

PRESS RELEASE

An Open Letter By Supporters of Michelle Obama

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In this week when presidential candidate Joe Biden is making his Vice-Presidential choice, we, the undersigned, call on him to invite former First Lady Michelle Obama to be his running mate on the 2020 Democratic ticket. Mr. Biden has casually suggested he would choose Ms. Obama “in a heartbeat.” We believe the moment has come for a formal invitation to be extended.

Michelle Obama is the most admired woman in the world. As a candidate, she has the power not only to assure victory over Donald Trump but to unite a bitterly divided nation and continue her life’s tireless work for the American people. As a leader, her stature and preexisting rapport with heads of state are unparalleled.

We know that, after eight years as First Lady, Ms. Obama is reluctant to return to Washington. She is in good company. In 1952, Dwight Eisenhower defeated Adlai Stevenson for the presidency in a landslide, after also demurring in response to efforts to draft him. What was true for Mr. Eisenhower then is even more true for Ms. Obama now. Our nation needs healing and urgent course-correction.

Highly qualified candidates are being considered. We will wholeheartedly support whichever of them receives the nomination. These are times of unprecedented peril for the American people and our democracy.

Americans face the pandemic of Covid-19 and a deeper affliction of the soul, led by one of the most divisive presidents in American history. The world too is in crisis, and, where America once led the way, she is now fast becoming a pariah state; her passport is unwelcomed in nations that were once faithful allies. Misled into dangerous denial, the U.S has been replaced by other countries as exemplars of crisis management.

When victorious, Joe Biden will bring to the job eight years of domestic and international experience as Vice-President and a long history of bipartisan cooperation as a U.S. senator. In the wake of a figure who has so woefully damaged America at home and abroad, he will signal a return to more responsible stewardship for the American people and the world.

Recent polls affirm this, but we cannot afford to take any chances. Mr. Biden must put forward the strongest ticket possible for a crushing landslide that not only unseats Mr. Trump but throws the un-American spirit of Trumpism on the ash heap of history. One that also strengthens the opportunity to win down the ticket and take back the U.S. Senate. This is why we encourage Mr. Biden to formally invite Ms. Obama.

We realize such an invitation is a sensitive matter for Ms. Obama, one to which she has given great thought and declined in the past. Of course, we honor whatever she decides now, but we would be remiss if we did not put forth the considerations that we feel underscore her singularity as a leader for this challenging time.

America is experiencing the most significant upheaval since the Civil Rights Movement. Following the death of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and too many others, nearly thirty million Americans of all ages and backgrounds have taken to the streets to cry out for greater respect for black lives.

It's a pivotal moment whose management toward real national betterment requires strong, sensitive, and courageous leadership. Imagine, in the age of Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, what it will mean for an African-American woman to become America's first female vice-president. Imagine too the symbolism that, by helping Biden defeat Trump, this same woman will have unseated an unapologetic chauvinist and white supremacist.

Starting with birtherism, Trump has made no secret of his disdain for his predecessor, working to roll back and undermine countless of Obama's achievements. It will show the nation and the world that the vision for a fairer and more compassionate America is one a majority of Americans share and cannot be undone by an intemperate and vindictive successor. The stakes could not be higher.

Michelle Obama represents cherished national values, having transcended humble beginnings and systemic inequality to earn a place among world leaders. A profoundly different path from that of members of the present administration, most of whom are children of white privilege, hers is the story of all Americans, of people who struggle, persevere, and overcome.

Beyond our shores, Michelle Obama can open up the skies of a brighter future. Gripped by the uncertainty of the pandemic and a dangerous resurgence of right-wing populism, billions around the world will see in her candidacy the hope, progress, and dignified moral leadership to which America has long aspired.

As we look ahead to another great American recovery, we must choose leaders who provide moral clarity and strategic wisdom. We must ensure that a divisive and racially hostile administration is succeeded by one that unmistakably renews our commitment to the rights and dignity of all people.

While we understand the gravity of the consideration before Michelle Obama, we remind her of Alexander Hamilton's words in Lin-Manuel Miranda's award-winning musical Hamilton: "I know that we can win // I know that greatness lies in you // But remember from here on in // History has its eyes on you."

There is a time when history calls upon us, and for Michelle Obama, that time is now. Indeed, history has its eyes on her.

Respectfully signed,

Louis Gossett Jr., Academy Award Winning Actor, GA; **Mack Wilbourn**, serial entrepreneur, GA; **Sidney Topol**, World War II veteran, FL; **Eugene Jarecki**, award-winning filmmaker, NY; **Tito Jackson**, businessman & civic activist, MA; **Colette Phillips**, Colette Phillips Communications Inc., MA; **Patricia DeGenero**, foreign affairs analyst, NY; **Steve Klein**, communications strategist, GA; **Bill Batson**, artist & civic activist; **Dawn Greenidge**, businesswoman, FL; **Christine Faria**, entrepreneur, ME; **Ari Dlugacz**, foundation head, PA; **Diane Downing**, hotel & restaurant chain, NH; **Scott Silverberg**, attorney, NY; **Travis Jones**, corporate executive, GA; **Eleanor Haller-Jordan**, Think Tank founder; **Angela Shaw**, Democrats Abroad, France; **Jerry Dunfey**, Global Citizens Circle, NH; **Nadine Hack**, Democrats Abroad, Switzerland; **Katharina Lange**, Leadership Professor, Germany; **Dorothee Baumann-Paulie**, Business Ethics & Human Rights Scholar, Switzerland

Selected co-signers available for interview upon request

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