[This is my first trip,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#0) [my first foreign trip as a first lady.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#2000) [Can you believe that?](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#4000) [(Applause)](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#6000) [And while this is not my first visit to the U.K.,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#16000) [I have to say that I am glad that this is my first official visit.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#19000) [The special relationship between the United States and the U.K.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#24000) [is based not only on the relationship between governments,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#28000) [but the common language and the values that we share,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#33000) [and I'm reminded of that by watching you all today.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#36000) [During my visit I've been especially honored](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#40000) [to meet some of Britain's most extraordinary women --](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#44000) [women who are paving the way for all of you.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#47000)

[And I'm honored to meet you,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#50000) [the future leaders of Great Britain and this world.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#53000) [And although the circumstances of our lives may seem very distant,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#59000) [with me standing here as the First Lady of the United States of America,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#64000) [and you, just getting through school,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#68000) [I want you to know that we have very much in common.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#72000) [For nothing in my life's path](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#76000) [would have predicted that I'd be standing here](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#80000) [as the first African-American First Lady](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#82000) [of the United States of America.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#85000) [There is nothing in my story that would land me here.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#87000) [I wasn't raised with wealth or resources](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#92000) [or any social standing to speak of.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#95000) [I was raised on the South Side of Chicago.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#99000) [That's the real part of Chicago.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#103000) [And I was the product of a working-class community.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#106000) [My father was a city worker all of his life,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#109000) [and my mother was a stay-at-home mom.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#113000) [And she stayed at home to take care of me and my older brother.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#115000) [Neither of them attended university.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#120000) [My dad was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#123000) [in the prime of his life.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#126000) [But even as it got harder for him to walk](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#128000) [and get dressed in the morning --](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#131000) [I saw him struggle more and more --](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#133000) [my father never complained about his struggle.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#135000) [He was grateful for what he had.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#139000) [He just woke up a little earlier and worked a little harder.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#141000) [And my brother and I were raised with all that you really need:](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#146000) [love, strong values](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#149000) [and a belief that with a good education](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#152000) [and a whole lot of hard work,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#155000) [that there was nothing that we could not do.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#157000)

[I am an example of what's possible](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#160000) [when girls from the very beginning of their lives](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#164000) [are loved and nurtured by the people around them.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#168000) [I was surrounded by extraordinary women in my life:](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#173000) [grandmothers, teachers, aunts, cousins, neighbors,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#177000) [who taught me about quiet strength and dignity.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#182000) [And my mother, the most important role model in my life,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#186000) [who lives with us at the White House](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#191000) [and helps to care for our two little daughters,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#193000) [Malia and Sasha.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#196000) [She's an active presence in their lives, as well as mine,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#198000) [and is instilling in them](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#202000) [the same values that she taught me and my brother:](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#204000) [things like compassion, and integrity,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#207000) [and confidence, and perseverance --](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#210000) [all of that wrapped up in an unconditional love](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#214000) [that only a grandmother can give.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#217000)

[I was also fortunate enough to be cherished and encouraged](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#220000) [by some strong male role models as well,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#224000) [including my father, my brother, uncles and grandfathers.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#229000) [The men in my life taught me some important things, as well.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#232000) [They taught me about what a respectful relationship](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#237000) [should look like between men and women.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#240000) [They taught me about what a strong marriage feels like:](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#244000) [that it's built on faith and commitment](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#248000) [and an admiration for each other's unique gifts.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#251000) [They taught me about what it means](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#255000) [to be a father](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#257000) [and to raise a family.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#259000) [And not only to invest in your own home](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#261000) [but to reach out and help raise kids](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#263000) [in the broader community.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#268000)

[And these were the same qualities](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#270000) [that I looked for in my own husband,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#272000) [Barack Obama.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#275000) [And when we first met,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#278000) [one of the things that I remember is that he took me out on a date.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#281000) [And his date was to go with him to a community meeting.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#285000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#288000) [I know, how romantic.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#290000) [(Laughter)](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#292000) [But when we met, Barack was a community organizer.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#295000) [He worked, helping people to find jobs](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#297000) [and to try to bring resources into struggling neighborhoods.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#301000) [As he talked to the residents in that community center,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#305000) [he talked about two concepts.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#307000) [He talked about "the world as it is" and "the world as it should be."](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#309000) [And I talked about this throughout the entire campaign.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#315000) [What he said, that all too often,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#319000) [is that we accept the distance between those two ideas.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#321000) [And sometimes we settle for the world as it is,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#326000) [even when it doesn't reflect our values and aspirations.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#330000) [But Barack reminded us on that day,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#334000) [all of us in that room, that we all know](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#337000) [what our world should look like.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#340000) [We know what fairness and justice and opportunity look like.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#344000) [We all know.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#347000) [And he urged the people in that meeting,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#349000) [in that community,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#351000) [to devote themselves to closing the gap](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#353000) [between those two ideas,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#356000) [to work together to try to make the world as it is](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#358000) [and the world as it should be, one and the same.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#362000)

[And I think about that today because I am](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#366000) [reminded and convinced that all of you in this school](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#369000) [are very important parts of closing that gap.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#373000) [You are the women who will build the world as it should be.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#378000) [You're going to write the next chapter in history.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#383000) [Not just for yourselves, but for your generation](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#385000) [and generations to come.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#389000) [And that's why getting a good education](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#392000) [is so important.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#394000) [That's why all of this that you're going through --](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#396000) [the ups and the downs, the teachers that you love and the teachers that you don't --](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#399000) [why it's so important.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#403000) [Because communities and countries and ultimately the world](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#406000) [are only as strong as the health of their women.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#409000) [And that's important to keep in mind.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#414000)

[Part of that health includes an outstanding education.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#416000) [The difference between a struggling family and a healthy one](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#422000) [is often the presence of an empowered woman](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#427000) [or women at the center of that family.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#430000) [The difference between a broken community and a thriving one](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#433000) [is often the healthy respect between men and women](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#436000) [who appreciate the contributions each other makes to society.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#440000) [The difference between a languishing nation](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#445000) [and one that will flourish](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#448000) [is the recognition that we need equal access to education](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#450000) [for both boys and girls.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#454000)

[And this school, named after the U.K.'s first female doctor,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#456000) [and the surrounding buildings named for Mexican artist Frida Kahlo,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#461000) [Mary Seacole,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#467000) [the Jamaican nurse known as the "black Florence Nightingale,"](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#469000) [and the English author, Emily Bronte,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#473000) [honor women who fought sexism, racism and ignorance,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#476000) [to pursue their passions to feed their own souls.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#480000) [They allowed for no obstacles.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#485000) [As the sign said back there, "without limitations."](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#488000) [They knew no other way to live](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#492000) [than to follow their dreams.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#494000) [And having done so, these women](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#497000) [moved many obstacles.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#502000) [And they opened many new doors](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#504000) [for millions of female doctors and nurses](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#506000) [and artists and authors,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#509000) [all of whom have followed them.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#512000) [And by getting a good education,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#514000) [you too can control your own destiny.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#517000)

[Please remember that.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#521000) [If you want to know the reason why I'm standing here,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#524000) [it's because of education.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#528000) [I never cut class. Sorry, I don't know if anybody is cutting class.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#531000) [I never did it.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#535000) [I loved getting As.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#537000) [I liked being smart.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#539000) [I liked being on time. I liked getting my work done.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#541000) [I thought being smart was cooler than anything in the world.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#545000) [And you too, with these same values,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#550000) [can control your own destiny.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#552000) [You too can pave the way.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#554000) [You too can realize your dreams,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#557000) [and then your job is to reach back](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#559000) [and to help someone just like you do the same thing.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#563000) [History proves that it doesn't matter](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#567000) [whether you come from a council estate](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#570000) [or a country estate.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#572000)

[Your success will be determined](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#574000) [by your own fortitude,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#576000) [your own confidence, your own individual hard work.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#579000) [That is true. That is the reality of the world that we live in.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#583000) [You now have control over your own destiny.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#587000) [And it won't be easy -- that's for sure.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#590000) [But you have everything you need.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#595000) [Everything you need to succeed,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#597000) [you already have, right here.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#600000)

[My husband works in this big office.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#603000) [They call it the Oval Office.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#607000) [In the White House, there's the desk that he sits at --](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#610000) [it's called the Resolute desk.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#612000) [It was built by the timber of Her Majesty's Ship Resolute](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#615000) [and given by Queen Victoria.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#619000) [It's an enduring symbol of the friendship between our two nations.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#622000) [And its name, Resolute,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#627000) [is a reminder of the strength of character that's required](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#629000) [not only to lead a country,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#633000) [but to live a life of purpose, as well.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#635000) [And I hope in pursuing your dreams, you all remain resolute,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#640000) [that you go forward without limits,](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#644000) [and that you use your talents -- because there are many; we've seen them;](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#647000) [it's there --](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#652000) [that you use them to create the world as it should be.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#654000) [Because we are counting on you.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#658000) [We are counting on every single one of you](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#661000) [to be the very best that you can be.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#663000) [Because the world is big.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#666000) [And it's full of challenges.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#668000) [And we need strong, smart, confident young women](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#670000) [to stand up and take the reins.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#674000)

[We know you can do it. We love you. Thank you so much.](http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html#676000)