

100 Black Men of St. Mary Parish

Black History Essay

“Behind Every Great Man, There is  
A Great Woman”

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"Behind every great man stands a great woman", is a powerful statement. In this case, I would say on side of every great man there is a great woman. A few years ago in 2008, Barack Obama, our first black president, was elected. He became our official 44<sup>th</sup> president on January 20, 2009. Although the election is what made history, Barack's loving wife, Michelle Obama, has made an ever-lasting impact on many.

"Every day the people I meet inspire me. Every day they make me proud. Every day they remind me how blessed we are to live in the greatest nation on Earth. Serving as your first lady is an honor and a privilege." Those were words from Michelle Obama. Coming from a woman of her caliber, I am sure those words were more than sincere.

Let me give you some background information on our amazing first lady. It is always intriguing to learn where great people started from. Michelle Obama was born Michelle LaVaughn Robinson on January 17, 1964 in Chicago, Illinois. She was raised on Chicago's South Side in an one-bedroom apartment along with her father (Fraser), mother (Marian), and older brother (Craig). Michelle comes from a very close family, and was raised with an emphasis in education.

It is no surprise that Michelle was a gifted student by the time she was in the sixth grade. She attended Chicago's first "magnet" high school for gifted children. "And when it came to going to schools, we all wanted to go to the best schools we could", said her older brother Craig. Michelle followed her

brother to Princeton University and earned her Bachelor's degree in Sociology, with a minor degree in African-American Studies. She went on to earn a law degree from Harvard Law School in 1988.

Following law school, Michelle worked at a Chicago Law Firm, where she met Barack. When the two met, Barack was a summer intern to whom Michelle was assigned as an adviser. The people at the firm thought it was only right to "hook" them up. Barack indeed asked Michelle out, but she declined because she felt their work relationship would make the romance improper. Eventually, she took back her decision and the two soon fell in love. After two years of dating, Barack proposed. The couple got married at Trinity United Church of Christ on October 3, 1992.

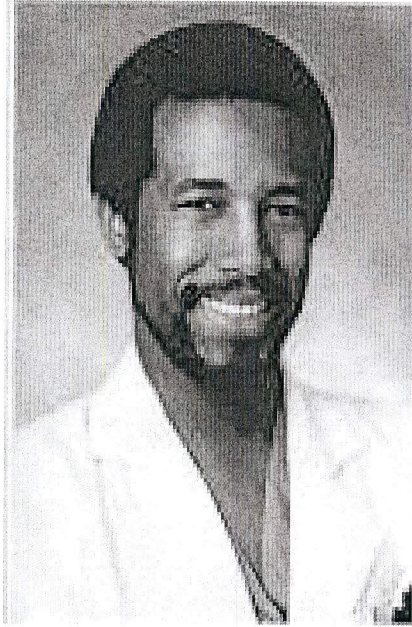
Michelle Obama first caught the eye of a national audience while at her husband's side when he delivered a high-profile speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2004. In 2007, Michelle returned to her own professional work to attend family and campaign obligations during Obama's run for the Democratic presidential nomination. Michelle said she made it a priority to only campaign two days out of the week and be home by the end of the second day for their two daughters Malia and Natasha, better known as Sasha. According to poles, Michelle is even more popular with the American public than her husband Barack. She is greatly admired for her strong character. In

President Obama's first term, she chose what she did very carefully. Michelle focused on education, healthy eating, and the White House vegetable garden.

Michelle Obama can definitely be looked at as the American Dream, and she gives hope to others like me. Barack's upbringing was not 100% American, just as he is not 100% black. However, Michelle is truly the first representative of urban, black America in the White House. "You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once, but don't underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own." That is just an example of the many inspiring quotes Michelle shares with the people of America.

The quote: "Behind every great man, stands a great woman", is an understatement to what Michelle does for Obama, but the saying is very true. Think about it, Dr. Martin Luther King had his queen Coretta Scott beside him. A couple idolized by the younger generation of today would be no other than the talented Jay-Z and Beyonce. But, the most powerful couple in my eyes would have to be Barack and Michelle Obama. So, I decided to dedicate this essay to a woman I see as an inspirational icon in Black History. It cannot be easy being the first lady, but Michelle Obama sure makes it look that way, and she does it in a stunning and fashionable manner.

**THE 2013 100 BLACK MEN OF ST MARY, BLACK HISTORY ESSAY  
CONTEST**



**Ben Carson M.D. submitted by Wayne Yelling, Jr. on February 28, 2013**

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## Benjamin Carson M.D.

I'm writing about Dr. Ben Carson he's my role model and hero. I myself overcame learning disabilities and challenges. There were many hurdles and obstacles in my life. Many teachers told my mother that I wouldn't learn, but through prayers and perseverance I managed to overcome that disability. The word can't is not used in my vocabulary. Today I'm on the Honor roll and a top reader in my school. Ben Carson overcame his learning disability like me to become a Pediatric neurosurgeon at Johns Hopkins Medical Center. It helps me to realize that I can do it too. Reading is power and Knowledge is the Key to succeed in life. Ben Carson was born in Detroit Michigan on September 18, 1951. He is the second son of Sonya and Robert Carson. Ben was eight when his parents separated leaving his mother Sonya to raise the children on her own, to make ends meet she worked three jobs.

Growing up Ben suffered from low self-esteem, at school, Ben and his brother Curtis struggled to keep their attention on their schoolwork, and their grades sank. They also suffered cruel racial slurs about how their color contributed to their poor up-bringing. But their mother was determined to bring the best out of her boys. Sonya Carson limited the time her sons spent Watching television, she sent them to the library often and demanded that they read at least two books a week. Like Ben's mother my mother is also a major influence in my life, she has taught me to never give up on your dreams and the sky is the limit. The brothers grades improved but they still faced cruelty at school. One day after being called a racial slur name at school he tried to stab a boy in the stomach but fortunately, the blade hit the boy's belt buckle. Carson knew at that moment he had to change his behavior and temper, so he turned to the bible and ask God to help him deal with his temper. He found salvation in the book of Proverbs

Proverbs 16:32 "Better a Patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city, and three hours later he said he had a different view of the world. Once Carson rededicated himself to his studies, and controlled his temper he did well in Junior High and High School making the honor

roll every year. In 1969 he graduated from Southwestern High School with honors, he won a scholarship to Yale University for 4 years. But because Ben's mother was financially well off, Ben had to work through most of his time in college to help his mom.

After graduating from Yale in 1973, with a degree in psychology he went on to the University Of Michigan School Of Medicine choosing to become a neurosurgeon, he soon realized that he had a gift for surgery since he said his mom told him at an early age that he had gifted hands, and to use them to help other people. In 1975 he married Lacrean Rustin whom he met at Yale. Carson earned his medicine degree, and him and his wife moved to Baltimore, Maryland where he became a resident at Johns Hopkins University in 1977. In 1982 he became the chief resident in neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital. After working at a hospital in Australia Carson returned to Johns Hopkins hospital in 1985 and became the director of pediatric neurosurgery at the age of 33.

In 1987, Carson attracted international attention by performing a surgery to separate two 7-month-old craniopagus twins from Germany, the surgery lasted 22 hours, but through hope and faith it was a success after that it proclaimed Carson to international fame and the rest was history. In 1994 Carson and his wife founded the Carson Scholars Fund in 1994. The foundation grants scholarships to young students and promotes reading in younger grades. After being diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2002, Ben decided to spend more time with his wife and three children Murray, Benjamin, Jr., Rhoeyce. Ben has written three books, and has received more than 50 honorary doctorate degrees and is a member of the Alpha Honor Medical Society and in 2008 Carson was awarded the Ford's Theater Lincoln Medal and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the U.S highest civilian honors. An autobiographical movie was made about his life called Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story in 2009 on the television station TNT. As of 2013 Carson still keeps a busy schedule, performing nearly 300 operations a year and speaking to various groups. Ben Carson life story proves that no matter what you just have to

follow your dreams, and never give up. So in honor of black history month Ben Carson I would to thank you for setting the bar high that I too can follow my dreams and strive for Excellence.



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Black History Month  
February, 2013

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*"History, despite its wrenching  
pain, cannot be unlived, but if  
faced with courage, need not be  
lived again."*

*-Maya Angelou*

## Black History Month

Every year, as February approaches, I hear the moans and groans of my peers: "I hate Black History Month," "Why isn't there a white history month?" Even though I hear these remarks annually, I am baffled by the fact that someone can blatantly undermine the success of a culture. Black History Month is a celebration of appreciation for the African Americans who fought for not only their own, but for the future generation's rights for years. I believe in the importance of knowing where you came from, but there is nowhere for kids my age to learn about black history. Instead of looking up black history on the internet, they are mesmerized by websites like Facebook and YouTube; the school systems are no count, either. The history books I am issued in school do no justice in illustrating the life-long struggle of African Americans. With only one or two sections granted to slavery and black civil rights, students are left with the impression that Rosa Parks started a boycott, Martin Luther King Jr., made a speech, "that peanut guy", George Washington Carver did some "cool" things, and afterwards, all was well. The truth of the matter is that even after all humans were considered "equal", hatred and racism raged on, and presently, still does.

In 1865, the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed, extinguishing slavery. Three years later, African Americans were granted citizenship when the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment was ratified, and in 1869, the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment gave black men the right to vote. This snippet of history shows the start of the African American struggle. They were not granted citizenship for three whole years after being freed from the reigns of slavery; for three years, they wandered aimlessly. In 1876, segregation started when the Jim Crow laws were established. At this period of time, blacks were forced to live in fear. If they were as much as accused of breaking one of these laws, they would be brutally killed. These laws did not begin to dwindle until 1954 when segregation in public schools ended. It was not until 1964 that segregation in the workplace and public areas was abolished. The time span from the end of slavery to the end of public segregation was 99 years.

Rosa Parks, Sojourner Truth, Martin Luther King Jr., W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Jesse Jackson, and many more, were the famous faces associated with the fight for black civil rights. However, there were hundreds of thousands of common people fighting for this cause. These people participated in rallies, riots and boycotts, and were sometimes arrested in the process. They fought long and hard for years, sacrificing so much for the sake of the future generations to live in prosperity, and sadly, it is taken for granted; many people seem to have ignored the past because they have become spoiled by the road that was paved for them by their ancestors.

Black History Month is a time to shamelessly promote one's appreciation for the bold actions of African America civil rights activists. If it was not for their thirst for change, I cannot even imagine how life would be. African Americans did not get where we are overnight, and honestly, we still are not there; I witness racial separations, slurs and "jokes" on a near daily basis. If the world continues on this downward slope of wickedness, I fear we shall end up exactly where started before 1865.

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*"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent  
about the things that matter."  
-Martin Luther King Jr.*

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