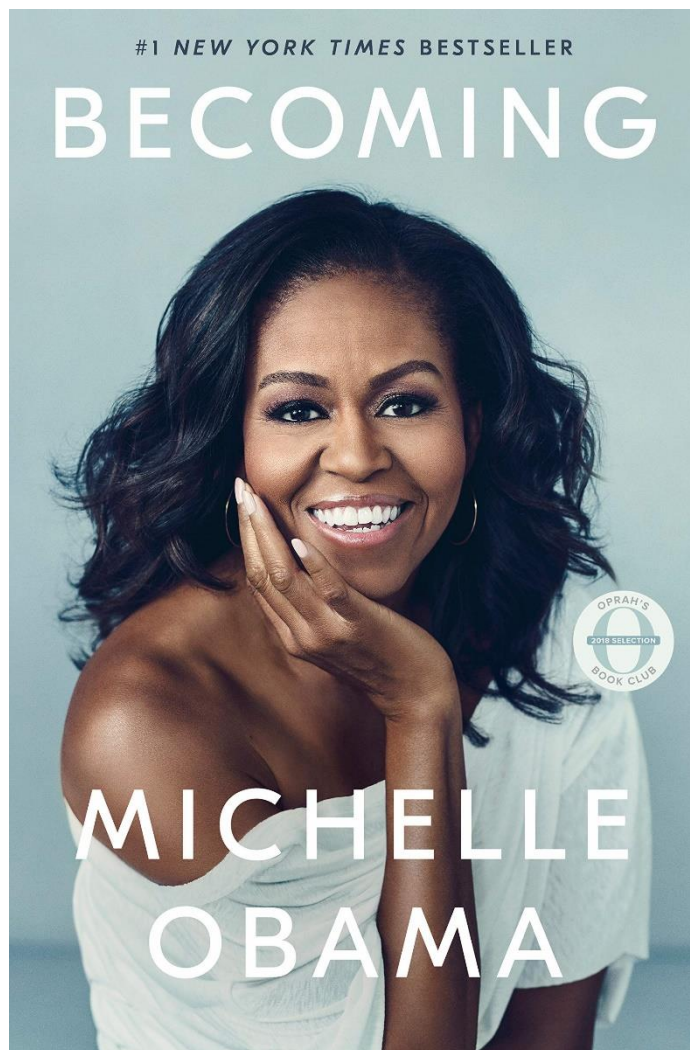


Becoming by Michelle Obama Book Summary



- She now believes that asking a kid what they want to be when they grow up is a useless question
- As if growing up is finite and there is an endpoint
- She learned that kids know at a very young age when they're being devalued, when adults aren't invested enough to help them learn
- In this case, they aren't bad kids. They're just trying to survive bad circumstances and it's not their fault

- Her brother Craig learned while playing basketball in various areas that *most people are good people if you just treat them well*
- In life, you *control what you can*
- In context of their family being prepared for things like fires and always arriving early so that they don't have to worry about parking for their dad and bad seats so they won't have to walk far
- The noise from critics and doubters doesn't go away, but the most successful people she knows have figured out how to live with it, to *lean on the people who believe in them* and to push onward with their goals
- Barack was unlike anyone she had ever dated. Mainly because he seemed so secure
- He was openly affectionate, he made her feel good, and he was almost like a unicorn
- He was unusual almost to the point of seeming unreal
- He never talked about material things and his money went largely towards books
- She had to learn to adjust to Barack's air of certainty he had about him, which made even her feel sort of lost in her own life
- Barack saw marriage as the loving alignment of two people who could lead parallel lives but without foregoing any independent dreams or ambitions
- She saw marriage more as a full on merger, a reconfiguring of two lives into one, with the well-being of the family taking precedence over any one agenda or goal
- When you lose someone, everything in life hurts and everything feels flat
- Barack baited Michelle into another one of their marriage arguments and then surprised her with a proposal after their celebration of his finishing the bar exam
- *Inspiration by itself is shallow. You have to back it up with hard work*
- When two people with different personalities get married, you have no choice but to adapt
- What she knows about her husband is that you don't dangle an opportunity in front of him that could give him a wider field of impact and expect him to just walk away

- Barack got a lot of heat from opponents and other politicians for missing a very important gun control vote because he had to stay back in Hawaii for his sick daughter
- She learned from her close group of friends that *there is no formula for motherhood*, no single approach could be deemed right or wrong
- When campaigning in Iowa, all she did was speak her story and her truth about her and her husband's journey and why she believes he would be a great president and why she would vote for him
- She learned from her mom that *bullies are just scared people hiding in scary people*
- The key was to never let a bully's insult or aggressions get to you personally
- Having Sasha and Malia with them while campaigning was a relief because it made Michelle and Barack more relaxed
- The two girls weren't invested in the end result like they were
- She learned that *it is harder to hate up close*
- She knew that as the first African-American First Lady, *she was held to a different standard*
- She knew she had to be better, faster, and stronger than ever
- Her grace needed to be earned because she knew it wouldn't be given
- She was humbled and excited to be first lady, but not for one second Did she think she would be sliding into some glamorous easy role
- Nobody who has the words first and black attached to them ever would
- *Confidence needs to be called from within*, she learned
- If you don't get out there and define yourself, you will be quickly and in accurately defined by others
- The age old maxim in the black community: *you've got to be twice as good to go half as far*
- Kids care about fame, it turns out, only for a few minutes
- After that, they just wanna have fun
- Kids learn at a young age how to measure, even if they do not know the value of things
- Hopefully they learn later on and this is wrong

- Life was better always when we could measure the warmth of people
- When going abroad, Michelle had opportunities Barack did not to bring warmth to wherever she went and really meet people
- She loved being with kids. Kids made her feel like herself again
- To them, she was not a spectacle. She was just a nice kind of tall lady
- Living in the White House at times could feel so confining
- Little things like walking outside made her feel guilty because it would impact the people around them due to security measures
- Her and Barack were a nuisance, a disruption to any normal scene. There was no getting around that fact
- Her intent was always to go deep, not broad with the issues of the stone
- Her fashion and the clothes she wore was also a big part of her life that she had to take into consideration
- She tried her best to emphasize American designers who are up-and-coming and promote diversity
- She quickly found out a truth that no one talks about
- Today, virtually every woman in public life has some version of her trifecta, her hairstylist, make up artist, and wardrobe person. It is all but a requirement, a built in fee for their societal double standard
- She knew from experience that even *during hard times, especially during hard times, it was still OK to laugh*
- For the sake of children in particular, you had to find ways to have fun
- For her, the garden was simple, prosperous, and healthy
- A symbol of diligence and faith
- It was beautiful while also being powerful
- And it made people happy
- She learned to leave the politics to Barack and shift her focus elsewhere
- She made more of a human appeal to leaders in private sectors, rather than a regulatory wife
- She wanted to collaborate rather than pick a fight
- She wanted to speak directly to moms, dads, and especially kids
- Growing up, she had been taught that self-sufficiency was everything

- Now she left the safety and security of her family with other people, many of them 20 years younger than her
- Barack's job, it seemed, was to take the chaos of the world and metabolize it somehow into calm leadership, every day of the week and every week of the year
- She understood that they represented the nation and they're obligated to step forward and be present when there was tragedy, hardship, or confusion
- Part of their role as they understood it was to model *reason, compassion, and consistency*
- She learned many times over that *grief and resilience live together*
- She discovered a sense of pride and self sufficiency from military hospitals and the resiliency of injured soldiers
- Many of them refuse any pity from others
- She sees these values reflected in all parts of the military
- They were both getting better at compartmentalizing their work and family life so that they didn't spill over into each other
- Barack read letters seeing it as a responsibility of the oath
- He had a hard and lonely job, but he knew he had an obligation to stay open, to shut nothing out
- This was part of his nightly routine
- Her mom always says that her and Craig are not special, and that the Southside is filled with kids like them
- The parents just needed to *help them get into those rooms*
- The important part of her story is to acknowledge the many small ways she has been buttressed over the years, and the people who helped build her confidence overtime
- She remembers them all, every person who waved her forward, doing their best to inoculate her against the slights and indignities she was certain to encounter in the places she was headed
- Friendships between women, as any woman will tell you, are built of 1000 small kindnesses, swapped back and forth and over again
- Every once in a while she would invite 12 of her women friends to a Boot Camp where they would bond and engage in activities together

- She wanted to show up in the world in a way that honored who they were, the black women who came before her and paved the way for a potential better future for women like her
- Life was teaching her that *progress and change happens slowly*
- We are planting seeds of change, the fruit of which we might never see
- American citizens are for the most part far less cynical than their elected leaders, they just needed to get them out and vote
- She was learning how to connect her message to her image
- In this way, she could direct the American gaze
- She felt it was important to reach out to kids multiple times and in multiple ways in order for them to feel that it was all real
- Her early successes in life she knew were a product of the *consistent love and high expectations* with which she was surrounded as a child at home and at school
- *Kids will invest more if they feel they are being invested in*
- There was power in showing children her regard
- You may live in the world as it is, but *you can still work to create the world as it should be*

Main ideas / Themes:

- *Most people are good people* if you just treat them well
- In life, you control what you can
- Successful people learn to *lean on the people who believe in them* and to push onward with their goals
- Inspiration by itself is shallow. You have to back it up with hard work
- Bullies are just scared people hiding in scary people
- Confidence needs to be called from within
- As a minority, you are held to a different standard. You've got to be twice as good to go half as far
- During hard times, especially during hard times, *it is OK to laugh*
- Grief and resilience live together
- Progress and change happens slowly

- Successes in life she knew were a product of the *consistent love* and *high expectations*
- Kids will invest more if they feel they are being invested in
- You may live in the world as it is, but you can still work to create the world as it should be

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