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Letters to Michelle Obama collected into a book

By CAROLYN THOMPSON
The Associated Press
Tuesday, January 20, 2009; 4:06 AM

BUFFALO, N.Y. -- One letter is signed "with a grateful heart."

"When I look at you, I see me," reads another.

The letters, solicited by two University at Buffalo scholars soon after the election, have been compiled into a book, "Go, Tell Michelle: African American Women Write to the New First Lady," just in time for Tuesday's inauguration.

Many in the collection of 100 letters share a universal theme. Paine College President Shirley A.R. Lewis expressed it this way: "Thank you for being such a vital part of this dream that I never thought I'd see in my lifetime."

Women of all ages and backgrounds responded to an Internet call for messages and poems, said the editors, themselves black women. No surprise, given their own feelings of exuberance through the campaign and election.

"I felt such a sisterhood with Michelle Obama and a kinship," said Barbara Seals Nevergold. "At the end of the election, I started to think, how can we as African-American women share with her our feelings about the new role she's going to take?"

Nevergold and Peggy Books-Bertram, co-founders of the Uncrowned Queens Institute for Research and Education on Women at the University at Buffalo, said more than 200 women responded within the narrow three-week window for submissions. Letters not included in the book will be posted online.

Some read like letters to an old friend. One compliments the incoming first lady for the red and black dress she wore on Election Night.

Others more reserved:

"It is noticeable that you are a charming, loving and intelligent woman of great integrity who knows how to set her priorities."

Advertisement Most start simply, "Dear Michelle."

In Michelle Obama, Nevergold said, many see the new face of black women in America.



Michelle Obama, wife of President-elect Barack Obama appears at the "Kids' Inaugural: We Are The Future Concert" in Washington, Monday, Jan. 19, 2009. (AP Photo/Matt Rourke) (Matt Rourke - AP)

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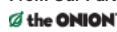
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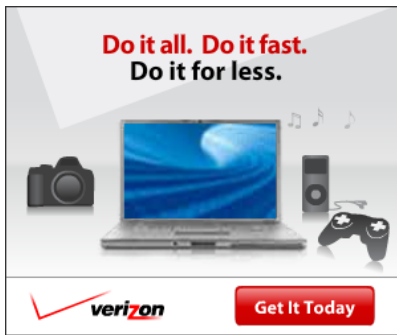
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