

# First Ladies of America



Each first lady of the United States has her own special story, and Michelle Obama is no exception. However, Mrs. Obama's story has a twist that gives her a unique and especially meaningful place in American history. As the wife of President Barack Obama, Mrs. Obama, 49, is the first African-American woman to grace the White House as the nation's first lady. Moreover, researchers have established that among her ancestors was a young girl who grew up in slavery in the South. While discovering a personal heritage rooted in slavery is not uncommon in the United States, Mrs. Obama's heritage is a reminder of the progress America has made in human rights and civil rights throughout its short history. At the Democratic National Convention in 2008, she gave Americans a glimpse of the values that have shaped her public life.

"Each of us comes here by our own improbable journey ... driven by the simple belief that the world as it is just won't do, that we have an obligation to fight for the world as it should be," she told her audience. Born in 1964 during the turbulent years of the Civil Rights Movement, Michelle Obama grew up on Chicago's South Side as the daughter of working class parents. Her father was a pump operator for the Chicago Water Department while her mother stayed home to take care of her and her brother. While growing up, Mrs. Obama learned first-hand the value of hard work and determination; she watched her father work to save money for her education even as he battled multiple sclerosis and struggled to walk with the aid of two canes.

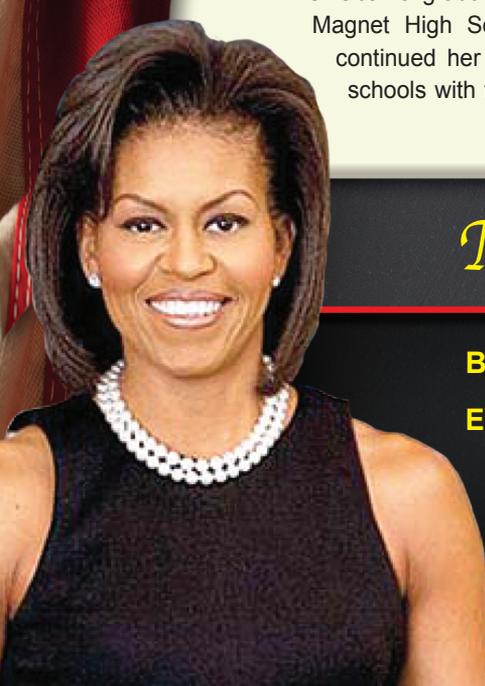
Mrs. Obama graduated from Whitney Young Magnet High School in 1981 and then continued her education at Ivy League schools with the help of student loans.

At Princeton University, she earned a bachelor's degree in sociology and African-American studies. At Harvard Law School, she earned a juris doctor degree. Upon completion of her formal education, Mrs. Obama entered the law profession, joining Chicago's Sidley Austin law firm in 1988. It was there that she crossed paths with Barack Obama, another young lawyer who had been hired by the firm as a summer associate in 1989. The couple wed in 1992, and by that time, Mrs. Obama had turned her attention to another of her passions – public service. After leaving the Sidley Austin law firm, she held numerous public and community-oriented positions in Chicago before accompanying her husband to the White House upon his election in 2008. Throughout his term t

**Barack  
Obama  
Administration,  
2009 to 2017**

Unwavering in her support of her husband's career and political agenda, she also has used her own education and experience in public service. Supporting the unique needs of military families, pushing for national healthcare reform, promoting national service, and spotlighting the intricacies of balancing career with family have all been part of her agenda. Another top priority on her list is "Let's Move," a campaign launched in 2010 to solve the growing problem of childhood obesity within a generation.

Mrs. Obama is well-known for her dedication to her and President Obama's two young daughters, Malia and Sasha. As her husband begins his second term as president — and if her past performance can be used as a predictor of her future as first lady — then Mrs. Obama will not be content to sit idly on the sidelines during the next four years.



## Michelle Robinson Obama

**Born:** January 17, 1964, in Chicago, Illinois

**Education:** Whitney Young Magnet High School, Chicago, Illinois; Princeton University; Harvard Law School

**Marriage:** 1992 to Barack Obama

**Children:** Malia, Born 1998; Sasha, born 2001