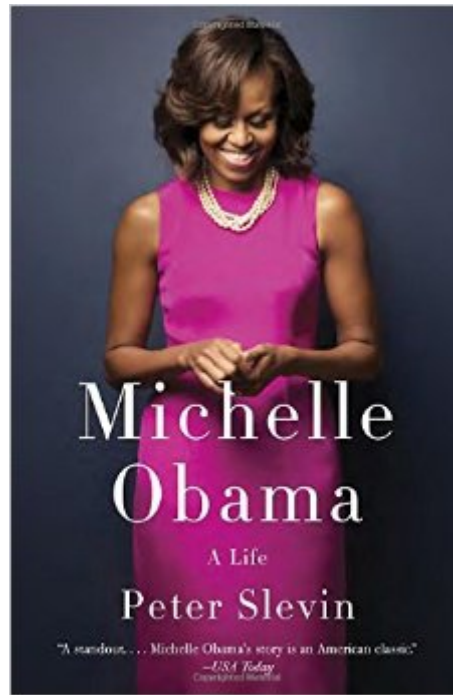


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Michelle Obama: A Life



Synopsis

This is the inspiring story of a modern American icon, the first comprehensive account of the life and times of Michelle Obama. With disciplined reporting and a storyteller's eye for revealing detail, Peter Slevin follows Michelle to the White House from her working-class childhood on Chicago's largely segregated South Side. He illuminates her tribulations at Princeton University and Harvard Law School during the racially charged 1980s and the dilemmas she faced in Chicago while building a high-powered career, raising a family, and helping a young community organizer named Barack Obama become president of the United States. From the lessons she learned in Chicago to the messages she shares as one of the most recognizable women in the world, the story of this First Lady is the story of America. Michelle Obama: A Life is a fresh and compelling view of a woman of unique achievement and purpose.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Peter Slevin's biography of First Lady Michelle Obama draws you in from the very first page. He begins with her own words, spoken at the graduation ceremony at a high school in a troubled black neighborhood. By doing so, he sets the stage for Mrs. Obama's life story, the daughter of working class parents who rose to prominence despite the overwhelming odds against her. The story is delightfully told. Mr. Slevin enlivens the narrative not only with Michelle Obama's words but of scores of people whose lives have intersected with hers. And the quotes are entertaining! One woman who says she would have predicted that Michelle would become president rather than her

husband, uses a moniker you might hear on the streets instead of in the halls of power (bad-you-can-guess). After opening with the First Lady's words, the author backtracks to her family and childhood upbringing. Again, he casts his net wide as an interviewer, finding people who knew her parents, people who went to school with Michelle, people who have worked with her. He paints a picture of the times, and what it was -- and is -- like to be black in both her parents' time and her own. The biography is, thankfully, not a standard-issue work of hagiography. The author doesn't shy away from the First Lady's missteps, like the time she wore designer sneakers to work in a soup kitchen. He also repeats unflattering, and downright nasty, comments from both Internet trolls and high-profile critics alike. By doing so, he draws attention to the damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't role of the First Lady.

Writing the biography of a first lady is a daunting business. You have a childhood to write about that may or may not be inspirational. You have the story of a presidential couple that everyone must feel they know a lot about, and the "real" couple behind the office and headlines to contend with. You also have the president, who could so overpower the First Lady as to seem diminutive and a mere echo of her husband. You also have a part of the population who, no matter what you say and/or write about a person, cannot see beyond their own political-goggles and will mercilessly attack a book no matter what the content. Peter Slevin manages to navigate successfully these potential issues in his new, fascinating book "Michelle Obama: A Life". The story of her childhood is compelling, as she grew up on the south side of Chicago, having to contend with the pervasive racial factors that dominated the society during that time. Her parents gave her a firm grounding, insisting on education and expecting her to be a successful adult. That she fulfilled in spades. We get to spend time with her in college, and at the start of her career. When Barack enters her life, she somehow manages to both transform and become more the woman she always was. It's a hidden testament to her character and drive, as well as her loving devotion to her husband, who was destined to be on an upward track. Even though the subsequent elections could possibly shadow the Michelle, Slevin steers the book towards her, and we get to see her both at her best and not-so-best. In fact, Slevin writes a portrait of Michelle that is both honest and honoring. You don't feel at all that he regards her to put her on a pedestal. His intention is to tell her story as honestly as possible.

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