



Check these out...

[It's Time To Rethink Business Ethics](#)

[Climbing the Corporate Ladder](#)

[Action Over Intention](#)

[Accountability In Leadership](#)

Michelle's Moment: The First Lady's First Legacy

by [Jennifer C. Thomas](#), president and founder of [MediaReady Consulting](#)

January 20, 2009

One of my favorite songs is Chaka Khan's "I'm Every Woman." What a fitting song for this week, with the inauguration of President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Robinson Obama. As America and the world take a front row seat to this monumental moment in history, I wonder if Mrs. Obama had any idea years ago the young lawyer she helped mentor would one day not just become her husband, but the 44th President of the United States, and she the First Lady.

Michelle Obama will be added to the annals of history, and her Inaugural gown, to the famous First Ladies' gallery in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. She will decide the platforms on which she will focus over the next four years. She is not just the first African American First Lady, but only the third with a postgraduate degree. She is the ultimate symbol of success; of a smart young woman, born on the South Side of Chicago, who worked her way to the top. She easily found her voice while at Princeton University and Harvard Law School and parlayed that voice into a successful career before and during her marriage to the President. She will no doubt skillfully use her knowledge and influence in her newest role.



I think of Michelle Obama as the ultimate Super Woman and Super Mom. She has mastered the delicate skill of balancing career, politics and family. Her daughters Malia and Sasha appear to be well-rounded, well-mannered kids; taking all of the hoopla surrounding their now-famous stature in stride. According to President Obama, they have their Mom to thank for that. No doubt Mrs. Obama will create a unique legacy in her new

role as have the First Ladies who have gone before her: Eleanor Roosevelt, Jackie Kennedy, Lady Bird Johnson, Nancy Reagan, Hillary Clinton, and Laura Bush. All stood behind and beside their husbands while helping shape the image of America to the world. Michelle Obama will also follow the legacy of other famous women who have impacted this great country: Sojourner Truth, Madame C. J. Walker, Rosa Parks, Barbara Jordan, Wilma Rudolph, Mae Jemison, and Oprah Winfrey. These women paved the way from an often tumultuous history, and boldly helped lead the way to freedom and limitless opportunity.

The most awe-inspiring aspect of this moment is not just the fact that Michelle Obama is the first African American First Lady. It's what will become her first legacy. From this point on, little girls like my three nieces will never have to "imagine" what it's like to be a Black woman in the White House. They can see a woman who looks like their Mommy and little girls who look like them living there; not to mention a man who looks like their Daddy running the most powerful country in the world. Even though they are too young right now to understand the impact of this unparalleled moment in history, because of it their dreams can soar without limitations of race or gender. This in itself makes my heart burst with gladness. This in itself is cause for celebration.

About The Author

*Jennifer C. Thomas is president and founder of Atlanta-based **MediaReady Consulting**, which coaches professionals to "master their media savvy with effective communication skills." A 20-year veteran of broadcast journalism, Thomas was most recently an executive producer for CNN Headline News and is a former reporter, anchor, talk-show host and field producer for such media giants as NBC, ABC and New York Times owned-and-operation stations. While at CNN and Headline News, she helped capture major tragedies such as Hurricane Katrina and the September 11th terrorist attacks.*

[Click to make comment](#)

Maria January 26, 2009, 8:25 am