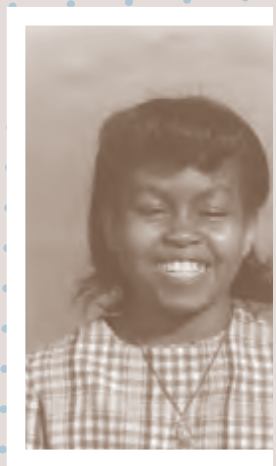


# BECOMING

*ADAPTED FOR YOUNG READERS*

MICHELLE OBAMA

#1 NEW YORK  
TIMES  
BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR





# WHO ARE YOU, AND WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BECOME?

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# BECOMING

*ADAPTED FOR YOUNG READERS*

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MICHELLE  
OBAMA

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# A NOTE TO READERS

WHEN I BEGAN THE PROCESS OF WRITING THIS BOOK, I wasn't sure what shape it would ultimately take, let alone what the title might be. One thing I did know was that I wanted to be honest—and this edition for young readers is no different. Growing up on the South Side of Chicago in the 1960s and '70s, my parents, Fraser and Marian Robinson, always kept it straight with me and my brother, Craig. They never sugarcoated hard truths or presented their reality as anything other than what it was—because they knew we could handle it. I want to give you all that same respect.

So my promise to you is to give you my story in all its messy glory—from the time I struggled on a question in front of my kindergarten class, to my first kiss and the insecurities I felt growing up, to the chaos of a campaign trail and the strange experience of shaking hands with the Queen of England.

But I hope you don't get too swept up in the glitz of the White House, because the most meaningful parts of my story aren't the ball gowns or state dinners. Instead, they are the little things: the way my grandfather smiled when he put his favorite album on the record

player, the smell of our house when my mom cleaned it each spring, the sound of an ice scraper on a car window in the middle of a Chicago winter.

During the writing process, I realized that there is no memory too small. Every last bit of our story has meaning. Some memories can bring a twinge of pain, particularly those that happen when we are young. I can still feel the embarrassment when I failed in front of my classmates at a young age. I can still feel the knot in my stomach after someone doubted me. And I still feel the pain and the emptiness that came with losing those closest to me. At some point, we all experience the kind of hurt that we can't fix on our own.

But those tender spots—the ones that we try the hardest to keep hidden—are often the parts of ourselves that are most worth sharing. Feelings like discomfort and struggle are signs that we're doing the hard work of discovering the greatest truths about ourselves. And when I look back at my own life, I see that it's only through those moments of great difficulty that I was able to find the strength to make a change or search more purposefully for who I wanted to be.

These kinds of things aren't usually what we feel comfortable sharing with one another. We're usually most concerned with what I like to call our statistics—our test scores, our exploits on the sports field, the kind of jeans our family can afford to buy. But truly, what's most important is our story—our whole story, including those moments when we feel a little vulnerable. So often, it's in sharing those parts of our stories that we see the beauty not only in our own journey, but in someone else's.

So I hope that as you're reading my story, you'll also think about your own—because it's the most beautiful gift you'll ever have. The bumps and bruises, the joys and triumphs and bursts of laughter—they

all combine to make you who you are. And who you are is not some static, unchanging thing. It will change every day and every year, and none of us know what shape our lives will ultimately take. That's what becoming is all about. And just like you, I still have a whole lot of becoming left to do, too.



# PREFACE

*March 2017*

WHEN I WAS A KID, MY DREAMS WERE SIMPLE. I WANTED a dog. I wanted a house that had stairs in it—two floors for one family. For some reason, I wanted a four-door station wagon instead of the two-door Buick that was my dad’s pride and joy. I used to tell people that when I grew up, I was going to be a pediatrician. Why? Because I loved being around little kids and I quickly learned that it was a pleasing answer for adults to hear. *Oh, a doctor! What a good choice!* In those days, I wore pigtails and bossed my older brother around and managed, always and no matter what, to get As at school. I was ambitious, though I didn’t know exactly what I was shooting for. Now I think it’s one of the most useless questions an adult can ask a child—*What do you want to be when you grow up?* As if at some point you become something and that’s the end.

So far in my life, I’ve been a lawyer. I’ve been a vice president at a hospital and the director of a nonprofit that helps young people build meaningful careers. I’ve been a working-class Black student at a fancy mostly white college. I’ve been the only woman, the only African

American, in all sorts of rooms. I've been a bride, a stressed-out new mom, a daughter torn up by grief. And until recently, I was the First Lady of the United States of America. Being First Lady challenged me and humbled me, lifted me up and shrank me down, sometimes all at once. I'm just beginning to process what took place over these last years—from the moment in 2006 when my husband first started talking about running for president to where we are now. It's been quite a ride.

When you're First Lady, America shows itself to you in its extremes. I've been to fund-raisers in private homes that look more like art museums, houses where people own bathtubs made from gemstones. I've visited families who lost everything in Hurricane Katrina and were tearful and grateful just to have a working refrigerator and stove. I've encountered people I find to be shallow and false and others—teachers and military spouses and so many more—whose spirits are so deep and strong it's astonishing. And I've met kids—lots of them, all over the world—who crack me up and fill me with hope and who blessedly manage to forget about my title once we start rooting around in the dirt of a garden.

I've been held up as the most powerful woman in the world and taken down as an “angry Black woman.” I've wanted to ask those people what they didn't like about me—was it that I was “angry,” or that I was Black, or that I was a woman? I've smiled for photos with people who call my husband horrible names on national television, but still want a framed keepsake. Some people on the internet have questioned everything about me, right down to whether I'm a woman or a man. A U.S. congressman has made fun of my butt. I've been hurt. I've been furious. But mostly, I've tried to laugh this stuff off.

There's a lot I still don't know about America, about life, about what the future might bring. But I do know myself. My dad, Fraser, taught me to work hard, laugh often, and keep my word. My mom, Marian, showed me how to think for myself and to use my voice. Together, in

our cramped apartment on the South Side of Chicago, they helped me see the value in our story, in my story, in the larger story of our country. Even when it's not pretty or perfect. Even when it's more real than you want it to be. Your story is what you have, what you will always have. It is something to own.

For eight years, I lived in the White House, a place with more stairs than I can count—plus elevators, a bowling alley, and an in-house florist. I slept in a bed that was made up with fancy linens. Our meals were cooked by a team of world-class chefs and delivered by professionals more highly trained than those at any five-star restaurant or hotel. Secret Service agents, with their earpieces and guns and serious expressions, stood outside our doors, doing their best to stay out of our family's private life. We got used to it, eventually, sort of—the strange grandeur of our new home and also the constant, quiet presence of others.

The White House is where our two girls played ball in the hallways and climbed trees on the South Lawn. It's where my husband, Barack Obama, sat up late at night, reading briefings and drafts of speeches in the Treaty Room, and where Sunny, one of our dogs, sometimes pooped on the rug. I could stand on the Truman Balcony and watch the tourists posing with their selfie sticks and peering through the iron fence, trying to guess at what went on inside. There were days when I felt suffocated by the fact that our windows had to be kept shut for security, that I couldn't get some fresh air without causing a fuss. There were other times when I'd be awestruck by the white magnolias blooming outside, the everyday bustle of government business, the majesty of a military welcome. There were days, weeks, and months when I hated politics. And there were moments when the beauty of this country and its people so overwhelmed me that I couldn't speak.

Then it was over. Even if you see it coming, even as your final weeks are filled with emotional good-byes, the day itself is still a blur. A hand goes on a Bible; an oath gets repeated. One president's furniture gets

carried out while another's comes in. Closets are emptied and refilled in the span of a few hours. Just like that, there are new heads on new pillows—new personalities, new dreams. And when it ends, when you walk out the door that last time from the world's most famous address, you're left in many ways to find yourself again.

So let me start here, with a small thing that happened not long ago. I was at home in the redbrick house that my family recently moved into. Our new house sits about two miles from our old house, on a quiet neighborhood street. We're still settling in. In the family room, our furniture is arranged the same way it was in the White House. We've got mementos around the house that remind us it was all real—photos of our family time at Camp David, handmade pots given to me by Native American students, a book signed by Nelson Mandela. What was strange about this night was that everyone was gone. Barack was traveling. My younger daughter, Sasha, was out with friends. My older daughter, Malia, was living and working in New York before going to college. It was just me, our two dogs, and a silent, empty house like I haven't known in eight years.

And I was hungry. I walked down the stairs from our bedroom with the dogs following on my heels. In the kitchen, I opened the fridge. I found a loaf of bread, took out two pieces, and laid them in the toaster oven. I opened a cabinet and got out a plate. I know it's a weird thing to say, but to take a plate from a shelf in the kitchen without anyone first insisting that they get it for me, to stand by myself watching bread turn brown in the toaster, feels as close to a return to my old life as I've come. Or maybe it's my new life just beginning to announce itself.

In the end, I didn't just make toast; I made cheese toast, moving my slices of bread to the microwave and melting a fat mess of gooey cheddar between them. I then carried my plate outside to the backyard. I didn't have to tell anyone I was going. I just went. I was in bare feet, wearing a pair of shorts. The chill of winter had finally lifted. The air smelled like spring. I sat on the steps of our veranda, feeling the

warmth of the day's sun still caught in the slate beneath my feet. A dog started barking somewhere in the distance, and my own dogs paused to listen, seeming momentarily confused. It occurred to me that it was a jarring sound for them, given that we didn't have neighbors, let alone neighbor dogs, at the White House. For them, all this was new. As the dogs loped off to explore the perimeter of the yard, I ate my toast in the dark, feeling alone in the best possible way. I wasn't thinking about the guards with guns sitting less than a hundred yards away at the custom-built command post inside our garage, or the fact that I still can't walk down a street without security. I wasn't thinking about the new president or for that matter the old president, either.

I was thinking instead about how in a few minutes I would go back inside my house, wash my plate in the sink, and head up to bed, maybe opening a window so I could feel the spring air—how glorious that would be. I was thinking, too, that the stillness was affording me a first real opportunity to think about so many things. As First Lady, I'd get to the end of a busy week and need to be reminded how it had started. But time is beginning to feel different. My girls, who arrived at the White House with their Polly Pocket dolls, a blanket named Blankie, and a stuffed tiger named Tiger, are now teenagers, young women with plans and voices of their own. My husband is making his own adjustments to life after the White House, catching his own breath. And here I am, in this new place, with a lot I want to say.

# 4

AT SCHOOL, WE WERE GIVEN AN HOUR-LONG BREAK for lunch each day. I usually marched home with four or five other girls, all of us talking nonstop, ready to play games on the kitchen floor and watch TV while my mom handed out sandwiches. This began a habit that has sustained me for life, keeping a close and high-spirited group of girlfriends whose wisdom I can rely on. In my lunch group, we talked about whatever had gone on that morning at school, any differences we had with teachers, any assignments we thought were useless. We loved the Jackson 5 and weren't sure how we felt about the Osmonds. The Watergate scandal had happened, but none of us understood it. It seemed like a lot of old guys talking into microphones in Washington, D.C., which to us was just a faraway city filled with a lot of white buildings and white men.

My mom was happy to serve us. It gave her an easy window into our world. As my friends and I ate and gossiped, she often stood by quietly, doing some household chore, not hiding the fact that she was listening to every word. In my family, with four of us packed into a small apartment, we'd never had any privacy anyway. It only mattered

sometimes. Craig, who was suddenly interested in girls, had started taking his phone calls in the bathroom.

As Chicago schools went, Bryn Mawr fell somewhere between being a bad school and a good school. The student population only grew Blacker and poorer with each year. There was, for a time, a city-wide movement to bus kids to new schools, but Bryn Mawr parents had fought it off, arguing that the money was better spent improving the school itself. As a kid, I had no opinion on whether the facilities were run-down or whether it mattered that there were hardly any white kids left. The school ran from kindergarten all the way through eighth grade, which meant that by the time I'd reached the upper grades, I knew every light switch, every chalkboard and cracked patch of hallway. I knew nearly every teacher and most of the kids. For me, Bryn Mawr was practically an extension of home.

As I was entering seventh grade, the *Chicago Defender*, a weekly newspaper that was popular with African American readers, ran a mean-spirited opinion piece that claimed Bryn Mawr had gone from being one of the city's best public schools to a "run-down slum" governed by a "ghetto mentality." Our school principal, Dr. Lavizzo, defended his community of parents and students, calling the newspaper piece "an outrageous lie, which seems designed to incite only feelings of failure and flight."

Dr. Lavizzo was a round, cheery man who had an Afro that puffed out on either side of his bald spot. He understood precisely what he was up against. Failure is a feeling long before it becomes an actual result. It's a feeling of vulnerability mixed in with self-doubt and made even stronger by fear. Those "feelings of failure" he mentioned were everywhere already in my neighborhood, in the form of parents who couldn't get ahead financially, of kids who were starting to suspect that their lives would be no different, of families who watched their better-off neighbors leave for the suburbs or transfer their children to Catholic schools. Real estate agents made things worse by whispering

to homeowners that they should sell before it was too late. The comments pushed people to feel that failure was coming, that it had already half arrived. You could get caught up in the ruin or you could escape it. They used the word everyone was most afraid of—“ghetto”—dropping it like a lit match.

My mom bought into none of this. She’d lived in South Shore for ten years already and would end up staying another forty. She didn’t buy into fearmongering or pie-in-the-sky idealism. She was a straight-down-the-line realist, controlling what she could.

At Bryn Mawr, she became one of the most active members of the PTA, helping raise money for new classroom equipment and throwing appreciation dinners for the teachers. She also helped convince the school to create a special multigrade classroom for higher-performing students. The class was Dr. Lavizzo’s idea. It brought the brighter kids together so they could learn at a faster pace.

The idea was controversial, as all “gifted and talented” programs are. But for my last three years at Bryn Mawr, I benefited. I joined a group of about twenty students from different grades, set off in a self-contained classroom apart from the rest of the school. We had our own recess, lunch, music, and gym schedules. We were also given special opportunities, including weekly trips to a community college to attend an advanced writing workshop or dissect a rat in the biology lab. Back in the classroom, we did a lot of independent work, setting our own goals and moving at whatever speed best suited us.

We were given dedicated teachers, first Mr. Martinez and then Mr. Bennett, both gentle and friendly African American men who cared a lot about what their students had to say. We could tell that the school had invested in us, which made us all try harder and feel better about ourselves. Being allowed to learn independently made me even more competitive. I tore through the lessons, quietly aware of where I stood among my peers as we moved from long division to pre-algebra, from writing single paragraphs to turning in full research papers. For



me, it was like a game. And as with any game, like most any kid, I was happiest when I was ahead.

I TOLD MY mom everything that happened at school. I'd update her in a rush as I walked through the door in the afternoon, slinging my book bag on the floor and hunting for a snack. I realize I don't know exactly what my mom did during the hours we were at school, mainly because I never asked. I don't know what she thought about, how she felt about being a traditional homemaker as opposed to working a different job. I only knew that when I showed up at home, there'd be food in the fridge, not just for me, but for my friends. I knew that when my class was going on a trip, my mom would almost always volunteer to chaperone, arriving in a nice dress and dark lipstick to ride the bus with us to the community college or the zoo.

In our house, we lived on a budget but didn't often discuss its limits. My mom did her own nails, dyed her own hair (one time accidentally turning it green), and got new clothes only when my dad bought them for her as a birthday gift. She'd never be rich, but she was always crafty. When we were young, she magically turned old socks into puppets that looked exactly like the Muppets. She sewed a lot of my clothes, at least until middle school, when I insisted she stop.

Every so often, she'd change the layout of our living room, putting a new slipcover on the sofa, swapping out the photos and framed prints that hung on our walls. Every year, when the weather turned warm, she did a spring cleaning—vacuuming furniture, laundering curtains, and removing every storm window so she could Windex the glass and wipe down the sills before replacing them with screens to allow the spring air into our tiny, stuffy apartment. She'd then often go downstairs to Robbie and Terry's, particularly as they got older and less able, to clean for them as well. It's because of my mom

that whenever I catch the scent of Pine-Sol, I automatically feel better about life.

At Christmastime, she got especially creative. One year, she figured out how to cover our radiator with cardboard printed to look like red bricks, so that we'd have our own chimney and fireplace. She then asked my dad—the family's resident artist—to paint orange flames on pieces of very thin paper, which, when backlit with a lightbulb, made for a half-convincing fire. On New Year's Eve, as a matter of tradition, she'd buy a special food basket, the kind that came filled with blocks of cheese, smoked oysters in a tin, and different kinds of salami. She'd invite my dad's sister Francesca over to play board games. We'd order a pizza for dinner and then snack our way elegantly through the rest of the evening, my mom passing around trays of pigs in a blanket, fried shrimp, and a special cheese spread baked on Ritz crackers. As midnight drew close, we'd each have a tiny glass of champagne.

My mom was always calm. I had friends whose moms rode their highs and lows as if they were their own, and I knew plenty of other kids whose parents were too overwhelmed by their own challenges to be much of a presence at all. My mom was simply even-keeled. She wasn't quick to judge and she wasn't quick to meddle. Instead, she monitored our moods and bore kindhearted witness to whatever problems or triumphs a day might bring. When things were bad, she gave us only a small amount of pity. When we'd done something great, we received just enough praise to know she was happy with us, but never so much that it became the reason we did what we did.

Advice, when she offered it, tended to be practical. "You don't have to *like* your teacher," she told me one day after I came home full of complaints. "But that woman's got the kind of math in her head that you need in yours. Focus on that and ignore the rest."

She loved us consistently, Craig and me, but we were not over-managed. Her goal was to push us out into the world. "I'm not raising

babies,” she’d tell us. “I’m raising adults.” She and my dad offered guidelines rather than rules. It meant that as teenagers we’d never have a curfew. Instead, they’d ask, “What’s a reasonable time for you to be home?” and then trust us to stick to our word.

One day when Craig was in eighth grade, a girl he liked asked him to come by her house, letting him know that her parents wouldn’t be home and they’d be left alone. My brother had agonized over whether to go or not—excited by the opportunity but knowing it was sneaky and dishonorable, the sort of behavior my parents would never approve of. This didn’t, however, stop him from telling my mom a half-truth, letting her know about the girl but saying they were going to meet in the public park.

Guilt-ridden before he’d even done it, guilt-ridden for even thinking about it, Craig finally confessed the whole home-alone scheme, expecting or maybe just hoping that my mom would blow a gasket and forbid him to go.

But she didn’t. She wouldn’t. It wasn’t how she operated.

She listened, but she made him responsible for his own choice. “Handle it how you think best,” she said, before turning back to the dishes in the sink or the pile of laundry she had to fold.

It was another small push out into the world. I’m sure that in her heart my mom knew already that he’d make the right choice. Every move she made, I realize now, was rooted in the quiet confidence that she’d raised us to be adults. Our decisions were on us. It was our life, not hers, and always would be.

BY THE TIME I was fourteen, I thought of myself as half a grown-up anyway—maybe even as two-thirds of a grown-up. I’d gotten my period, which I announced immediately and with huge excitement to everyone in the house, because that was just the kind of household we

had. I'd graduated from a training bra to one that looked slightly more womanly, which also thrilled me. Instead of coming home for lunch, I now ate with my classmates in Mr. Bennett's room at school. Instead of dropping in at Southside's house on Saturdays to listen to his jazz records and play with Rex, I rode my bike right past, headed east to the house on Oglesby Avenue where the Gore sisters lived.

The Gore sisters were my best friends and also a little bit my idols. Diane was in my grade, and Pam a grade behind. Both were beautiful girls—Diane was fair-skinned, and Pam was darker—each with a kind of self-possessed grace that seemed to come naturally. Their little sister, Gina, was a few years younger. Theirs was a home with few men. Their dad didn't live there and was rarely discussed. There was one much older brother who was not often present. Mrs. Gore was an upbeat, attractive woman who worked full-time. She had a makeup table full of perfume bottles and face powder compacts, which seemed as exotic as jewels to me. I loved spending time at their house. Pam, Diane, and I talked endlessly about which boys we liked. We put on lip gloss and took turns trying on one another's clothes, suddenly aware that certain pairs of pants made our hips look curvier. Much of my energy in those days was spent inside my own head, sitting alone in my room listening to music, daydreaming about a slow dance with a cute boy, or glancing out the window, hoping for a crush to ride his bike down the block. So it was a blessing to have found some sisters to ride through these years with together.

Boys weren't allowed inside the Gore house, but they buzzed around it like flies. They rode their bikes back and forth on the sidewalk. They sat on the front stoop, hoping Diane or Pam might come out to flirt. Everywhere I looked, bodies were changing. Boys from school were suddenly man-sized and awkward, their energy twitchy and their voices deep. Some of my girlfriends, meanwhile, looked like they were eighteen, walking around in short-shorts and halter tops,

their expressions cool and confident as if they knew some secret, as if they now lived on a different plane, while the rest of us remained uncertain, waiting for our call-up to the adult world.

Like a lot of girls, I became aware of my body early, long before I began to even look like a woman. I moved around the neighborhood now with more independence, less tied to my parents. I'd catch a city bus to go to late-afternoon dance classes at Mayfair Academy, where I was taking jazz and acrobatics. I ran errands for my mom sometimes. With the new freedoms came new challenges. I learned to keep my gaze fixed firmly ahead anytime I passed a group of men clustered on a street corner. I knew to ignore the catcalls when they came. I learned which blocks in our neighborhood were thought to be more dangerous than others. I knew never to walk alone at night.

At home, my parents gave in to the fact they were housing two growing teenagers, turning the back porch off our kitchen into a bedroom for Craig, who was now a sophomore in high school. The flimsy partition that Southside had built for us years earlier came down. I moved into what had been my parents' room, they moved into what had been the kids' room, and for the first time my brother and I had actual space for ourselves. My new bedroom was dreamy, complete with a blue-and-white floral bed skirt and pillow shams, a crisp navy-blue rug, and a white princess-style bed with a matching dresser and lamp. Each of us was given our own phone extension, too—my phone was a light blue to match my new decor, while Craig's was a manly black.

I arranged my first real kiss over the phone. It was with a boy named Ronnell. Ronnell didn't go to my school or live in my neighborhood, but he sang in the Chicago Children's Choir with my classmate Chiaka. With Chiaka acting as the go-between, we somehow had decided we liked each other. Our phone calls were a little awkward, but I didn't care. I liked the feeling of being liked. I don't remember which

one of us suggested that we meet outside my house one afternoon to give kissing a try, but I remember that we were both excited.

There was nothing earth-shattering or especially inspiring about our kiss, but it was fun. Being around boys, I was slowly coming to realize, was fun. The hours I passed watching Craig's games from the bleachers of one gym or another began to feel less like a sisterly obligation, because what was a basketball game if not a showcase of boys? I'd wear my snuggest jeans and put on some extra bracelets and sometimes bring one of the Gore sisters along so I would be more noticeable in the stands. When a boy on the JV team smiled at me as he left the court one evening, I smiled right back. It felt like my future was just beginning to arrive.

I was slowly separating from my parents, gradually less eager to blurt every last thought in my head. I rode in silence behind them in the backseat of the Buick as we drove home from those basketball games, my feelings too deep or too jumbled to share. I was caught up in the lonely thrill of being a teenager now, convinced that the adults around me had never been there themselves.

Sometimes in the evenings I'd emerge from brushing my teeth in the bathroom and find the apartment dark, the lights in the living room and kitchen turned off for the night, everyone settled into their own sphere. I'd see a glow beneath the door to Craig's room and know he was doing homework. I'd catch the flicker of television light coming from my parents' room and hear them talking quietly, laughing to themselves. Just as I never wondered what it was like for my mom to be a full-time, at-home mom, I never wondered then what it meant to be married. But I understand now that even a happy marriage can be challenging, that it's a relationship that needs to be renewed again and again. I took my parents' union for granted. It was the simple solid fact upon which all four of our lives were built.

Much later, my mom would tell me that every year when spring

came and the air warmed up in Chicago, she considered the idea of leaving my dad. For her it was an active fantasy, something that felt healthy and maybe even energizing to ponder, almost a springtime ritual.

If you've never passed a winter in Chicago, let me describe it: You can live for a hundred straight days beneath an iron-gray sky that claps itself like a lid over the city. Frigid, biting winds blow in off the lake. Snow falls in dozens of ways, in heavy overnight dumps and daytime, sideways squalls, in demoralizing sloppy sleet and fairy-tale billows of fluff. There's ice, usually, lots of it, that shellacs the sidewalks and windshields that then need to be scraped. There's the sound of that scraping in the early mornings—the *hack hack hack* of it—as people clear their cars to go to work. Your neighbors, unrecognizable in the thick layers they wear against the cold, keep their faces down to avoid the wind. City snowplows thunder through the streets as the white snow gets piled up and sooty, until nothing is pristine.

Eventually, however, something happens. A slow reversal begins. It can be subtle, a whiff of humidity in the air, a slight lifting of the sky. You feel it first in your heart, the possibility that winter might have passed. You may not trust it at the beginning, but then you do. Because now the sun is out and there are little nubby buds on the trees and your neighbors have taken off their heavy coats. And maybe there's a new airiness to your thoughts on the morning you decide to pull out every window in your apartment so you can spray the glass and wipe down the sills. It allows you to think, to wonder if you've missed out on other possibilities by becoming a wife to this man in this house with these children.

Maybe you spend the whole day considering new ways to live before finally you fit every window back into its frame and empty your bucket of Pine-Sol into the sink. And maybe now all your certainty returns, because yes, truly, it's spring and once again you've made the choice to stay.

Journal your **BECOMING**  
journey on the next pages!

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I was raised to be  
confident and see  
no limits, to believe  
I could go after  
and get absolutely  
anything I wanted.  
And I wanted  
everything . . .

---



What do you want? List ten things you want for yourself. For each item, write one simple step toward making that wish come true.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

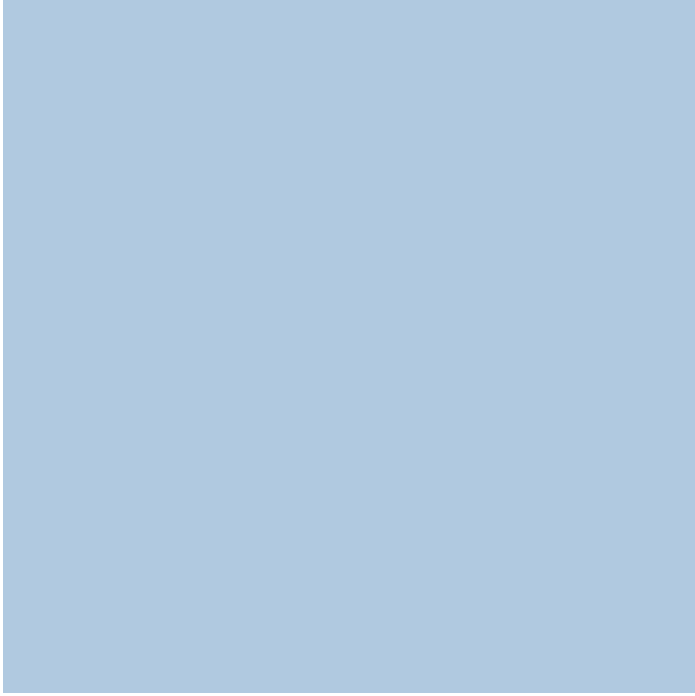
6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



You  
matter.





What happened in your life today? List five things that went well.

1

2

3

4

5

DATE     /     /

---

List three new hobbies you'd like to learn to do. What about each of them appeals to you?



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**"I COULD HEAR THE SOUND OF CONVERSATION GOING ON BETWEEN THE ADULTS IN THE KITCHEN NEARBY, MY PARENTS' LAUGHTER RINGING EASY AND LOUD OVER THE YARD. I WATCHED MY BROTHER IN THE FLOW OF A SWEATY GAME WITH A GROUP OF BOYS ON THE STREET CORNER. EVERYONE SEEMED TO FIT IN, EXCEPT FOR ME. I LOOK BACK ON THE DISCOMFORT OF THAT MOMENT NOW AND RECOGNIZE THE MORE UNIVERSAL CHALLENGE OF FIGURING OUT HOW WHO YOU ARE FITS WITH WHERE YOU COME FROM AND WHERE YOU WANT TO GO. I ALSO REALIZE THAT I WAS A LONG WAY, STILL, FROM FINDING MY VOICE."**



What will you become? Visit [girlscouts.org/becomingme](https://www.girlscouts.org/becomingme) to access the BECOMING program and find out more!



“IT IS A JOY AND PRIVILEGE TO SUPPORT  
YOUNG GIRLS ALONG THEIR JOURNEYS OF

# BECOMING,

WORKING TOGETHER TO UNLOCK THE UNIQUE AND  
PROFOUND POWER THAT LIES WITHIN EACH OF OUR OWN STORIES.”

*Michelle Obama*





**What will you become?**

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