



*Happy New Year
from the Mississippi Link*

For some girls, First Lady rivals Beyoncé' as a role model



This April 20, 2016 file photo shows First Lady Michelle Obama giving a hug to a child during the annual White House Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day event attended by the children of Executive Office employees, young people from Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, SchoolTalk, and the D.C. Child and Family Services Agency, in the East Room of the White House in Washington. The feel-good initiatives of First Lady Michelle Obama have served as both inspiration and eight years of teaching moments for many families. AP PHOTO/JACQUELYN MARTIN

By Leanne Italie
Associated Press

NEW YORK – Healthy food and plenty of exercise. The challenges military families face. Education for girls around the globe.

The feel-good initiatives of first lady Michelle Obama have served as both inspiration and eight years of teaching moments for many families. So what, exactly, do they think is her legacy over a period that spans much of the lifetime of today's kids?

"I think she stands for kindness in America," said Alexis Shenkiryk, a 12-year-old in Del Mar, California. "She really encouraged me to try harder, and she promoted a lot of good things for everyone, not just certain people."

Alexis was jealous when her 24-year-old sister got to attend President Barack Obama's 2008 inauguration. Over the years, said Shenkiryk's mom, Rhonda Moret, the goodwill the first lady was able to pass on to her girls overflowed from the White House.

"We're a biracial family," Moret said. "We've had numerous conversations discussing how one's race or background are truly irrelevant and how we should value one's character above all else."

Inara Abernathy, a 17-year-old in Nashville, Tennessee, has absorbed many life lessons of her own from the First Lady.

"She's strong and beautiful and she makes me feel beautiful, too," Inara said. "I feel like I can accomplish things when I think about her."

Then there's bullying.

"I was bullied a lot when I was little and she taught me how when I got bullied to just don't think about it," Inara said. "Ignore them. Live your

life and be happy."

Her dad is a retired Army colonel and the teen admires Mrs. Obama's shout-out for military families. And when the First Lady put in the White House garden, "it made me think about eating better food and losing weight," Inara said. "Without her I'm not sure I would have done that."

Norfolk, Virginia, 10th-grader Cassidy Carey canvassed for Hillary Clinton and has volunteered to advocate for various social causes through the site DoSomething.org. She was too little to remember the president's first inauguration, but she loved watching the second one. She's a regular First Lady watcher.

"Oh, I love her," said Cassidy, who has already decided on law school when the time comes. "I just think she's really well composed, and she's an empowering person."

Kiki Emordi is 8 and in the third grade in Richmond, Texas. Her parents are originally from Nigeria and her mother, Ngozi Emordi, teaches English as a second language.

"She's a bold woman," said the elder Emordi, who also has two older girls and a son. "Any black girl can just see Michelle and know she can dream big. She says to these girls it doesn't matter where you come from or what you look like, you can be anything that you want to be."

Lesson learned, as far as Kiki is concerned. She is forever on the hunt for any news of Mrs. Obama, whether it's about a fresh speech or fabulous outfit.

"I really look up to her as a role model," she said.

At 7, Jordan West of Rochester, New York, has already met

First Lady
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With final press briefing of 2016, president Obama reflects on his record

By Freddie Allen
Managing Editor/NNPA Newswire

President Barack Obama used his last press conference of the year to reflect on the accomplishments of his administration over the past eight years.

"As I was preparing to take office, the unemployment rate was on its way to 10 percent. Today, it's at 4.6 percent – the lowest in nearly a decade," said Obama. "We've seen the longest streak of job growth on record, and wages have grown faster over the past few years than at any time in the past 40."

Even as the economy approaches full employment, however, the black unemployment rate (8.1 percent) is almost twice the white unemployment rate (4.2 percent), according to the Labor Department; a gap that has persisted since the federal government started collecting separate jobs' data for blacks nearly 50 years ago and that no president has been able to address.

Obama also touted his administration's success with insuring people under the Affordable Care and Patient Protection Act, also known as Obamacare.

"When I came into office, 44 million people were uninsured. Today, we've covered more than



President Obama speaks during his last press conference of 2016 at The White House. FREDDIE ALLEN/AMG/NNPA

20 million of them," said Obama. "For the first time in our history, more than 90 percent of Americans are insured."

Still, disparities in health-care also persist. The uninsured rates for blacks (12 percent) remains higher than the uninsured rates for whites (8 percent), and according to the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), blacks, American Indians and Alaska natives have a higher prevalence

of asthma, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

"Health disparities are particularly striking in the burden of AIDS and HIV diagnoses and death rates, with blacks experiencing over eight and ten times higher rates of HIV and AIDS diagnoses than whites," the KFF reported. "Infant mortality rates are significantly higher for blacks and American Indians and Alaska natives compared to

whites, and black males have the shortest life expectancy compared to other groups."

Obama also noted that his administration, over the last eight years, has dramatically decreased the number of troops deployed abroad and eliminated Osama Bin Laden as well as thousands of other terrorists.

"No foreign terrorist organiza-

Obama
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'We Shall Not Be Moved' march aims to send Trump message on MLK weekend

By Hazel Trice Edney
Trice Edney News Wire

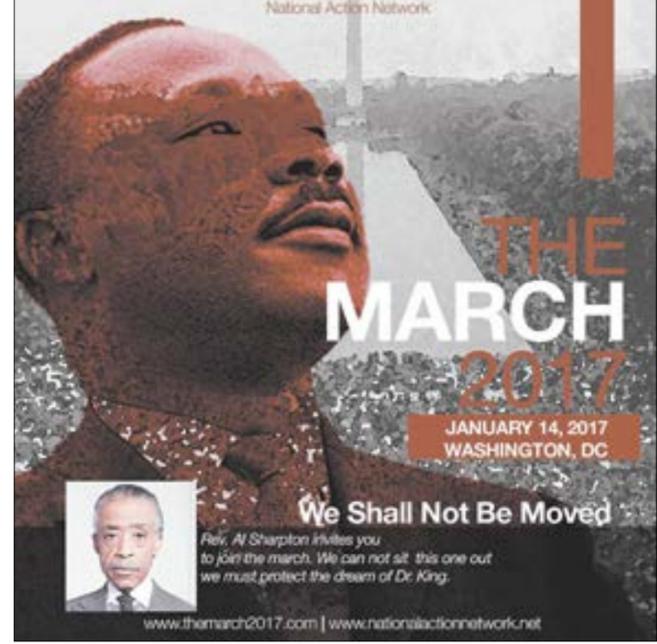
The march announced by the Rev. Al Sharpton shortly after Donald Trump was elected president is now taking shape for January 14 and will aim to send a clear message to the president-elect in the "spirit and tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.," said a statement from Sharpton this week.

"The 2017 march will bring all people together to insist on change and accountability," said Sharpton. "Martin Luther King Jr.'s struggle for civil rights didn't end with his death, it's a fight we take on each day. The political players may change but our goals stay the same. Trump and his administration need to hear our voice and our concerns."

He continues, "Participants will demand accountability not just from President-elect Trump but from Senate and Congress members who are charged with overseeing the Criminal Justice Reform Act, the Voting Rights Bill, Supreme Court nominations and other Trump political appointments. Our movement, #WeShallNotBeMoved, will send a clear message to those in power that the fight for equal rights and justice for all continues," he states.

The four top concerns outlined involve police reform, mass

March
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