

Michelle Obama

(born 1964)

In the 1960s, Frazer Robinson and his wife Marian lived in a bungalow in the south of Chicago. Frazer worked for the Chicago Water Department and Marian was a secretary. When their son Craig was born, Marian stopped work and stayed at home to look after the baby. Two years later, on 17 January, 1964, Marian's daughter, Michelle LaVaughn Robinson, was born. Life wasn't easy for the family because Frazer only earned \$6,000 a year - not very much for a family of four.

Michelle worked hard at school, had brilliant results in her examinations and then she went to the elite university, Princeton, where she studied sociology and African-American studies. Because she herself was an African-American, she often felt a **victim of racial discrimination**. In her first year at Princeton, the mother of another student **complained** because her daughter **had to share** a room with a black girl. That girl was Michelle Robinson, now Michelle Obama, America's new First Lady.

Michelle went on to study at Harvard Law School and **became a lawyer**. When she left there, in 1988, she went to work for a Chicago **law firm** and here she met her future husband, Barack Obama. Michelle and Barack got married in October, 1992. Their first daughter, Malia, was born in 1998 and their second daughter, Sasha, was born in 2001.

After Malia was born, Barack went into politics and became a senator. He had to spend a lot of time away from home - and Michelle had to balance her career with looking after their children. It was a difficult time for the Obama family. Barack wrote in one of his

victim Opfer ♦ **racial discrimination** Rassendiskriminierung ♦ **to complain** sich beschweren ♦ **to have to (had to)** müssen ♦ **to share** teilen ♦ **to become (became, become)** werden ♦ **lawyer** Anwalt ♦ **law firm** Anwaltskanzlei

books, "Tired and stressed, we had little time for conversation, **much less** romance". But they compromised – she went back to work (**earning** \$316,000 a year - more than her husband did at that time!) and Barack spent more time looking after their daughters.

When Barack started campaigning for the presidency in 2007, Michelle cut her professional **duties** by 80% to help him in his campaign. She soon **won a reputation** for charm, **wit**, intelligence - and style. She has become America's fashion icon and has even **appeared** on the **front cover** of *Vogue* fashion magazine.

When Barack Obama became America's 44th president in November, 2008, the Obamas moved into a new home - the White House. And to make sure that Malia and Sasha don't **miss out on** family life, Michelle's mother, Marian, has moved into the White House, too. So America not only has a First Lady but also a First Granny! ♦



Cultural note

In the early days of the United States, there was no official name for the president's wife. Some used the title *Lady*, some were called *Mrs President*. In 1849, when Dolley Madison (wife of the fourth US president) died, President Taylor made a speech at her **funeral** and called her the *First Lady*. But the title first became popular in 1877 when there was a New York newspaper report on the new president, Rutherford B. Hayes and his wife, the First Lady, Lucy Webb Hayes. **Nowadays** the wives of presidents and **prime ministers** all over the world are called First Lady.

much less noch viel weniger ♦ **to earn** verdienen ♦ **duty** Pflicht ♦ **to win a reputation (won, won)** sich einen Namen machen ♦ **wit** Witz, Geist ♦ **to appear** erscheinen ♦ **front cover** Titelblatt ♦ **to miss out on** versäumen ♦ **funeral** Begräbnis ♦ **nowadays** heutzutage ♦ **prime minister** Premierminister