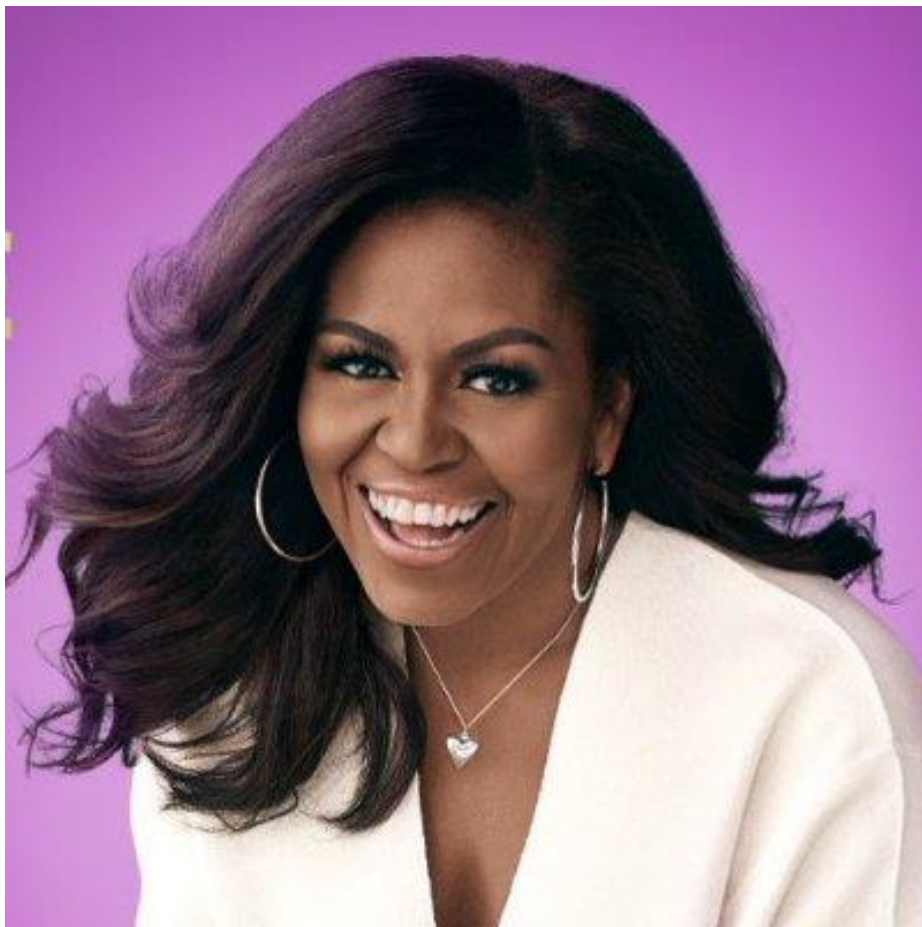


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WALES IUBA 6003 LEADING & DEVELOPING PEOPLE

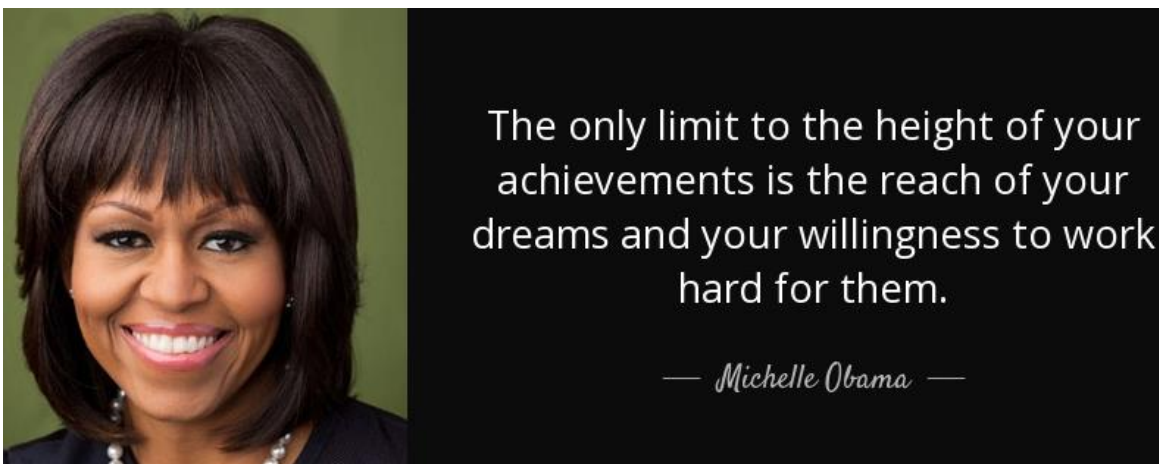
ASSESSMENT ONE

Michelle Obama: A Leadership Case Study



Michelle Obama was reared on the South Side of Chicago and developed a deep reverence for family, dedication, and knowledge. After observing her father's struggle with multiple sclerosis, Michelle realised that ***one's successes are limited only by their goal-setting abilities and determination to achieve them.*** Michelle completed her bachelor's degree at Princeton University with distinction and was awarded a doctorate from Harvard Law School. In 1988, Michelle joined the prestigious Chicago law firm Sidley Austin, where she mentored Barack Obama, and the couple got married in 1992. (White House Gov: *First Lady Michelle Obama*, 2014; The West Port Library *LibGuides: Michelle Obama: About*, 2023). Michelle Obama prominently served as the United States' 44th First Lady with African ancestry, focused on four essential activities: advocating for women's and girls' education worldwide, promoting stable households, assisting service members and their families, and facilitating college access. (The White House, 2021; Michelle Obama | Biography & Facts | Britannica, 2023).

During her tenure in the White House, Michelle inaugurated the **Let's Move!** initiative for tackling childhood obesity within a generation. It boosted more nutritious lunch programmes and stimulated the establishment of crops across the nation and raised the pupils' prospects for active lifestyles. (The White House, 2021). Currently, Michelle is partaking in a personal project, highlighting the significance of people's influence in her book and podcast— "**The Light We Carry**", prompting society to contemplate their lives, attain contentment, and cultivate significant connections in the tumultuous culture through ***engaging instances and insightful guidance.*** (Silva, 2022; Goodreads. *The Light We Carry: Overcoming in Uncertain Times*, Michelle Obama, 2023).



(Source: NPR; Michelle Obama Convention Speech, 2008)

Global trends change the planet, these are called “**megatrends**”, civilization's biggest difficulties and potential, underpinning many successful firms, governments, and NGOs globally. (PWC: *Five Megatrends And Their Implications for Global Defense & Security*, 2016). For instance, **technology** drives the fourth industrial revolution. AI and robots, automation, are changing every aspect of humanity, and several industries and it transforms the work market, shifting the demand trend for workforce skills. Besides, **globalisation** has been accelerated by transportation, communication, and technology. The world seems smaller due to global purchasing alternatives. High competitiveness, mobility, and economies of scale are benefitting businesses. (*Mega trends and your business* | SA Law, 2016; Fisk, 2019; Badea, 2023).

Due to the volatile environment, leaders are challenged to adapt and provide what necessitates success. Today's leaders value **resiliency**, successfully adapting to altering conditions demonstrates their ability to deal with adversity. (AlAhmari, 2022). To be successful, leaders must consider demonstrating **innovative thinking and vision for the future** because strategic execution necessitates foresight and a specific objective. (Kestig et al., 2016; Hernandez & Rodriguez, 2018; Martin Roll, 2019; LinkedIn Team Spirit, 2023).

This essay aims to critically assess Michelle Obama's leadership style within the overall setting whereby she operates as aforementioned, with a focus on evaluating its effectiveness in motivating creativity, adaptation, and high performance.

A leader is an exceptional individual with ambition, aptitude, disposition, and other exceptional qualities. These qualities enable them to inspire and have a significant impact on a group, helping it achieve a shared objective. Leaders demonstrate various personalities and use different leadership styles. Regardless of the style chosen, each one serves a unique purpose. The concept of leadership has been extensively studied and discussed throughout history. Leadership involves guiding and influencing individuals to work together towards a common goal or vision. Leadership involves responsibly guiding and managing a group or organisation, while motivating individuals to reach their full potential. (Delia, 2018; Strait, 2020).

Leadership involves the ability to think of and effectively communicate a visionary idea, fully embrace it, and persistently work towards making it a reality. Leadership involves building trust and inspiring confidence in people. Leadership has a significant impact on organisational

progress. Fostering creativity and innovation is crucial for successful leadership in organisational change and development. It is crucial for leaders to effectively manage and cultivate their ability to innovate. (Heiss, 2023; Soeari et al., 2023).

A truly impactful leader can quickly adapt to changing circumstances. Regular modifications, evolutionary transformations, and autonomous advancements are the three classifications of alterations in leadership. The ability to effectively manage and adapt to change is a key measure of a leader's effectiveness. Mastering this skill is crucial for today's leaders to successfully steer and lead environmental transformations. Leadership is about influencing and guiding others to align their actions with the leader's goals and aspirations. A good leader can foster an entrepreneurial mindset in their team, empowering them to develop innovative strategies that improve productivity and efficiency. (Heiss, 2023; Soeari et al., 2023).

The analysis of leader Michelle Obama will incorporate the utilisation of Authentic and Transformational leadership models. Furthermore, an in-depth evaluation will be conducted to ascertain if she exhibits the qualities frequently associated with emotional and interpersonal intelligence, as well as versatility. The fundamental pillars of authentic leadership lie in the virtues of transparency, sincerity, and honesty. Authentic leaders cultivate trust among their subordinates and cultivate a congenial atmosphere within the professional setting. Authentic leadership encompasses not solely the capacity to motivate individuals to strive towards the objectives of an organisation, but also a steadfast commitment to those very objectives over an extended period of time. The fundamental components of authentic leadership encompass possessing a lucid and discernible vision for the future, exhibiting an unwavering commitment to serving others, maintaining steadfast loyalty to one's personal convictions, fostering relationships grounded in trust, and possessing a comprehensive understanding of one's own capabilities and aptitudes. (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022; Yang & Lin, 2023; Ayça, 2023). The following pictures below explain critical elements and characteristics that must be present in the individual to be considered an authentic and transformational leader.

CHARACTERISTICS of AUTHENTIC LEADERS



TRUE TO THEMSELVES

No matter what kind of leadership style you use (collaborative, agile, etc.) being true to your values and principles is key to be an Authentic Leader.



SELF-AWARE

Reflect and understand yourself, by being honest about your strengths, weaknesses, and needs.



PROACTIVE

Your life story itself isn't as important as how you evaluate it and take appropriate action.

Source: (Nadine, 2022).

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP WELLBEING THROUGH LEADERSHIP



VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Authentic leaders have a compelling vision for the future. The vision gives themselves and others a purpose and brings the people they are leading on a journey with them.



SERVICE FOR OTHERS

Authentic leaders put others first and demonstrate this through a service mindset. This means a focus on "we" rather than "me" and helping others grow.



CONVICTION OF VALUES

Authentic leaders are deeply aware of their values. They are genuine, reliable, trustworthy and build positivity. Authentic leaders are unbiased in their decision-making and look to grow the strengths of those around them.



GENUINE RELATIONSHIPS

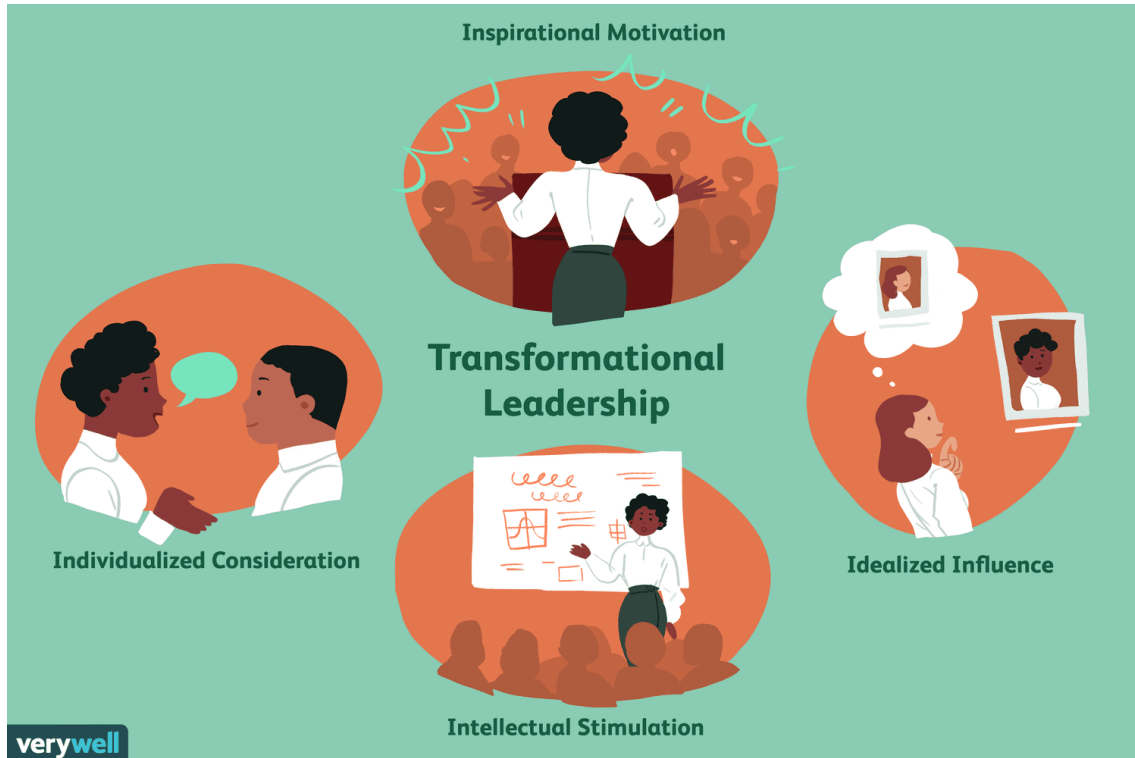
Authentic leaders strive for genuine, open and truthful relationships with the people around them. When leaders have positive and genuine relationships it is the greatest amplifier of their own wellbeing.



FOUNDATION OF SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is the foundation of authentic leadership. This includes: knowing yourself, being true to yourself, developing a high self-efficacy, autonomy and having a positive self-concept. See the self-awareness model for more.

Source: (Cargill's Classroom: Wordpress.com, 2023).



Source: (Cherry, 2023).

Authentic leaders assess their strengths, weaknesses, and core values to improve teamwork. Self-awareness involves introspection, constructive criticism, and understanding the emotions of subordinates. Self-awareness shows employees that a leader can understand different perspectives. Authentic leaders carefully consider multiple perspectives, including their own and opposing views, when making decisions. This method promotes open communication among employees while minimising conflict. Equal and fair treatment of employees demonstrates a leader's appreciation for their contributions and openness to their suggestions. Besides, authentic leaders are honest and open about their feelings in professional relationships. This may require offering constructive feedback to team members and acknowledging personal shortcomings. A true leader demonstrates desired behaviours and fosters transparency and clarity within the team and organisation. (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022; Whitfield, 2023; Alharbi, 2023).

Authentic leaders possess the ability to think beyond the present and focus on the future. Leaders can inspire employees to increase their effort and commitment towards achieving long-term goals. This trait ensures sustained team success. Authentic leaders are committed to their missions. This suggests that individuals prioritise the objectives of the organisation or team over their own. Authentic leaders prioritise team success over authority to achieve their objectives and demonstrate a strong dedication to personal growth, professional development, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, discipline, inspiration, long-term goals, consistency, proactiveness, and ethical conduct. (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022; Whitfield, 2023; Alharbi, 2023).

Michelle Obama has also portrayed the following elements and characteristics aforementioned. A perfect example that shows she portrays authentic leadership and transformational leadership perfectly is when she gave an inspiring and compelling speech, portraying the characteristics of an authentic and transformational leader, during the graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020, and during that year it was a very unstable and vulnerable time for all worldwide due to the pandemic and social issues occurring. (Edmond, 2020; Martinez, 2020).

“For those of you who feel invisible: Please know that your story matters. Your ideas matter. Your experiences matter. Your vision for what our world can and should be matters.” (Obama, 2020).

Michelle Obama told the 2020 graduating students that the outrage Americans feel against systemic injustice and police violence can be used for good. The killing of George Floyd has sparked protests around the country, and the Former First Lady has recognised that. (Rico, 2020; Scancarelli, 2020). Based on the 2020 graduation speech from Michelle that is available on YouTube, several lessons were shared, which truly shows how **authentic** Michelle is as a leader, she not only shows care and support to the community, but she also encouraged people and shows her vulnerable side, not afraid of admitting that humans have emotions too and can utilise it to our own power to do good and make a difference. Michelle Obama knows her words provide power, confidence, support, and security to people. Her words spoken are exactly what was needed by society, even if the people watching were not to be students, as the speech is broadcast live worldwide! Michelle had a vision, that what she says will influence people and drive them to take

action. Hence, she used her platform to do exactly what will help everyone, make them feel seen, heard, and valued, inspire collaboration and unity, and all this was delivered with such transparency—her authenticity and transformational leadership style was portrayed very sincerely through her speech. (Akhtar, 2020; Scancarelli, 2020).

Michelle shared her wisdom to the world. Personally, as an online audience during the LIVE broadcast for the YouTube Class of 2020 Graduation, a very critical lesson learned is that life is full of unknowns. Furthermore, Michelle underlined the power of kindness, urging people to constructively express their ideas and share them with the world. As expected of an authentic leader, Michelle said that showing one's feelings is not a weakness and can actually improve one's contributions to society. Moreover, one of the most powerful emotions at one's disposal is anger. Corrosion, damage, and the propagation of instability from the inside out will ensue from ignoring it. However, focused wrath is the engine that drives historical transformation. With all her collective actions from a Former First Lady until the present day, it can be observed that she portrays both authentic and transformational leadership style, with authentic being her dominant style. (Akhtar, 2020; Rico, 2020; Scancarelli, 2020; Greimel, Kanbach and Mihaela Chelaru, 2023).

A comprehensive study has been conducted to explore the impact of transformational leadership on various outcomes in the workplace. These outcomes encompass commitment, performance, and the fostering of creativity. Hence, it can be confidently asserted that this particular style of leadership occupies a crucial position as a dependent variable in the realm of leadership research. Through the cultivation of both implicit and explicit agreements of reciprocity, transformational leaders possess the remarkable ability to inspire their subordinates, encouraging them to elevate their aspirations and foster a profound sense of autonomy. This, in turn, propels individuals to surpass conventional expectations, reaching new heights of achievement. (Marcella, 2022; Greimel, Kanbach and Mihaela Chelaru, 2023; Qian & Kee, 2023; Tran, & Carey, 2023).

The essence of transformational leadership lies in the fundamental principles of the social cognitive theory. This leadership style revolves around the remarkable capacity of a leader to ignite inspiration within team members, cultivate an environment that nurtures intellectual growth, and

exhibit authentic care and concern for everyone. The fundamental principles of transformational leadership are embodied in these four pillars. In the realm of leadership, individuals who possess the ability to inspire a sense of excellence and evoke emulation from their followers achieve this by embodying exemplary conduct, commonly referred to as charismatic influence. These exceptional individuals establish themselves as beacons of inspiration, captivating the admiration, trust, and respect of those who hold them in the highest esteem. The perception and anticipation of innovation's worth among employees can be shaped through the observation and emulation of their superiors' behaviours. Furthermore, the attainment of inspirational motivation occurs when leaders skillfully convey a captivating vision and purpose to their followers, leading to heightened productivity and overall contentment for all involved parties. According to this argument, employees can experience a high level of motivation when ambitious and precisely defined goals are set, which in turn require them to engage in creative problem-solving. (Marcella, 2022; Greimel, Kanbach & Mihaela Chelaru, 2023; Qian & Kee, 2023; Tran, & Carey, 2023;).

Michelle Obama demonstrates exceptional composure and self-assurance in various situations. She embodies the essence of modern parenthood with her impeccable style and perceptive nature. Her fashion choices have led to a \$2 billion increase in annual retail sales. The Let's Move programme, led by President Obama, aims to address childhood obesity, and has received significant support and endorsement. Michelle Obama's popularity has significantly increased by 20 percentage points since 2008. As noted by biographer Allgor, the public is more familiar with visual representations of her rather than detailed biographical narratives. President Obama recognises the significance of the first lady's role. Therefore, it is essential for him to exercise caution to prevent any potential breaches of appropriateness. (Yangailo, 2023; *Transformative Leadership Characteristics of Michelle Obama*, 2021; Tierney & Freese, 2023).

Michelle Obama is highly respected in the feminist community. Throughout her career, she has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to advocating for gender equality. It is commonly believed that a nation's economic prosperity is hindered when it limits the potential of a significant portion of its population, particularly referring to women. This quote emphasises the significance of empowering women to achieve their full potential and actively contribute to societal progress. Michelle Obama is a strong advocate for women's rights and plays a key role in

driving positive social change. (Yangailo, 2023; *Transformative Leadership Characteristics of Michelle Obama*, 2021; Tierney & Freese, 2023).

Michelle Obama is widely praised for sharing inspiring and constructive messages. True heroes possess an exceptional capacity to inspire and empower others. This statement highlights the significance of utilising one's skills for the betterment of others, rather than solely concentrating on personal challenges. It is important to recognise that true power comes from supporting individual growth, rather than engaging in actions that harm others. This exemplifies her effective use of leadership skills. (Yangailo, 2023; *Transformative Leadership Characteristics of Michelle Obama*, 2021; Tierney & Freese, 2023).

Furthermore, Michelle Obama possesses distinct perspectives regarding evolution, difficulties, and influence, her book “The Light We Carry”, highlights the importance of elucidating the universe to help others. This fosters consciousness and facilitates the generation of creative solutions for improving society. Michelle discusses her schedule and morals in various aspects of her life, including motherhood, daughterhood, union, relationships, and her role as First Lady. These revelations have facilitated her ability to adjust and surmount challenges. Her wisdom has facilitated personal growth and transformation. Michelle employs effective strategies such as initiating empathy, establishing high aspirations, and cultivating an empowering circle of entrusted peers and coaches, referred to as her "kitchen table." She targets socioeconomic status, gender, and overview with lightheartedness, truthfulness, and understanding. Michelle advocates for readers to confront fears, request encouragement from their social networks, and lead lives characterised by courage. This is an example of the evident transformational leadership she exhibits, based on the picture regarding transformational leader traits. (Obama 2021; Newman 2022).

In today's turbulent environment, ethical behaviour and respect are often disregarded. Dictators, not leaders, are those who fail to listen to their followers. When one lacks self-respect for themselves, it is almost impossible to show sincere reverence for others. Michelle Obama's actions in various roles—a mother, a wife, a citizen, a First Lady, etc had been guided by a deep commitment to mutual respect and dignity, which are qualities essential to effective governance.

Leaders that exude confidence and clarity are more likely to motivate their followers. It is evident that Michelle Obama has been a strong advocate for gender equality, equality for women,

and harmonious balance between work and life. Moreover, communication is more than just being understood and persuaded. One has to be amiable and simple to get in touch with. People may be hesitant to report issues or ask for help if they know their leader or superior does not have a policy of accessibility. Naturally, leaders who are open about their intentions, plans, and abilities inspire trust and confidence among followers, thus why Michelle Obama has many people from all walks of life that look up to her as a role model and follow through with her current personal projects, which is evident her dominant leadership style is AUTHENTIC while also being TRANSFORMATIONAL depending on situation.

Not to mention, leaders that are truly effective know how to admit error and are realistic about their capabilities. They are people that put in their absolute best effort and are always appreciated. Anyone can tell that, Michelle Obama emits so much light and positivity wherever she goes. Her AUTHENTIC and TRANSFORMATIONAL leadership abilities are enhanced by her commitment to addressing issues like childhood obesity and supporting military families. As always, she is an inspiration to everyone wherever she goes.

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