

## **Women’s History Month Spotlight: Michelle Obama, the Promising Attorney turned Public Servant**



Although most people know Michelle Obama for her initiatives as the First Lady of the United States, Mrs. Obama had an accomplished career as an attorney and a public servant before becoming First Lady. In recognition of Women’s History Month, Cowan, Liebowitz & Latman invites you to learn more about Michelle Obama and her journey as an attorney and public servant.

Michelle Obama was born and raised in the South Shore neighborhood of Chicago. Mrs. Obama showed early academic promise and graduated as salutatorian from her high school. Her academic success led her to Princeton University where she graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelors in Sociology and a minor in African American Studies. From her undergraduate days, Mrs. Obama had a strong interest in tackling racial and community issues with her senior thesis written on “Princeton-Educated Blacks and the Black Community.” She continued her education at Harvard Law School where she earned her JD in 1988.

After graduating from Harvard Law, Mrs. Obama joined the prominent Chicago firm, Sidley Austin, focusing on entertainment law. Her time at Sidley Austin provided her with valuable legal experience, but she realized her true passion was public service and community engagement. In 1991, Mrs. Obama left Sidley Austin to join the Chicago municipal government, initially as an Assistant to the Mayor. Eventually, she became the Assistant Commissioner of Planning and Development, but in 1993, Mrs. Obama left the Department of Planning and Development to lead the Chicago office of the non-profit organization, Public Allies.

During her almost four-year tenure at Public Allies, Mrs. Obama broke fundraising records for the organization. In 1996, she went on to become the Associate Dean of Student Services at the University of Chicago. She remained in the University of Chicago's administration in community affairs roles until her husband's 2008 presidential election. In her position as the First Lady, Mrs. Obama remained committed to public service and launched several initiatives, including her hallmark public health campaign, Let's Move! The Let's Move! campaign aimed to tackle childhood obesity through school-based programs to encourage healthier eating habits and increase children's physical activity, to promote better food labeling, and push for healthier school lunch options.

Michelle Obama capitalized on her legal expertise to effect change in the public sector. Her transition from a promising attorney to an impassioned public servant and then to her role as the First Lady committed to transformative social initiatives, showcases her unwavering dedication to fostering change and advocating for the underrepresented. Mrs. Obama's story serves as a powerful reminder of how individual passion, coupled with education and perseverance, can lead to significant societal impact.

As we celebrate Women's History Month, Cowan, Liebowitz & Latman encourages you to recognize [diversity and inclusion](#) every month.