

First lady honors school counselors and champions the power of hope

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Michelle Obama gestures as she gives her final speech as first lady at the 2017 School Counselor of the Year ceremony in the East Room of the White House in Washington, D.C., January 6, 2017. Photo: AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Her voice breaking and eyes filling with tears, an unusually emotional Michelle Obama said Friday that being first lady "has been the greatest honor of my life."

She bid an early farewell to the White House. An East Room ceremony honoring the 2017 school counselor of the year, and the work of all school counselors, marked her final event as first lady.

Before the tearful goodbye, there were words of encouragement for young people. Obama, as she has done many times in eight years in the White House, urged kids to get the best education they can and then use it to "lead by example with hope, never fear."

"Don't be afraid," she said.

Diversity Makes Us Who We Are

The first lady also praised the "glorious diversity" of people of all faiths, colors and creeds in America. The diversity is "not a threat to who we are" but is what "makes us who we are," she said. The comment seemed to be a rebuke of President-elect Donald Trump, who criticized Mexicans, Muslims and others throughout his presidential campaign.

"To the young people out there, do not ever let anyone make you feel like you don't matter or like you don't have a place in our American story, because you do," Obama said. "And you have a right to be exactly who you are."

She urged them to get ready to add their voices to the national conversation and "stand up for our proud American values."

Obama gave them advice for when they encounter obstacles and feel like giving up. She asked them to remember what she said she and President Barack Obama have talked about since first starting their journey to the White House nearly a decade ago, "and that is the power of hope."

School Counselors Help Students Get Into College

She said staying hopeful has been important for the couple. It has allowed them to "rise above the voices of doubt and division, of anger and fear, that we have faced in our own lives and in the life of this country."

Mrs. Obama ended the appearance by thanking the school counselors standing behind her, including the 2017 honoree Terri Tchorzynski, for their hard work and dedication. Tchorzynski is from the Calhoun Area Career Center in Battle Creek, Michigan. Obama has said school counselors often are the "deciding factor" in whether a student chooses to attend college.

"Being your first lady has been the greatest honor of my life, and I hope I've made you proud," Mrs. Obama said.

She has said she will continue to work on issues she championed as first lady after she and her husband leave on January 20. Her causes include education, fighting childhood obesity and supporting military families.

Quiz

- 1 Read the paragraph from the section "Diversity Makes Us Who We Are."

The first lady also praised the "glorious diversity" of people of all faiths, colors and creeds in America. The diversity is "not a threat to who we are" but is what "makes us who we are," she said. The comment seemed to be a rebuke of President-elect Donald Trump, who criticized Mexicans, Muslims and others throughout his presidential campaign.

Which word from the paragraph helps you understand that Michelle Obama expressed disapproval of some of Donald Trump's statements?

- (A) creeds
 - (B) diversity
 - (C) rebuke
 - (D) criticized
- 2 Which of the following sentences from the article BEST shows the author's perspective of Michelle Obama?
- (A) Her voice breaking and eyes filling with tears, an unusually emotional Michelle Obama said Friday that being first lady "has been the greatest honor of my life."
 - (B) An East Room ceremony honoring the 2017 school counselor of the year, and the work of all school counselors, marked her final event as first lady.
 - (C) She urged them to get ready to add their voices to the national conversation and "stand up for our proud American values."
 - (D) She has said she will continue to work on issues she championed as first lady after she and her husband leave on January 20.

3 Complete the sentence.

Michelle Obama is MOST in favor of

- (A) encouraging diverse groups of Americans to value hope and education.
- (B) encouraging more people to become school counselors and support education funding.
- (C) looking for new opportunities and championing new causes as she leaves the White House.
- (D) looking for ways to help Trump's administration work on education and nutrition.

4 Read the sentence from the article.

Obama has said school counselors often are the "deciding factor" in whether a student chooses to attend college.

The author uses the term "deciding factor" to mean:

- (A) something that allows someone to avoid having to make a choice
- (B) something that prevents someone from being able to make a certain choice
- (C) the least important element in what causes someone to make a choice
- (D) the one particular element that causes someone to make a certain choice