

## Allison's Book Corner September 2020

*Becoming* by Michelle Obama  
(Crown Publishing 2018)

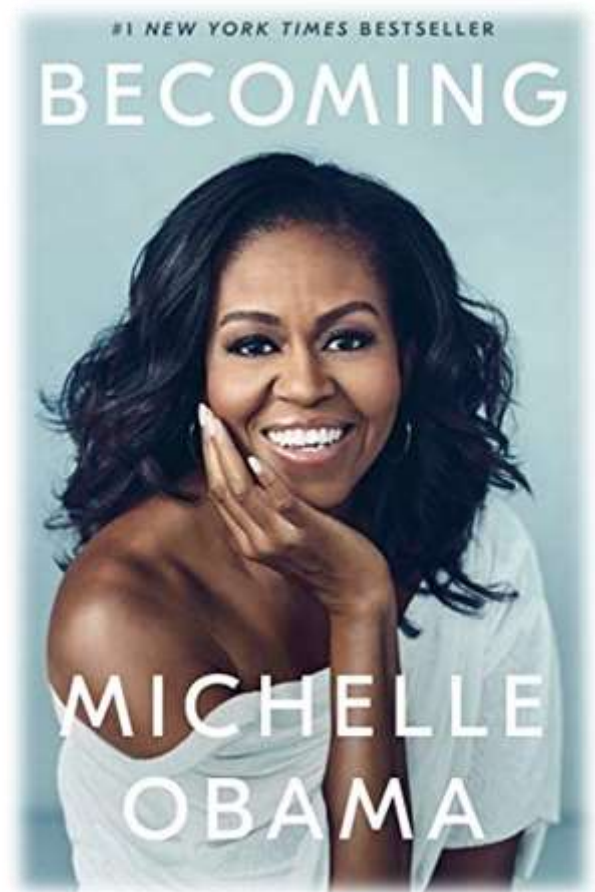
*Becoming* by Michelle Obama sold 1.4 million copies in its first week. After 15 days, the book became the best-selling title of 2018 in the U.S. By March 26, 2019, *Becoming* had sold 10 million copies. This is becoming (no pun intended) the best-selling memoir of all time.

If you have not read *Becoming* by now, I recommend it highly. I realize we are living in partisan times, but strongly believe that no matter your political affiliation, this book can be of value to you as a **human being**.

What struck me from when Michelle Obama first appeared in American politics is that she never thought this would be her journey. If you had told her as a little girl that she would one day be First Lady of the United States, young Michelle would have laughed or called you crazy. There is something about the humble beginnings and never planning to be in the White House -- or in politics generally -- that really resonates. Our future First Lady could have been on line with us at the local Target. She was one of us, just out here trying to make it and find her way.

Reading about her childhood and her family in Chicago is very interesting. I have no ties to Chicago, nor have I been there, so reading about it was a learning experience. But it also felt very familiar, just like any urban primarily-black neighborhood that I have visited in the tri-state area.

This memoir also highlights how you absolutely do not know how meeting just one person can change your life FOREVER, (just one little ole



person). Being person of faith, reading Obama's life story showed me just how God was right behind her, ordering her footsteps. For those of you not of any particular faith, you can see instead the hand of fate, or destiny.

What if you had not met your best friend at college? What if you had decided not to take a particular class where you sat next to a particular person? These random things mark us positively or negatively for a lifetime. So when Michelle becomes engaged to Barack Obama and then decides she must introduce him to Valerie Jarrett (before she can accept a job offer from Jarrett), the wheels of history are put in motion. Michelle certainly did not see what was ahead, but she felt strongly the three of them would always be friends. As many of you know, Valerie Jarrett became Barack Obama's senior advisor throughout his administration. Fun fact: she is also godmother to the Obama girls.

Michelle Obama also has no problem discussing being a working mother with a husband who is always at work. Her struggles before the White House are our struggles. She even touches the taboo topic of possible infertility. Before most married women have kids, we worry that maybe we will not be able to have them after all. I know I did. Well, so did Michelle Obama. And then a well-meaning doctor suggested a popular fertility drug, Clomid, which proved unnecessary. Her story, folks, is our story. She is a real person, not some woman on a pedestal. I called a friend and suggested she read the book after I read about Obama's Clomid experience.

Many of us can already guess what history is going to say about Michelle Obama. The first line is easy because she will forever be the first African American First Lady of the United States. But there is so much more. On Netflix you can watch the documentary "Becoming," which follows Michelle on her worldwide publicity tour for the memoir. There are two great things about the documentary. First, you hear her daughters voice their opinions as young adults. Second, Michelle and her mother take us back to their family home in Chicago. This is especially revealing after reading the memoir and then seeing the modest circumstances in which she grew up.

*Becoming* is another great opportunity to dive into a person's life and possibly see yourself and learn something along the way.