



***Becoming*, by Michelle Obama**  
***Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy***

It is no wonder that *Becoming*, Michelle Obama's engaging memoir, has set bestseller records here and around the globe. Our much admired former first lady's warmth and vitality shine in every chapter.

Born Michelle Robinson, she grew up in the South Side of Chicago along with her big brother Craig. The Robinson family rented the top story of a two-family house owned by Mrs. Robinson's Aunt Robbie and Uncle Terry, who lived on the first floor. "My family was my world," she remembers. "My mother taught me how to read early, walking me to the public library. My father went to work every day dressed in the blue uniform of a city laborer, but at night he showed us what it meant to love jazz and art. Everything that mattered was within a five-block radius."

An outstanding student, Michelle graduated *cum laude* from Princeton and got her law degree from Harvard. During her first year at the law firm Sidley & Austin in Chicago, a senior partner asked her to mentor a summer associate. On her mentee's first day, she recalls, "I walked out to meet him—Barack Obama, dressed in a dark suit and still a little damp from the rain. Despite my resistance to the hype that had preceded him, I found myself admiring Barack. He was refreshing, unconventional, and weirdly elegant."

Their friendly working relationship later blossomed into romance. To celebrate Barack's completion of his bar exam, they had dinner at a favorite Chicago restaurant. When it came time for dessert, the waiter brought over a plate covered with a silver lid and lifted the cover: "I saw a dark velvet box where the chocolate cake was supposed to be. Inside was a diamond ring. When I said yes to his proposal it seemed that everyone in the restaurant started to clap. Life with Barack was never going to be dull."

The importance of family is a prevailing theme throughout her memoir. When our 44<sup>th</sup> president was elected, the Obamas were concerned how their young daughters would adjust to their new life. At 10 and 7, Malia and Sasha would be the youngest children to live in the White House since the Carter administration. George and Laura Bush, the outgoing first couple, had parented two older daughters and sought to make the transition smooth: "Laura invited me to return with Sasha and Malia on a day when her own girls could be there to introduce my kids to the 'fun parts' of the White House, including how to use a sloping hallway as a slide."

Michelle Obama now relishes her life out of the spotlight: "For me, becoming isn't about arriving somewhere or achieving a certain aim. It's all a process, steps along a path. Becoming requires equal parts patience and rigor. Becoming is never giving up on the idea that there's still more growing to be done."