ old Charles Marion Shields , son of her master . Melvinia did not talk to relatives about Dolphus ' father . Dolphus Shields moved to Birmingham , Alabama after the Civil War , and some of his children migrated to Cleveland , Ohio and Chicago .

All four of her grandparents had multiracial ancestors , reflecting the complex history of the U.S. , but her extended family said that people did not talk about the era of slavery when they were growing up . Her distant ancestry includes Irish and other European roots . In addition , a paternal first cousin once @-@ removed is the African @-@ American Jewish Rabbi Capers Funnye , son of her grandfather 's sister .

Robinson grew up in a two @-@ story bungalow on Euclid Avenue in Chicago 's South Shore community area . Her parents rented a small apartment on the second floor from her great @-@ aunt , who lived downstairs . She was raised in what she describes as a " conventional " home , with " the mother at home , the father works , you have dinner around the table . " Her elementary school was down the street . They enjoyed playing games such as Monopoly , reading , and frequently saw extended family on both sides . She played piano , learning from her great @-@ aunt who was a piano teacher . The Robinsons attended services at nearby South Shore Methodist Church . They used to vacation in a rustic cabin in White Cloud , Michigan . She and her 21 @-@ month older brother , Craig , skipped the second grade .

Her father suffered from multiple sclerosis which had a profound emotional effect on her as she was growing up . She was determined to stay out of trouble and be a good student , which was what her father wanted for her . By sixth grade , Michelle joined a gifted class at Bryn Mawr Elementary School (later renamed Bouchet Academy) . She attended Whitney Young High School , Chicago 's first magnet high school , established as a selective enrollment school , where she was a classmate of Jesse Jackson 's daughter Santita . The round @-@ trip commute from the Robinsons ' South Side home to the Near West Side , where the school was located , took three hours . She recalled being fearful of how others would perceive her , but disregarded any negativity around her and used it " to fuel me , to keep me going . " She recalled experiencing gender discrimination growing up , saying , for example , that rather than asking her for her opinion on a given subject , people commonly tended to ask what her older brother thought . She was on the honor roll for four years , took advanced placement classes , was a member of the National Honor Society , and served as student council treasurer . She graduated in 1981 as the salutatorian of her class .

= = = Education and early career = = =

She was inspired to follow her brother to Princeton University , where he graduated in 1983 , after which he went on to become a basketball coach at Oregon State University and Brown University . She recalls that some of her teachers in high school tried to dissuade her from applying , that she had been told she was " setting my sights too high " . She believed that her brother 's alumni status may have helped her during the admission process , but she was resolved to demonstrate her own worthiness . She acknowledges that she was overwhelmed when first arriving in first year , attributing this to the fact that neither of her parents had graduated from college , and that she had never spent time on a college campus . The mother of a white roommate reportedly unsuccessfully tried to get her daughter moved because of Michelle 's race . She recalls her time at Princeton being the first time she was made more aware of her ethnicity and that despite the willingness of her classmates and teachers to want to understand her , she still felt " like a visitor on campus . " " I remember being shocked , " she says , " by college students who drove BMWs . I didn 't even know parents who drove BMWs . "

While at Princeton , she got involved with the Third World Center (now known as the Carl A. Fields Center) , an academic and cultural group that supported minority students , running their day care center , which also included after school tutoring . She challenged the teaching methodology for French because she felt that it should be more conversational . As part of her requirements for graduation , she wrote a thesis titled Princeton @-@ Educated Blacks and the Black Community . She researched her thesis by sending a questionnaire to African American graduates , requesting they specify when and how comfortable they were with their race prior to their enrollment at Princeton and how they felt about it when they were a student and since then . Of the 400 she sent her survey to , only a small number , fewer than 90 , responded and her findings did not support her hope that the black alumni would still identify with the African American community , even though they had attended an elite university with all of the advantages that accrues to its graduates . She majored in sociology and minored in African American studies , graduating cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in 1985 .

Robinson went on to earn her Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree from Harvard Law School in 1988 . By the time she applied for Harvard Law , biographer Bond wrote , her confidence had grown ; " This time around , there was no doubt in her mind that she had earned her place " . Her faculty mentor at Harvard Law was Charles Ogletree , who has said that she had answered the question that had plagued her throughout Princeton by the time she arrived at Harvard Law , of whether she would remain the product of her parents or keep the identity she had acquired at Princeton , believing that she concluded she could be " both brilliant and black . " At Harvard she participated in demonstrations advocating the hiring of professors who were members of minorities and worked for the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau , assisting low @-@ income tenants with housing cases . She is the third First Lady with a postgraduate degree , after her two immediate predecessors , Hillary Rodham Clinton and Laura Bush . She would later say her education gave her opportunities beyond what she

had ever imagined . In July 2008 , she accepted the invitation to become an honorary member of the 100 @-@ year @-@ old black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha , which had no active undergraduate chapter at Princeton when she attended .

= = = Family life = = =

Obama 's father Fraser C. Robinson III died from complications from his illness in March 1991 . She would later say that although he was the " hole in my heart " and " loss in my scar " , the memory of her father has motivated her each day since . Her friend Suzanne Alele died from cancer around this time as well , Obama later telling Katie Couric that the loss made her think of her contributions toward society and how well she was influencing the world from her law firm . This was seen as a turning point for Michelle .

Michelle met Barack Obama when they were among the few African Americans at their law firm , Sidley Austin (she has sometimes said only two , although others have pointed out there were others in different departments) , and she was assigned to mentor him while he was a summer associate . Their relationship started with a business lunch and then a community organization meeting where he first impressed her . Before meeting Obama , Michelle had previously told her mother that she would focus solely on her career . The couple 's first date was to the Spike Lee movie Do the Right Thing . Barack Obama opined that he and Michelle had an " opposites attract " scenario in their interest for each other initially since Michelle had stability through her two @-@ parent home while he was " adventurous " . They married in October 1992 , and have two daughters , Malia Ann (born 1998) and Natasha (known as Sasha , born 2001) . After his election to the U.S. Senate , the Obama family continued to live on Chicago 's South Side , choosing to remain there rather than moving to Washington , D.C. Throughout her husband 's 2008 campaign for US President , she made a " commitment to be away overnight only once a week ? to campaign only two days a week and be home by the end of the second day " for their two daughters .

She once requested that her then @-@ fiancé meet her prospective boss , Valerie Jarrett , when considering her first career move ; Jarrett is now one of her husband 's closest advisors . The marital relationship has had its ebbs and flows ; the combination of an evolving family life and beginning political career led to many arguments about balancing work and family . Barack Obama wrote in his second book , The Audacity of Hope : Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream , that " Tired and stressed , we had little time for conversation , much less romance . " However , despite their family obligations and careers , they continued to attempt to schedule date nights while they lived in Chicago .

The Obamas ' daughters attended the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools , a private school . As a member of the school 's board , Michelle fought to maintain diversity in the school when other board members connected with the University of Chicago tried to reserve more slots for children of the university faculty . This resulted in a plan to expand the school . Malia and Sasha now attend Sidwell Friends School in Washington , after also considering Georgetown Day School . Michelle stated in an interview on The Ellen DeGeneres Show that they do not intend to have any more children . The Obamas have received advice from past first ladies Laura Bush , Rosalynn Carter and Hillary Rodham Clinton about raising children in the White House . Marian Robinson , Michelle 's mother , has moved into the White House to assist with child care .

= = = Religion = = =

Obama is a Protestant Christian . She was raised Methodist and joined the Trinity United Church of Christ , where she and Barack Obama married , performed by Rev. Jeremiah Wright . On May 31 , 2008 , Barack and Michelle Obama announced that they had withdrawn their membership in Trinity United Church of Christ stating that " Our relations with Trinity have been strained by the divisive statements of Reverend Wright , which sharply conflict with our own views . "

The Obama family has attended several different Protestant churches since moving to Washington D.C. in 2009 , including Shiloh Baptist Church and St. John 's Episcopal Church . At the 49th African

Methodist Episcopal Church 's general conference , Michelle Obama encouraged the attendees to advocate for political awareness , saying , " To anyone who says that church is no place to talk about these issues , you tell them there is no place better ? no place better , because ultimately , these are not just political issues ? they are moral issues , they 're issues that have to do with human dignity and human potential , and the future we want for our kids and our grandkids . "

= = Career = =

Following law school , she was an associate at the Chicago office of the law firm Sidley & Austin , where she first met her future husband . At the firm , she worked on marketing and intellectual property . She continues to hold her law license , but as she no longer needs it for her work , it has been on a voluntary inactive status since 1993 .

In 1991 , she held public sector positions in the Chicago city government as an Assistant to the Mayor , and as Assistant Commissioner of Planning and Development . In 1993 , she became Executive Director for the Chicago office of Public Allies , a non @-@ profit organization encouraging young people to work on social issues in nonprofit groups and government agencies . She worked there nearly four years and set fundraising records for the organization that still stood 12 years after she left .

In 1996 , Obama served as the Associate Dean of Student Services at the University of Chicago , where she developed the University 's Community Service Center . In 2002 , she began working for the University of Chicago Hospitals , first as executive director for community affairs and , beginning May 2005 , as Vice President for Community and External Affairs . She continued to hold the University of Chicago Hospitals position during the primary campaign , but cut back to part @-@ time in order to spend time with her daughters as well as work for her husband 's election ; she subsequently took a leave of absence from her job . According to the couple 's 2006 income tax return , her salary was \$ 273 @,@ 618 from the University of Chicago Hospitals , while her husband had a salary of \$ 157 @,@ 082 from the United States Senate . The Obamas ' total income , however , was \$ 991 @,@ 296 , which included \$ 51 @,@ 200 she earned as a member of the board of directors of TreeHouse Foods , and investments and royalties from his books . Obama reflected that she had never been happier in her life prior to working " to build Public Allies " .

Obama served as a salaried board member of TreeHouse Foods , Inc . (NYSE : THS) , a major Wal @-@ Mart supplier with which she cut ties immediately after her husband made comments critical of Wal @-@ Mart at an AFL @-@ CIO forum in Trenton , New Jersey , on May 14 , 2007 . She also served on the board of directors of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs .

= = Early campaigns = =

During an interview in 1996 , Michelle Obama acknowledged that there was a " strong possibility " her husband would begin a political career , but said she was " wary " of the process due to it meaning that their lives would become " an open book " while she was private .

Although she has campaigned on her husband 's behalf since early in his political career by handshaking and fund @-@ raising , she did not relish the activity at first . When she campaigned during her husband 's 2000 run for United States House of Representatives , her boss at the University of Chicago asked if there was any single thing about campaigning that she enjoyed ; after some thought , she replied that visiting so many living rooms had given her some new decorating ideas . She reportedly turned down requests by the campaign for her to attend fundraisers . Obama was against her husband 's run for the congressional seat and after his defeat would have preferred her husband tending to the financial needs of the family in what she deemed a more practical way .

At first , Obama had reservations about her husband 's presidential campaign , due to fears about a possible negative effect on their daughters . She says that she negotiated an agreement in which her husband was to give up smoking in exchange for her support of his decision to run . About her role in her husband 's presidential campaign she has said : " My job is not a senior adviser . " During the campaign , she has discussed race and education by using motherhood as a framework .

In May 2007 , three months after her husband declared his presidential candidacy , Obama reduced her professional responsibilities by 80 percent to support his presidential campaign . Early in the campaign , she had limited involvement in which she traveled to political events only two days a week and rarely traveled overnight ; by early February 2008 her participation had increased significantly , attending thirty @-@ three events in eight days . She made several campaign appearances with Oprah Winfrey . She wrote her own stump speeches for her husband 's presidential campaign and generally spoke without notes .

Throughout the campaign , some media often labeled Michelle Obama as an " Angry Black Woman , " and some web sites attempted to propagate this image , prompting her to respond : " Barack and I have been in the public eye for many years now , and we 've developed a thick skin along the way . When you 're out campaigning , there will always be criticism . I just take it in stride , and at the end of the day , I know that it comes with the territory . " By the time of the 2008 Democratic National Convention in August , media outlets observed that her presence on the campaign trail had grown softer than at the start of the race , focusing on soliciting concerns and empathizing with the audience rather than throwing down challenges to them , and giving interviews to shows like The View and publications like Ladies ' Home Journal rather than appearing on news programs . The change was even reflected in her fashion choices , wearing more informal clothes in place of her previous designer pieces . The View appearance was partly intended to help soften her public image , and it was widely covered in the press .

The presidential campaign was Obama 's first exposure to the national political scene ; even before the field of Democratic candidates was narrowed to two , she was considered the least famous of the candidates ' spouses . Early in the campaign , she told anecdotes about the Obama family life ; however , as the press began to emphasize her sarcasm , she toned it down . The New York Times op @-@ ed columnist Maureen Dowd wrote :

I wince a bit when Michelle Obama chides her husband as a mere mortal ? a comic routine that rests on the presumption that we see him as a god ... But it may not be smart politics to mock him in a way that turns him from the glam JFK into the mundane Gerald Ford , toasting his own English muffin . If all Senator Obama is peddling is the Camelot mystique , why debunk this mystique ?

On the first night of the 2008 Democratic National Convention , Craig Robinson introduced his younger sister . She delivered her speech , during which she sought to portray herself and her family as the embodiment of the American Dream . Obama said both she and her husband believed " that you work hard for what you want in life , that your word is your bond , and you do what you say you 're going to do , that you treat people with dignity and respect , even if you don 't know them , and even if you don 't agree with them . " She also emphasized loving her country , in response to criticism for her previous statements about feeling proud of her country for the first time , where the original statement was seen as a gaffe . That keynote address was largely well received and drew mostly positive reviews . A Rasmussen Reports poll found that her favorability among Americans reached 55 % .

On an October 6 , 2008 broadcast , Larry King asked Obama if the American electorate was past the Bradley effect . She stated that her husband 's achievement of the nomination was a fairly strong indicator that it was . The same night she also was interviewed by Jon Stewart on The Daily Show where she deflected criticism of her husband and his campaign . On Fox News ' America 's Pulse , E. D. Hill referred to the fist bump shared by the Obamas on the night that he clinched the Democratic presidential nomination as a " terrorist fist jab " ; Hill was taken off air and the show itself was cancelled .

= = First Lady of the United States = =

During her early months as First Lady , Obama visited homeless shelters and soup kitchens . She also sent representatives to schools and advocated public service .

Obama advocated for her husband 's policy priorities by promoting bills that support it . She hosted a White House reception for women 's rights advocates in celebration of the enactment of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 Pay equity law . She supported the economic stimulus bill in visits to

the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and United States Department of Education . Some observers looked favorably upon her legislative activities , while others said that she should be less involved in politics . According to her representatives , she intends to visit all United States Cabinet @-@ level agencies in order to get acquainted with Washington .

On June 5 , 2009 , the White House announced that Michelle Obama was replacing her current chief of staff , Jackie Norris , with Susan Sher , a longtime friend and adviser . Norris became a senior adviser to the Corporation for National and Community Service . Another key aide , Spelman College alumna Kristen Jarvis , served from 2008 until 2015 , when she left to become chief of staff to the Ford Foundation president Darren Walker .

In 2009 Michelle Obama was named Barbara Walters ' Most Fascinating Person of the year .

Some initiatives of First Lady Michelle Obama include advocating on behalf of military families , helping working women balance career and family , encouraging national service , and promoting the arts and arts education . Obama has made supporting military families and spouses a personal mission and has been increasingly bonding with military families . According to her aides , stories of the sacrifice these families make move her to tears . In April 2012 , Obama and husband were awarded the Jerald Washington Memorial Founders ' Award by the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) .The award is the highest honor given to homeless veteran advocates . Obama was again honored with the award in May 2015 , accepting with Jill Biden .

In November 2013 , a Politico article by Michelle Cottle accusing Obama of being a " feminist nightmare " for not using her position and education to advocate for women 's issues was sharply criticized across the political spectrum . Cottle quoted Linda Hirshman saying of Obama 's trendy styles , promotion of gardening and healthy eating , and support of military families that " She essentially became the English lady of the manor , Tory Party , circa 1830s . " A prominent critic of Cottle was MSNBC host Melissa Harris @-@ Perry , who rhetorically asked " Are you serious ? " Supporters of Obama note that the First Lady has been one of the only people in the administration to address obesity , through promoting good eating habits , which is one of the leading US public health crises .

In May 2014 , Obama joined the campaign to bring back school girls who had been kidnapped in Nigeria . The First Lady tweeted a picture of herself holding a poster with the # bringbackourgirls campaign hashtag .

Over the course of the Obama presidency , particularly during the second term , Michelle Obama was subject to speculation over whether she would run for the presidency herself , similarly to predecessor Hillary Clinton . A potential Michelle Obama candidacy was supported by both Samuel L. Jackson and James Clyburn . On April 6 , 2009 , CNN did a poll on whether she should run for the presidency in 2020 , 83 % of responders being opposed to the idea . A May 2015 Rasmussen poll found Obama had 22 % of support to Clinton 's 56 % of winning the Democratic nomination , higher than that of potential candidates Elizabeth Warren , Martin O 'Malley and Bernie Sanders . Alternatively , another poll from that month found 71 % of Americans believed that Obama should not run for the presidency , only 14 % approving . On January 14 , 2016 , during a town @-@ hall meeting , President Obama was asked if the First Lady could be talked into running . He responded , " There are three things that are certain in life : death , taxes , and Michelle is not running for president . That I can tell you . " On March 16 , 2016 , while speaking in Austin , Texas , Obama denied that she would ever run for the office , citing a desire to " impact as many people as possible in an unbiased way . "

= = = Let 's Move ! = = =

Obama 's predecessors Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush supported the organic movement by instructing the White House kitchens to buy organic food , and Obama extended their efforts toward healthy eating by planting the White House Kitchen Garden , an organic garden , the first White House vegetable garden since Eleanor Roosevelt served as First Lady , and installing bee hives , on the South Lawn of the White House . The garden supplied organic produce and honey to the First Family and for state dinners and other official gatherings .

In January 2010 , Obama undertook her first lead role in an administration @-@ wide initiative , which she named " Let 's Move ! , " to make progress in reversing the 21st century trend of childhood obesity . On February 9 , 2010 , the First Lady announced Let 's Move ! and President Barack Obama created the Task Force on Childhood Obesity to review all current programs and create a national plan towards change . Michelle Obama stated that her goal was to make this effort her legacy : " I want to leave something behind that we can say , ' Because of this time that this person spent here , this thing has changed . ' And my hope is that that 's going to be in the area of childhood obesity . " Her 2012 book American Grown : The Story of the White House Kitchen Garden and Gardens Across America is based on her experiences with the garden and promotes healthy eating . Her call for action on healthy eating has been echoed by the United States Department of Defense , which has been facing an ever expanding problem of recruit obesity .

Several Republicans have critiqued or lampooned Obama 's initiative . In October 2014 , senator Rand Paul linked to Michelle Obama 's Twitter account when announcing on the website that he was going to Dunkin ' Donuts . In January 2016 , Republican Governor of New Jersey and presidential candidate Chris Christie condemned the First Lady 's involvement with healthy eating while on the campaign trail in Iowa , arguing that she was using the government to exercise her views on eating . Obama had previously cited Christie as an example of an adult who struggled with obesity , a demographic she sought to diminish by targeting children since Let 's Move ! was " working with kids when they 're young , so that they don 't have these direct challenges when they get older . " In February , Senator Ted Cruz indicated that Obama 's health policies would end under his administration , promising that french fries would return to cafeterias if his wife was First Lady .

= = = LGBT rights = = =

In the 2008 US presidential election , Obama boasted , to gay Democrat groups , of her husband 's record on LGBT rights : his support of the Illinois Human Rights Act , the Illinois gender violence act , the Employment Non @-@ Discrimination Act , repealing Don 't Ask Don 't Tell , and full repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act , civil unions ; along with hate crimes protection for sexual orientation and gender identity and renewed effort to fight HIV and AIDS . They have both been opponents of constitutional amendments banning same @-@ sex marriage in the federal , California , and Florida constitutions . She said that the US Supreme Court delivered justice in the Lawrence v. Texas case and drew a connection between the struggles for gay rights and civil rights by stating " We are all only here because of those who marched and bled and died , from Selma to Stonewall , in the pursuit of a more perfect union . "

After the repeal of Don 't Ask Don 't Tell on September 20 , 2011 , Obama included openly gay service members in her national military families initiative . On May 9 , 2012 , Barack and Michelle Obama came out publicly in favor of same @-@ sex marriage . Prior to this , Michelle Obama had never stated her position on same @-@ sex marriage publicly . Senior White House officials said that Michelle Obama and Senior Adviser Valerie Jarrett had been the two most consistent advocates for same @-@ sex marriage in Barack Obama 's life . Michelle went on to say that " This is an important issue for millions of Americans , and for Barack and me , it really comes down to the values of fairness and equality we want to pass down to our girls . These are basic values that kids learn at a very young age and that we encourage them to apply in all areas of their lives . And in a country where we teach our children that everyone is equal under the law , discriminating against same @-@ sex couples just isn 't right . It 's as simple as that . " At the 2012 DNC Michelle said , " Barack knows the American Dream because he 's lived it ... and he wants everyone in this country to have that same opportunity , no matter who we are , or where we 're from , or what we look like , or who we love . "

= = = 2012 presidential election = = =

Obama campaigned for her husband 's re @-@ election in 2012 . Beginning in 2011 , Obama became more politically active than she had been since the 2008 election , though avoided

discussions about the re @-@ election bid . By the time of the election cycle , she had developed a more open public image , some viewing her as the most popular member of the Obama administration , as her poll numbers having never dropped below 60 % since entering the White House and an Obama senior campaign official even dubbed her " the most popular political figure in America " . The positive assessment was reasoned to have contributed to her active role in the re @-@ election campaign , but it was noted that the challenge for the Obama campaign was using her without tarnishing her popularity . Obama was viewed as a polarizing figure , having both " sharp enmity and deep loyalty " from Americans , but she was also seen as having improved her image since the time of the last election when her husband initially ran for the presidency . It was commented by Isabel Wilkinson of The Daily Beast that her style changed over the course of the campaign to sensitive and economical .

Obama expressed confidence in her husband 's debating skills prior to the first debate of the election cycle , though his performance would later be criticized as appearing detached and for looking down when addressing Romney , leading to a consensus that the latter won the debate . After her speech at the 2012 Democratic National Convention , Obama was found through a CBS News / New York Times poll conducted in September to have a 61 % favorably rating with registered voters , the highest favorability she had sustained since April 2009 . Obama aimed to humanize her husband with relating stories about him , attempting to appeal to female voters in swing states . It was commented by Paul Harris of The Guardian that the same tactic was being used by Ann Romney , wife of 2012 Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney . Polls in October showed their husbands tied at 47 % for the female vote . However , Michelle Obama 's favorability ratings remained higher than Ann Romney 's at 69 % to 52 % . Despite Obama 's higher poll numbers , comparisons between Obama and Romney were consistently made by the media until the election , regardless of Michelle Cottle of Newsweek writing , " nobody votes for first lady . "

= = = Domestic travels = = =

In May 2009 , Obama delivered the commencement speech at a graduating ceremony at UC Merced in Merced County , California , the address being praised afterward by students who found her relatable . Kevin Fagan of the San Francisco Chronicle wrote that there was chemistry between Obama and the students .

In August 2013 , Obama attended the 50th anniversary ceremony for the March on Washington at the Lincoln Memorial . Positive attention was brought to Obama 's attire , a black sleeveless dress with red flowers , designed by Tracy Reese . Reese reacted by releasing a public statement that he was honored the First Lady " would choose to wear one of our designs during the celebration of such a deeply significant historical moment " .

In March 2015 , Obama traveled to Selma , Alabama , with her family to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery marches . Obama publicly stated her daughter Sasha would have been exposed to the same violence as that of protesters during the Selma marches had she been alive . After President Obama 's remarks there , the Obamas joined original marchers in crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge .

In July 2015 , Obama journeyed to Coachella Valley while coming to Los Angeles for that year 's Special Olympics World Games .

In October 2015 , Obama was joined by Jill Biden and Prince Harry in visiting a military base in Fort Belvoir , Virginia , an attempt on the prince 's part to raise awareness to programs supporting harmed service members . In December 2015 , Obama traveled with her husband to San Bernardino , California , to meet with families of the victims of a terrorist attack that occurred two weeks earlier .

= = = Foreign trips = = =

On April 1 , 2009 , Obama met with Queen Elizabeth II in Buckingham Palace , Obama embracing her before attending an event with world leaders . Obama praised her , though the hug generated

controversy for being out of protocol when greeting Elizabeth .

In April 2010 , Obama traveled to Mexico , her first solo visit to a nation . In Mexico , Obama spoke to students , encouraging them to take responsibility for their futures . Referring to the underprivileged children , Obama argued that " potential can be found in some of the most unlikely places " , citing herself and her husband as examples .

Obama traveled to Africa for the second official trip in June 2011 , touring Johannesburg , Cape Town and Botswana and meeting with Graca Machel . Obama was also involved with community events in the foreign countries . It was commented by White House staff that her trip to Africa would advance the foreign policy of her husband .

In March 2014 , Obama visited China along with her two daughters Malia and Sasha , and her mother Marian Robinson . She met with Peng Liyuan , the wife of Chinese President Xi Jinping , visited historic and cultural sites , as well as a university and two high schools . Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes said that the visit and intent in Obama journeying there was to symbolize " the relationship between the United States and China is not just between leaders , it 's a relationship between peoples " .

In January 2015 , Obama traveled to Saudi Arabia alongside her husband , following the death of King Abdullah . She received criticism for not covering her head in a nation where women are forbidden from publicly not doing so , though Obama was defended for being a foreigner and thus not having to submit to Saudi Arabia 's customs , even being praised in some corners . Obama was neither greeted nor acknowledged by King Salman during the encounter .

In June 2015 , Obama undertook a weeklong trip to London and three Italian cities . In London , she spoke with students about international education for adolescent girls and met with both British Prime Minister David Cameron and Prince Harry . She was joined by her two daughters and mother . In November , she spent a week in Qatar , her first official visit to the Middle East . She continued advancing her initiative for international education for women by speaking at the 2015 World Innovation Summit for Education for the " Let Girls Learn " initiative in Doha , Qatar and touring a school in Amman , Jordan , where she met with female students . During the Qatar trip , Obama had intended to visit Jordan as well , but the trip was canceled due to weather conditions . In Jordan , Obama had intended to visit an Amman school , which had been constructed with assistance from U.S. funds .

In March 2016 , Obama accompanied her husband and children to Cuba in a trip that was seen by the administration as having the possibility of positively impacting relations between the country and America . Later that month , the First Couple and their daughters traveled to Argentina , meeting with Argentine President Mauricio Macri .

= = = Midterm elections = = =

Obama campaigned for Democratic candidates in the 2010 midterm elections , making her debut on the campaign trail in Milwaukee , Wisconsin . By the time she began campaigning , Obama 's approval rating was 20 percentage points higher than her husband . Though Obama indicated in January 2010 that a consensus had not been made about whether she would campaign , speculation of her involvement came from her large approval rating as well as reports that she had been invited to speak at events with Democrats such as Barbara Boxer , Mary Jo Kilroy and Joe Sestak . She toured seven states in two weeks within October 2010 . Though viewed as essential by the White House , aides reported that she would not become deeply involved with political discussions nor engage Republicans in public disputes . After the elections took place , only six of the thirteen Democratic candidates Obama had campaigned for won . The Los Angeles Times concluded that while Obama was indeed more popular than her husband , her " election scorecard proved no better than his , particularly in her home state . "

Obama was a participant in the 2014 midterm elections , held at a time where her popularity superseded her husband 's to such an extent that it was theorized that she would receive a much larger outpour of support in campaigning . Reporting her travel to Denver , Colorado , David Lightman wrote that while Democrats did not want President Obama to campaign for them , " the

first lady is very popular " . In May 2014 , Obama was found to have a 61 % favorable approval rating from a CNN poll , her husband coming in at 43 % . In a video released in July , as part of an effort to encourage voter turnout , she called on voters to be " hungry as you were back in 2008 and 2012 " . Obama appeared at a fundraiser in Georgia in September for Democratic senate candidate Michelle Nunn . Obama 's approach to campaigning in Georgia strayed from discussing current events and instead broadly stressed the importance of registering to vote and turning out during the elections . Obama 's infrequent appearances came from her dislike of being away from her children and Washington politics as well as her distaste for the opposition by Republicans to her husband 's agenda and her view that Democrats in the U.S. Senate had not sufficiently supported her initiatives to end childhood obesity . Obama raised her profile in October , touring three states in four days . Obama called the elections her husband 's " last campaign " .

= = = Public image and style = = =

With the ascent of her husband as a prominent national politician , Obama has become a part of popular culture . In May 2006 , Essence listed her among " 25 of the World 's Most Inspiring Women . " In July 2007 , Vanity Fair listed her among " 10 of the World 's Best Dressed People . " She was an honorary guest at Oprah Winfrey 's Legends Ball as a " young 'un " paying tribute to the ' Legends , ' who helped pave the way for African American women . In September 2007 , 2013 magazine listed her 58th of ' The Harvard 100 ' ; a list of the prior year 's most influential Harvard alumni . Her husband was ranked fourth . In July 2008 , she made a repeat appearance on the Vanity Fair international best dressed list . She also appeared on the 2008 People list of best @-@ dressed women and was praised by the magazine for her " classic and confident " look .

At the time of her husband 's election , some sources anticipated that as a high @-@ profile African @-@ American woman in a stable marriage Obama would be a positive role model who would influence the view the world has of African @-@ Americans . Her fashion choices were part of the 2009 Fashion week , but Obama 's influence in the field did not have the impact on the paucity of African @-@ American models who participate , that some thought it might .

Obama 's public support grew in her early months as First Lady , as she was accepted as a role model . On her first trip abroad in April 2009 , she toured a cancer ward with Sarah Brown , wife of British Prime Minister Gordon Brown . Newsweek described her first trip abroad as an exhibition of her so @-@ called " star power " and MSN described it as a display of sartorial elegance . Questions were raised by some in the American and British media regarding protocol when the Obamas met Queen Elizabeth II and Michelle reciprocated a touch on her back by the Queen during a reception , purportedly against traditional royal etiquette . Palace sources denied that any breach in etiquette had occurred .

Obama has been compared to Jacqueline Kennedy due to her sense of style , and also to Barbara Bush for her discipline and decorum . Obama 's style has been described as " fashion populist . " In 2010 , she wore clothes , many high end , from more than 50 design companies with less expensive pieces from J.Crew and Target , and the same year a study found that her patronage was worth an average of \$ 14 million to a company . She became a fashion trendsetter , in particular favoring sleeveless dresses , including her first @-@ term official portrait in a dress by Michael Kors , and her ball gowns designed by Jason Wu for both inaugurals .

Obama appeared on the cover and in a photo spread in the March 2009 issue of Vogue . Every First Lady since Lou Hoover (except Bess Truman) has been in Vogue , but only Hillary Clinton had previously appeared on the cover . In August 2011 , she became the first woman ever to appear on the cover of Better Homes and Gardens magazine , and the first person in 48 years . During the 2013 Academy Awards , she became the first First Lady to announce the winner of an Oscar (Best Picture which went to Argo) .

The media have been criticized for focusing more on the First Lady 's fashion sense than her serious contributions . She said after the 2008 election that she would like to focus attention as First Lady on issues of concern to military and working families . In 2008 U.S. News & World Report blogger , PBS host and Scripps Howard columnist Bonnie Erbé argued that Obama 's own publicists

seemed to be feeding the emphasis on style over substance , and has stated that Obama is miscasting herself by overemphasizing style .