

# Michelle Obama: America's Next First Lady

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Imagine what this morning must have been like for the Obamas. Did Michelle Obama wake up, turn to her husband and say, "Good morning, Mr. President?" Were they even able to sleep? Have Malia and Sasha already logged on to their local shelter's website to find their new dog (yes, I am unabashedly lobbying for the new First Family to rescue that puppy!)? When does the reality of what just happened sink in? Every First Family must have that "Oh my goodness, WE DID IT!" feeling, coupled with a tinge of disbelief... and relief. Oh, to be a fly on the wall in those moments!

Of course, the "sinking-in" time is short-lived. Before lunchtime today, word came that the President-elect's first top secret intelligence briefing has already been scheduled for tomorrow. Last night, before Grant Park had cleared out, I was assigned a piece on what kind of First Lady Michelle Obama will be, and I wasn't alone. In The New York Post's story this morning, we were told Mrs. Obama will bring "glamour" to the White House; The Times in the UK paints Michelle Obama as a "new type of First Lady", who is "supportive, independent and a fashion icon." The Reuters headline reads "Michelle Obama: new style of First Lady".

It's interesting that so many stories about Michelle Obama make mention of her fashion sense. Yes, she has brought great style to the campaign trail and will likely continue to be a trendsetter in the White House, not unlike Jackie Kennedy. We know she shops at the mall stores many other American moms frequent: JCrew and White House/ Black Market. But there's more to Michelle Obama than her shopping habits. For a glimpse of the kind of First Lady she will be, we should be turning to her style as a daughter, a wife, and a mother.

Let's start in her hometown of Chicago, where Michelle Robinson was raised in a tight-knit middle-class family on the city's South Side. Instilled with a strong work ethic, she graduated Princeton and received her law degree from Harvard. As her husband's presidential campaign stretched over more than 20 months, Michelle Obama emerged as an independent, supportive and passionate woman. She spoke often of her girls and their place at the top of any list in her life. She spoke of her struggles, of her strength, of the stress her marriage has faced and of her faith. She pledged her support to her fellow working parents and to the military families, sacrificing so much at home and abroad. Most of all, she spoke directly to the thousands of people who turned out to hear her stump for her husband.

As for the historic nature of this election, it can't be ignored, but don't expect it to define this First Lady. "In the end, she will be first lady of all the people," Carl Anthony, a historian at the National First Ladies Library told me. "For white southerners as well as for black southerners; for recent immigrants as well as people whose ancestors have been here for many generations, whether they came in slave ships, or whether they came by their own accord as immigrants. I think that that is some of the beauty of the role as first lady, it's almost like being mother of the nation." Perhaps not much of a stretch for this mother of two