

### Ambivalence of Power in Michelle Obama's *Becoming*

This research paper examines the ambivalent psychology of the authorial the autobiographical memoir *Becoming* by Michelle Obama from the perspective of cultural hegemony. Through her personal experience, she explicitly reflects the ambiguity of power often in dilemma of what to do and what not to do and there is lack of decisive power within her, this is due to cultural hegemony. She presents herself helpless and powerless within the positions of power she achieved during the course of becoming an extra ordinary political figure from an ordinary girl, who had never dreamed of being the First Lady of the United States of America.

Michelle Obama, the grand-daughter of a slave, turned into an American lawyer, university administrator, and writer. Her achievement moved up to becoming, the First Lady of United States of America as the wife of former U.S. President, Barack Obama. She was the First Lady of the United States from 2009 to 2017, becoming the first African-American First Lady to serve the role. They both - Mr. and Mrs. Obama- hesitated to make a decision for many achievements that have high possibility for doing the best within the American societies. Their courage and dream of becoming the head of the state in America were several times discouraged with the sense of inferiority complex. Most of the time Michelle Obama's self-humiliating thought as they were from black community has put Barack Obama in dilemma to decide whether he would be the candidate of the president or not. Despite the huge favor of roaring mass of Americans, Barack Obama could not make quick decision to give his candidacy for the president. Even though Barak Obama has clear vision and capacity of mobilizing people, he can't decide exactly what to do because he has fear with the long-years dominative mindset of the whites. Several textual instances describe Obama's ambivalent psychology, domination of black and cultural

hegemony. Having supreme power as a president of the United States of America, Barack Obama along with his wife Michelle Obama regarded him as powerless due to hegemony of white supremacy which could not let Obama execute his power being an important authorized body.

Michelle Obama belongs to the southern side of Chicago which is the land of black dominated area in America. Being a black, it is very difficult to over cross the white hegemony. Economically and culturally she belonged to the lower family background so that she never thought of becoming the First Lady of America. In her memoir *Becoming*, she says, "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 growing up is finite. As if at some point you become something and that's the end" (15). It is the voice of female empowerment.

The text is divided into three sections with the sub-titles "Becoming Me", "Becoming Us" and "Becoming More". The subtitle themselves express something more than just a memoir. Narrating with grace, good humor, and uncommon candor, she provides a vivid, behind the scene about her family's history making launch into the global limelight as well as their life inside the White House over eight momentous years. In such topsy-turvy, ups and downs moment of her life, she comes to know her country and her country comes to know her. Obama's memoir sketches the state of hardships in the lives of black community under the supremacy and domination of the white hegemony. Though the juxtaposition of hope and despair, beauty and horror, happiness and sorrow, it exposes the western white tendency of looking towards the southern side of African- American black dominated area. The Blacks are subjugated politically and racially. They are also suppressed and oppressed culturally with the series of distortions, ambiguities and false assumptions. The white supremacy way of

representing and treating over the black is shown through this memoir by exposing everything like norms and values, culture, religion, politics as flux and irrational. To show the white hegemony, Michelle sketches herself as disturbed mentality and melancholy.

This research paper analyses how American white hegemony has racially and culturally dominated the black community. Although racial discrimination has been eliminated, there is still white supremacy prevalent in America. The Blacks are subjugated, back-warded and educationally and culturally lower comparing to the white community. Obama's thoughts in her memoir evoked the sentiment to fight against the whites. During her tenure as the First Lady, she played a key role in advocating for poverty awareness, education, health, and women empowerment. As an educated, intelligent, and independent woman, she served as a role model for women and was also considered a fashion icon.

Obama presents the text in a way that depicts cohesively her psychological ambivalence of fear to candidacy for president of Barack Obama. She does not have interest in politics and political affiliations. In her memoir *Becoming*, she expresses her feeling about politics when there was little gossiping about Barack Obama's candidacy of presidency. She says "If I was going to be a political spouse, I wanted to treat it seriously. I didn't care about the political per se, but I also didn't want to screw anything up" (219). Here, she might have felt fear of losing election and fear of lacking security as they are from Afro-American community.

Being black community member, Michelle has felt insecure in politics because she has been well acquainted with the brutality of American history which tells the stories of assassinations of high ranking Americans. Even white representatives were killed in the history of America. It was a challenging deed to Obama family because

of having black community. To evidence the incident of assassination of the higher position in the USA, she references the textual evidence in her book as:

Barack's safety was something I didn't want to think about, let alone discuss. So many of us had been brought up with assassinations on the news at night. The Kennedys had been shot. Martin Luther King Jr. had been shot. Ronald Reagan had been shot. John Lennon had been shot. If you drew too much heat, you bore a certain risk. But then again, Barack was a black man. The risk, for him, was nothing new. "He could get shot just going to the gas station," I sometimes tried to remind people when they brought it up. (242)

She exposes the hope and fear. Racially the blacks are dominated and they are more easily being killed. The more popular you become, the more haters you acquired. It is written rule. In the politics, the security threat is more serious agenda. Furthermore, in the area of white supremacy, the blacks' agendas were dominated.

Although many critics of Michelle Obama critiqued on different facets of memoir considering its autobiographical elements and texture, but they could not hold a strong grip over the hegemony put forth by Obama through her memoir. This thesis aims to dig out the effects of cultural encounter faced by African-American people in America. This project tends to interrogate the cultural hegemony in general and particularly, racially blacks are regarded as back-warded and uncivilized on the perception of white's mentality. Hence, this research paper's center of attention is on the flow of white hegemony which is substantiated drawing the concept from Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony. Specifically, Gramsci's main contribution to Marxism remains his concept of cultural hegemony. He is one of the noted theorists who advocated on the relation between culture and power under capitalism. Later he explains how the ruling class manages to dominate and rule over other classes.

In Michelle Obama's memoir, white occupation and subjugation over the African-American people and culture reflect the flow of hegemonic power in the memoir. In the memoir, the white activates the hegemonic power to rule the African-American people and their culture. So, the whites are the main agents of hegemonic influence and impose their culture, values and norms to the non-white people. In this context, Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony is worth reading which talks about condition of hegemony. According to him, hegemony is the "Consent of the ruled to be ruled" (156). Hegemony in this sense means the success of the dominant class in presenting their definitions of reality. Their view of the world is presented in such a way that it is accepted by other classes as common sense. The general consciousness is that it is the only sensible way of seeing the world. Thus, hegemony is the ruling ideology; it is the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are presented as common and have to take for granted.

Gramsci insists on the role of ideology by which the dominant class maintains its rule and domination in society. For Gramsci, instead of imposing its rule by means of force and coercion, the ruling class seeks to establish the consent of other classes to rule upon them. Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony is of great significance in shaping Michelle Obama's assault on *Becoming*. It is generally agreed upon that Gramsci shares with Marx and the Marxists as a whole their belief that the struggle between the ruling class and the subordinate working class is what enables society to move forward. Gramsci gives the clear concept of hegemony in his one of the widely read and cited books, *Prison Notebooks* as:

It is incongruous that the concrete posing of the problem of hegemony should be interpreted as a fact subordinating the group seeking hegemony.

Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the

interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed. (373)

Here, Gramsci focuses on the political power and the economic activity. The leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind. According to him hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive center of economic activity.

Michelle Obama has completed her graduation from the Princeton College. After becoming the first lady of the United State, she gives many commencement speeches except to Princeton and Harvard University. It means elite favors elite class only. For her, giving commencement speech is like a ritual. It was her routine schedule. She expresses "for me, giving commencement speeches was an important, almost sacred springtime ritual" (401). But her originality was from the black community, is being so, she was ignored by her own studied university. She incorporates her ideas as:

Each year I delivered several of commencement speeches, choosing a mix of high school and college ceremonies, focusing on the sorts of schools that normally didn't land high-profile speakers. (Princeton and Harvard, I'm sorry, but you are fine without me). In 2015, I'd gone back to the South Side of Chicago to speak at the graduation at King College Prep. (404)

Above mentioned lines show the hegemonic situation on the First Lady of USA, Michelle Obama at that time. She was dominated and ignored by High Profile College and university. It was the cause behind the black skin of Obama. She is on the top level of the position, but seems powerless. It is the hegemonic victim of white supremacy. Moreover, this segregationist ideology of the white has caused the state of

the power ambiguity in Obama. The bourgeois developed a hegemonic culture, which propagated its own values and norms so that they became the "common sense" (44) values of all. In this hegemonic rules and norms, Obama becomes powerless even within her powerful position. She recalls her past, when she first came across the situation of domination and discrimination. The certain people and leader make a certain rules and norms. In such a context, hegemonic rules and norms exclude the certain groups of people and make them powerless as Obama has become.

Like Antonio Gramsci, an Indian English scholar and critical theorist, Homi K Bhabha in his widely read book, *Location of Culture* has broadly discussed on the issue of ambivalence of power. In his contention, he has focused on the concept of hybridization of culture that can cause dilemma to identify their space in terms of political and cultural agency. He asserts, "a hybrid cultural space that forms contingently, disjunctively, in the inscription of the science of the cultural memory and sites of political agency" (11). The statement reveals that ambivalence of power occurs among the power holders when they feel themselves that they are in the space of hybridized culture. It means that neither the power holders can abide by their native culture nor they adjust within the new changes. It is to some extent a state of in-betweenness. This can be observed in the text as:

I moved with the awkwardness of a tourist, aware that we were outsiders, even with our black skin . . . But Africa, of course, owed us nothing. It's a curious thing to realize, the in-betweenness one feels being African American in Africa. It gave me a hard-to-explain feeling of sadness, a sense of being unrooted in both lands. (155)

Through this textual evidence, it is clear to realize that Michelle Obama herself finds in ambivalence state to identify her identity. She cannot fully claim that she is purely

an African when she visits an African village. At the same time she has shown that she has been influenced by American practices. Because of cultural fusion of Africa and America, she cannot decide herself whether she is African or American. This situation leaves Obama in betweenness without her particular identity. Even she has been the victim of ambivalence to her identity because of social values. She has found herself quite indifferent among the white people where she has felt identity less. It is stated in the text as, "I was being painted not simply as an outsider but as fully "other," so foreign that even my language couldn't be recognized. It was a small-minded and ludicrous insult, sure, but his mocking of my intellect, his marginalizing of my young self, carried with it a larger dismissiveness" (295). In this instance, Obama gives the vivid picture of her experiences that she has undergone as a strange individual. She has not only been charged as other or outsider but also has been excluded on the basis of her language, intelligent and personality.

Another British Marxist sociologist, cultural theorist and political activist, Stuart Hall digs out the concept of ambiguity of cultural identity through the concept of diasporic values. According to him, ambiguity of cultural identity prevails in social practices by avoiding the essence or purity of identity. Eventually, new identity is created through hybridity that remains different from the past and future recognition. In his language, Hall states:

. . . is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity, by a conception of identity that lives and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves a new, through transformation and difference. (119-20)

The major assertion of Hall in the extract shows that any individual can be ambiguous to his one identity when he or she has to leave their native place and have to live in alien land. Further he contends that new identity is created in the form of hybridization through the process of transformation that remains unique than the prevalent practices. The textual evidence in *Becoming* that represents Hall's ideology reads:

Barack's path was an improvisational zigzag through disparate worlds. I learned over lunch that he was in every sense a hybrid —the son of a black Kenyan father and a white mother from Kansas whose marriage had been both youthful and short-lived. He'd been born and raised in Honolulu but had spent four years of his childhood flying kites and catching crickets in Indonesia.  
(101)

This extract highlights the ambivalent state of identity about Barack Obama. It says that Barack Obama's personal and professional identity is in flux from the beginning of his career. Throughout his life, he has got many changes in his identity which did not allow him to be known with the single and individual identity. Consequently, he has been compelled to hide his original identity and forced to live with hybrid identity.

Aligning to the Gramscian notion of hegemony, James Lull, an American social scientist and author known for ethnographic research on the interaction between communications technology and culture, he discusses that cultural hegemony is resulted in the basis of social structure and self-assertion. He puts his argument in the book, *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach* as:

Dominant ideological streams must be subsequently reproduced in the activities of our most basic social units-families, workplace networks, and

friendship groups in the many sites and undertakings of everyday life.

Gramsci's theory of hegemony, therefore, connects ideological representation to culture. Hegemony requires that ideological assertions become self-evident cultural assumptions. (34)

The crux of the contention foregrounds that cultural hegemony can pervade not only in political and traditional practices but also it is seen being practiced in educational institutions. Sometimes cultural hegemony is found in practice without the verbal abuses rather it presents itself as self-evidence.

In *Becoming*, the writer herself had strange feelings about the word 'White' while she started kindergarten at Bryn Mawr Elementary School in the fall of 1969. Connecting her childhood experiences, we can associate theoretical concept of James Lull in *Becoming* as:

When it came my turn to read the words off the teacher's manila cards, I stood up and gave it everything I had, rattling off "red," "green", and "blue" without effort. "Purple" took a second, though, and "orange" was hard. But it wasn't until the letters W-H-I-T-E came up that I froze altogether, my throat instantly dry, my mouth awkward and unable to shape the sound as my brain glitched madly. (18)

Here, we can imagine how she felt about the word 'white' from her early age of life while starting elementary school. The word 'white' is so imprinted in her mind that resembles the white hegemony over the every person of black community. Her memoir shows how the word 'White' hit them in its full and easy perfection.

According to Lull, information and entertainment technology is so thoroughly integrated into the everyday realities of modern societies. A theoretical turn seems a natural and necessary development in an era when communications technology is

such a pervasive and potent ideological medium. According to him, "Technological developments in the twentieth century, however, have made the manner of social domination much more complex than before. Social class differences in today's world are not determined solely or directly by economic factors. Ideological influence is crucial now in the exercise of social power" (33), he says. According to him, today's world of science and technology is under the complete control of elite people so that they can manipulate such technologies for wrong causes. Technologically marginalized people are out off from the access of such facilities. The elites and bourgeois grasp the power on such areas of. As the textual evidence Michelle Obama's *Becoming*, mentions that:

The media response to Barack's speech was hyperbolic. "I've just seen the first black president," Chris Matthews declared to his fellow commentators on NBC. A front-page headline in the Chicago Tribune the next day read simply, "The Phenom." Barack's cell phone began to ring nonstop. Cable pundits were dubbing him a "rock star" and an "overnight success," as if he hadn't spent years working up to that moment onstage. (205)

Media sometime provoke "hyperbolic" responses. Some powerful groups might use it. They might depict negatively to someone's personal affairs. In the age of information and communication, elites groups have all sources of information and technology. They can mislead the entire media houses for defaming anyone whom they do not want to favor.

Michelle Obama's concept about social hierarchy of whites echoes the basic relationship with Foucault's theory of "Discourse as Power". Foucault's principle interest is that truth is itself a product of power. Each discursive practice in the society is the result of power structure operating in the society. He argues, "Truth is linked in

a circular relation with systems of power which produces and sustains it. This is a regime of truth" (1145). It says that discourses are the embodiment of power and it is the discourse through which authority speaks the power of ruling class. He further argues:

The important thing here, I believe is that truth is not outside power, or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth is not the reward of free spirit, the child of protracted solitude, or the privilege of the who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is the thing of this world: it is produce only by multiple forms of constraints and it includes regular effects of power. (1144)

Foucault's view is that the social and political power operates through the discourse. Therefore, the discourse is inseparable from power because discourse is ordering force that governs every institution. Thus, the discursive formation enables institutions to build power by creating and dominating the subaltern class, the power to govern and control them. In the memoir, Obama expresses her feelings about the whites exercise their discursive power to rule the African-American people and their culture. The southern area of America, the minorities of the black people are living. The domination and discrimination towards black people is the evident of white's selection of imperative, interrogative and negative statements which reflect white's authorities, victory and control. On the other hand, poor and lower blacks are expected to be speechless which reduces their status merely as an object. Michelle Obama in her *Becoming* expresses her feelings of domination as:

Since stepping reluctantly into public life, 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 my detractors which part of that phrase matters to them the

most— is it “angry” or “black” or “woman”? I’ve heard about the swampy parts of the internet that question everything about me, right down to whether I’m a woman or a man. A sitting U.S. congressman has made fun of my butt. I’ve been hurt. I’ve been furious. (16)

These comments of Obama show that she is feeling domination of white. She says that she is the most powerful women in the world but on the other hand she was badly and negatively criticized. It seems ambiguity of power. It proves that history is written from the perspective of discursive power. The power is on the control of the whites. They tease black by telling 'Angry Black Woman' and portraying her 'Butt' even to Michelle Obama. Such type of discursive power is imposed over black community. The above extracted lines indicate the command with complete possession or authority over the black people. Obama is only a representative of whole black communities.

Black people still feel that they have to retain white empathy at the expense of being truly empathetic to themselves. Erin Aubry Kaplan is a Los Angeles journalist and columnist who has written about African-American political, economic and cultural issues. She writes an article after reading Obama's memoir, *Becoming* about the feeling of black people and white empathy in the New York Times. She writes "how being consciously black *and* being an individual are not incompatible, but an ordinary state of being" (6). To clarify the notion of normal acceptance of the blacks she further asserts:

She cannot or will not acknowledge how any black person voicing pride in country for the first time makes perfect sense. She cannot or will not acknowledge that Mr. Wright’s critique of America was part of the liberation theology tradition that includes Martin Luther King Jr., a great patriot. More

important, these are critiques I've heard in many forms from ordinary black people. (6)

These lines show that Michelle Obama was badly criticized when they are running on the race of presidency. She was accused of not having patriotic feelings. The interesting thing was that the critics are also from the black community. So many stories of black Americans are being told than ever before, but there is still so much left out, often deliberately. It is the one kind of process of becoming according to writer.

Similarly another critic, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor who is Assistant Professor of African-American Studies at Princeton University and author insists that the book, *Becoming* reduces racial inequality to a matter of psychological impairment that can be overcome through grit and grin. In her book *Becoming*, Obama describes how campaign aides encouraged her to “play to my strengths and to remember the things I most enjoy talking about, which was my love for my husband and kids, my connection with working mothers, and my proud Chicago roots” (269). Together, Obama became disciplined in responding to the racist attacks, in part due the desire not to confirm the stereotypes. Obama, then, is not just telling stories. As we know that she is shaping our understanding of the world we live in, which is why it is so critical that we, as a public, interrogate her ideology. Taylor says in a political and literary forum on online Boston Review that Michelle Obama's *Becoming* can be studied by highlighting the feminist issue as well. The researcher mentions:

*Becoming* normalizes power and the status quo while sending the message that the rest of us only need to find our place in the existing social hierarchy to be happy. When stitched together and told honestly, they can create a map of shared experience that raises the possibility of *collective action* as a way to

transform the individual circumstance. This is certainly true of poor and working-class black women whose personal stories expose the racism, sexism, and general inequality of U.S. society. (7)

These lines of Taylor prove that the United States is not free and democratic. They fought against inequality and discrimination in a democratic way. They believe to the people, to the ballet. After all, *Becoming* is a delicate lesson in creating ideology. Obama exercises enormous influence in shaping discourse and opinion on critical issues concerning race, gender, public policy, and how we define progress in general.

Human consciousness is constructed by an ideology, values, the way of thinking and the beliefs and feelings through which human beings perceive by recourse to which they explain what they take to be reality. Therefore, ideology is a system of thought and reasoning and ultimately creating a truth. Professor Michele Barrett is a noted social theorist and expert on aspects of the social and cultural history of the First World War, says that the concept hegemony is organizing focus of Gramsci's thought on politics and ideology. Barrett opines that "The concept of 'hegemony' refers to the organization of popular consent to the ideology of the dominant group and for 'hegemony' to be secured everyone must accept, at the level of, common sense' knowledge, the view of the dominant class" (123). Here, Gramsci emphasizes on social and cultural factors, possibly society as a whole for the production of hegemony. Hegemony produces compromise and equilibrium that takes some account of subordinate groups. Norms and understanding are disseminated through the societal function.

African-American root is the history of slavery. The blacks were slave to the white. They were sold by white. In this situation, white hegemony over African-American was prevalent till now. Even becoming the president of the United State,

black community cannot feel the equality. Even Michelle Obama feels invisibility during her tenure as First Lady of the United States of America. She puts her opinion as:

I tried to communicate the one message about myself and my station in the world that I felt might really mean something which was that I knew invisibility. I'd lived invisibility. I came from a history of invisibility. I liked to mention that I was the great-great-granddaughter of a slave named Jim Robinson, who was probably buried in an unmarked grave in front of students who were thinking about the future, I offered testament to the idea that it was possible, at least in some ways, to overcome invisibility. (405)

This seems the exact situation of black community which was under the white domination from the slavery to still now 'invisibility'. The stigma of slavery in the United State of America still remains in a new form of domination, discrimination and inequality which was invisible openly by now. There is still cultural hegemony remains as a form of "invisibility". Whites are regarded themselves as superior.

Marxism had predicted that socialist revolution was inevitable in capitalist societies. Marxist theorists focus on the notion of coercive forces. Karl Marx predict on the issues of class struggle in his *Manifesto of the Communist Party*as:

that economic production, and the structure of society of every historical epoch necessarily arising therefrom, constitute the foundation for the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently all history has been a history of class struggles, of struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social evolution; that this struggle, however, has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself

from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie), without at the same time forever freeing the whole of society from exploitation, oppression, class struggles. (36)

This basic thought belongs solely and exclusively to Marx. On this core point of Marx, many critiques interpreted on the subject matter of class, society and ideology and struggle between Proletariat and bourgeoisie. By the early 20th century, no such revolution had occurred in the most advanced nations. Capitalism, it seemed, was more rooted than ever.

Gramsci suggests that bourgeois maintained control not just through violence and political and economic pressure, but also through ideology. The bourgeoisie developed a hegemonic culture, which spread its own values and norms. People in the working-class (and other classes) identified their own good with the good of the bourgeoisie, and helped to maintain the status rather than revolting. In Gramsci's view, a class cannot dominate in modern conditions by merely advancing its own narrow economic interests; neither can it dominate purely through force and coercion. Rather, it must exert intellectual and moral leadership, and make alliances and compromises with a variety of forces. Gramsci holds the view that hegemony is always established on the power impose of superior group to the inferior one. He expresses his ideas as:

The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. (12)

Gramsci rejects the Marxist claim that the power of the ruling class is limited to the economic base. For him, a social class becomes hegemonic not only by controlling the means of production and coercing other classes but rather by establishing their consent. In fact, consent is so important to Gramsci's theory of hegemony. He does not focus on the coercive force.

Michelle Obama is from the working class people as an African-American lady. She has a small dream of having a home and domestic dog in her life. Her father was handicapped. She was not living in a peaceful flat because too many people shared the house. She says, "My family lived in the South Shore neighborhood of Chicago, in a tidy brick bungalow that belonged to Robbie and her husband, Terry. My parents rented an apartment on the second floor" (1). In these beginning lines of the book, Obama's family background is depicted. "South Shore" is a land of black dominated area. In that area, economically lower status of people live, mostly people from black community. Obama's father has lower level of work to run the family. Her family was the central of everything for her. She puts her reality as "My father went to work every day dressed in the blue uniform of a city laborer; but at night he showed us what it meant to love jazz and art" (4). It shows the actual situation of black people in south shore of Chicago. The class of lower people and working class people has always dominated by the elite people according to Marxist theory.

According to Gramsci, the ruling classes of all capitalist societies managed to maintain their rule, in some cases without even physical force and pressure. The subaltern people were so manipulated that it did not even occur to them to question the dominant system of rule which came to be seen as the 'norm'. The dominant groups managed to stabilize their rule by seeking to win the approval of other groups. For textual references, Michelle Obama said about her situation from the bottom level

of her status to the fulfillment of dream which was smaller in the beginning time. She says:

If your family doesn't have much money, I want you to remember that in this country, plenty of folks, including me and my husband. We started out with very little. But with a lot of hard work and a good education, anything is possible—even becoming President. That's what the American Dream is all about. (133)

As we know that the life of Obama has been changed through the working class to the top politician. Although, they didn't feel powerful as themselves, they both believed on the hard work and good education to over cross the any types of superiority. The rooted hegemony can be crossed due to the hard working and education.

Michelle Obama thought that sludge of partisanship and racism would melt away under the sunny slogans of hope and change. She talks about the hope and fear. 'Fear' focuses on the sense of domination which is caused by white hegemony. 'Hope' refers to the over crossing to the hegemony and domination of the whites. A month after President Obama started his first term in 2009; Michelle Obama was sitting in the balcony during a joint session of Congress, where she could see a cadre of Republicans scowling while her husband delivered his address. "They would fight everything Barack did, I realized, whether it was good for the country or not" (337). She continues, "It seemed they just wanted Barack to fail" (337). It means Barack was from the black community and opponent and even white community wanted to fail his tenure. This all happen due to ever a country in which the prospect of a black president. Michelle talks about the candidacy of Barack that made her feel to stand on the decision of her husband. "For the first time in my adult lifetime," she told a crowd

before the Wisconsin primaries, “I’m really proud of my country. Not just because Barack has done well, but because I think people are hungry for change” (291). It means the word "change" might refer to change the concept of white while blacks are culturally hegemonic due to the white supremacy. There should be change in mind and soul not in speech to end the cultural domination to the blacks.

Taking the hegemonic theoretical perception of a Marxist, Raymond Williams under consideration of hegemony, through his book, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, we come to know that he has pinpointed to the dominating factors of base and super structure which are shaped by capitalistic ideology. He clarifies that "More recently hegemonism has been used to describe specifically ‘great power’ or ‘superpower’ politics, intended to dominate others" (144). Here, the base is composed by the material production, money, object the relations of production and the stage of development of productive forces. The super structure is where we find the political and ideological institutions, our social relations, set of ideas of our cultures, hopes, dreams and spirit. He further puts his words as:

An emphasis on hegemony and the hegemonic has come to include cultural as well as political and economic factors; it is distinct, in this sense, from the alternative idea of an economic base and a political and cultural superstructure, whereas the base changes the superstructure is changed, with whatever degree of indirectness or delay. The idea of hegemony, in its wide sense, is then especially important in societies in which electoral politics and public opinion are significant factors, and in which social practice is seen to depend on consent to certain dominant ideas which in fact express the needs of a dominant class. (145)

The extract explicitly classifies the two groups of base structure and superstructure. Between 'base' and 'superstructure' where base denotes the forces and relations of production and superstructure represents societal behavior and culture as a whole according to Raymond Williams. It is remarkable that Raymond Williams often considers culture as a practice. Williams's explicit definition of hegemony is absolutely impossible without his specific notion of determination, pressures and a saturating domination. Hegemony, the determination of everyday life and experience, reinforces and maintains the dominating presence of the class system.

William's term of base and superstructure, fortexual evidences, Michelle Obama exposes the both base and superstructure groups of America in her book *Becoming*. In the American society, she puts her ideas that the chronic domination over black community politically and culturally. Her experience is incorporated in her memoir as:

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 mother, a daughter torn up by grief. (15)

Obama is the only one woman who builds a meaningful careers being sole African-American lady, according to her. It means the structure of class in the society is still remaining. Obama herself is from the working class black student. She has experienced of a lot grief to over cross white hegemony which is culturally prevalent still in the American society. Williams's insistence upon his conception of determination becomes forceful as he approaches the concept directly as "A Marxism

without some concept of determination is in effect worthless. Marxism with many of the concepts of determination it now has is quite radically disabled” (83). Hegemony, then, not only requires, but reinforces and maintains the division of culture into dominant, alternative and oppositional subcultures. Obama is now stressed-out person having strong determination to living a meaningful life in the groups where White supremacy is detected.

Obama feels the strange thoughts of hegemony even in the college life. She graduated in 1985, says she sometimes wondered why she had been accepted into Princeton, a majority-white school, in the first place. She shares her experience as "It was impossible to be a black kid at a mostly white school and not feel the shadow of affirmative action" (85). Obama further argues, "You could almost read the scrutiny in the gaze of certain students and even some professors, as if they wanted to say, "I know why you're here." These moments could be demoralizing; even if I'm sure I was just imagining some of it. It planted a seed of doubt. Was I here merely as part of a social experiment?" (85). These types of experiences of her school life, she felt often as "demoralizing" and discouraging. She has doubt of discrimination and domination. She imagines herself as some of it among the white alumni. In the white dominated college, it was impossible to enroll by a black. It was the social experiment for her? She asks. It means she questions to the elite whites.

The former first lady Obama says that she gradually realized 'affirmative action' wasn't the only way the school filled quotas. This is not the first time Obama has talked about her experience as a black student at Princeton. Many times she explores such feelings. Her thoughts on the subject of black students are stated as:

As minorities, we were the most visible, but it became clear that special dispensations were made to admit all kinds of students whose grades or

accomplishments might not measure up to the acknowledged standard. It was hardly a straight meritocracy. There were the athletes, for example. There were the legacy kids, whose fathers and grandfathers had been Tigers or whose families had funded the building of a dorm or a library. (85)

Here, Obama cites student-athletes, as well as the "legacy kids" who attended Princeton like their "fathers and grand-fathers or whose families had funded the building of a dorm or a library" (88). By nature, white's kid feel freedom and standard but blacks feel others. Even in the sports like "athletes" there were the legacy kids of whites. The racial quotas can cause white students to look down on their black classmates. To be clear, Obama certainly deserved to get into Princeton. By all accounts, she was a brilliant student who went on to become an accomplished lawyer. But the fact that people looked down on her because of Princeton's affirmative action policies is unfortunate, just as it is for all deserving minority students who wonder whether they're just filling a quota.

Obama exposes many racial cases in her book *Becoming*. She was interested enough in race relations that she wrote her Princeton senior thesis on the topic. Her senior thesis aside, Obama's experience at Princeton is a good example of why affirmative action policies aren't a good idea. The thesis surveyed black Princeton alumni to see how they "felt about race and identity after being at Princeton" (294). Someone dug up her senior thesis from Princeton which was written more than two decades earlier. It was the example of how difficult to face the challenge of whites to the black in every step on life. The black are being noticed in every action. It was hard to face any types of challenge on the place of white hegemony for the black one.

Michelle Obama did not think Mr. Obama could win the presidency. Although she gave Mr. Obama her blessing, "I said yes because I loved him and had faith in

what he could do" (214). But she was still worried about the racial tension in the country. In *Becoming*, she revealed that she was "harboring a painful thought: Barack was a black man in America, after all. I didn't really think he could win" (214). Being a black, she has both types of feelings of hope and fear. Peoples grace towards is only might be sympathy to Barack according to Michelle Obama. In America, there is still white hegemony prevalent, Obama indicates.

In *Becoming*, the former first lady Michelle Obama wrote about the criticism. Such criticism was sometimes racially motivated. She faced throughout Mr. Obama's campaign. She was accused of not loving her own country, and headlines like "Her Looks: Regal or Intimidating" (296). Some online media also provoked against Michelle Obama. Even to Barack was blamed. Some of people by making plan politically hit him. She states, "The internet would burp up another anonymous and unfounded rumor, this one questioning Barack's citizenship, floating the idea that he'd been born not in Hawaii but in Kenya, which would make him ineligible to become president" (264). Barack's ancestors are from Kenya, but he was born in America. To avoid the race of presidency, he was accused of being outsiders or non-native American. Behind this, ultimately he was from black community. Some white elite target to attack him due to black nominee.

In the time of presidency nominee, some people condemned Obama for hersupport to her husband's candidacy. She was portrayed as outsider and 'other' in her own country because she belonged to black community. In America, south side of Chicago, black people are marginalized. Though it is the ghetto of the blacks, their domination is common in practice. They are mistreated by the whites. They are ignored by the white. Blacks are treaded as other in their native land. Obama states the same segregation as:

I was being painted not simply as an outsider but as fully “other,” so foreign that even my language couldn’t be recognized. It was a small-minded and ludicrous insult, sure, but his mocking of my intellect, his marginalizing of my young self, carried with it a larger dismissiveness. Barack and I were now too well-known to be rendered invisible, but if people saw us as alien and trespassing, then maybe our potency could be drained. (264)

It is the racial hit to Obama. They are treated as "other" and "outsider". In the white domination, it was challenging work to be president in the United States of America. Still now, culturally blacks are hegemonized due to white supremacy. It is a diplomatic political hit over the black leader. White people still "insult" black people and on their intellectuality. It was the issue of mockery by the white elites.

Obama was ambivalent about her husband running for president and didn't think he would win. Before Barack Obama became president of the United States a decade ago, he had an important task to complete. It was task of getting his wife's approval to run for the White House. Michelle Obama writes in the memoir that she never expected America to elect a black man for president. She has hope and fears both. But ultimately she let him run because she believed that he wouldn't make it too far in the race. She writes "I support him in campaigning, but I also felt certain he wouldn't make it all the way" (214). Eventually, other factors also contributed to Michelle agreeing to Barack's Presidential run. She knew that her husband was supported by a team of "good, smart people" (214). She believed he would be a kind president who would make better lives for millions of people. It was the worth of all people of American Black and White, she believed.

Marxist had predicted that socialist revolution was inevitable in capitalist society. The seizure of power by armed force, the settlement of the issue by war, is

the central task and the highest form of revolution. This Marxist-Leninist principle of revolution holds good universality, for China and for all other countries. The leader of China, Mao Tse-tung states that "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" (224). According to him, every communist must grasp this principle. In the class struggle in the era of imperialism teaches that it is only by the power of the gun that the working class and the laboring masses can defeat the armed bourgeoisie and landlords according to Marxism. In this sense we may say that only with gun the whole world can be transformed. We are advocators of the abolition of war, we do not want war; but war can only be abolished through war, and in order to get rid of the gun it is necessary to take up the gun. The form of war is always destruction either for winner or for defeated. But for Gramsci it was fundamental to the attainment of power that cultural hegemony be achieved first. He asserts in his significant book *Prison Notebooks*:

the class relations created by industrial development, with the limits of bourgeois hegemony reached and the position of the progressive classes reversed, have induced the bourgeoisie not to struggle with all its strength against the old regime, but to allow a part of the latter's façade to subsist, behind which it can disguise its own real domination. (253)

A class cannot dominate in modern conditions by merely advancing its own narrow economic interests. Gramsci ascribes a greater degree of importance to the cultural superstructure of capitalist societies than is attributed by Marx. From this perspective, the superstructure does not simply reflect the economic base. Rather, there is a meaningful degree of autonomy between the spheres. This means that the ideas of the ruling classes do not necessarily become the defining values of society as a whole. Rather, ongoing social action creates and reproduces hegemonic power. It is viewed

as "Hegemonic networks of power are the result of contestation between ruling elites and subaltern groups" (21). Because contestation is basic to the process of constituting hegemony, there is never a unified, totalizing system of ideological domination.

Michelle Obama also focuses on this concept of cultural domination like this "Failure is a feeling long before it becomes an actual result. It's vulnerability that breeds with self-doubt and then is escalated, often deliberately, by fear" (55). According to her, 'self-doubt' is the cause of failure to achieve power culturally. The minority and dominated people have sense of "fear" that is deliberately due to cultural hegemony. It is the psychological defeat that prevents the dreams of possible victory.

Michelle Obama represented possibly radical challenges to America's conservative race and gender politics. Brittney C. Cooper, who is a writer, public speaker and Professor of Women's and Gender Studies and Africana Studies at Rutgers University, talks about Mrs. Obama's revision of Black mothering politics. She wrote an article "An't I a Lady?: Race Women, Michelle Obama, and the Ever-Expanding Democratic Imagination" on the journal as:

Obama's revision of black mothering politics draws heavily upon the politics of respectability. Introduced in the nineteenth century as a strategy for combating negative perceptions of black women's bodies as lewd, devious, sexually aberrant, and unfit for citizenship, the politics of respectability encourages black women to adopt middle-class values of thrift, piety, modest self-presentation, and Christian religious ideals to present themselves as worthy of American citizenship. (51)

From the nineteenth century, blacks mostly women are presented as lustful, wily and sexual object by the whites. They are taken as unfit even for citizenship. Their identity was no more. No any moral value and respect as human being. They are double

marginalized of their husband and whites. It is as we know the situation of cultural domination or hegemony. But later they begin politics of 'respectability'. Such actions function primarily to rescue the critical image of black women. According to her, "Stereotypical representations of African-American women and their bodies still abound, necessitating a continued reliance upon the strategies of respectability to counter those images" (51). The researcher contends that even the Afro-American women are subjugated on the basis of the images as well.

Michelle Obama's active, positive brand of mothering performs important cultural work for the embattled imagery of the black mother. Her speeches and interviews, much like her husband's, have become a critical medium of resistance to the embattled and often critical public commentary surrounding her. It was the aftermath of being black category of skin. For the references, In her Democratic National Convention Speech in August 2008, Obama positioned herself as a "sister, blessed with a brother who is my mentor and my protector, a wife who loves my husband, a Mom whose girls are the heart of my heart and the center of my world," (n.pag) and as a daughter raised by a working-class family on the south side of Chicago. The south side of Chicago is the land of black dominated area. She proclaimed her love of country, her strong belief in American ideals of freedom and equal opportunity, but most importantly her belief in her husband, the "man I fell in love with 19 years ago ... the same man who drove me and our new baby daughter home from the hospital" (n.pag). Obama ended her speech in "honor of her father's memory and her daughters' future" (n.pag). The "daughters' future" does not only refer to the Obama's daughters rather all the blacks futures and their respect. This speech was well received, primarily because it placed Obama on safe, identifiable ground as mother, daughter, wife, and sister.

Mrs. Obama mentioned her struggle and complexities of her life. She describes the ways how people of color and those from other marginalized groups often adjust their language, behavior, and even appearance to navigate certain social situation. They see the huge problem in the America, “I was just thinking about income inequality” (113). It means it was so hard to work in such a situation for the black community. The Obama presidency cannot be assessed without an analysis race and racial symbolism. Ali Johnson, Pearl K. Ford Dowe, & Michael K. Fauntroy, who explicitly elaborate some of their views "One America? President Obama's Non-Racial" on the journal as:

A narrative emerged revealing the extent to which his presidency will be viewed in racial terms. President Obama like past presidents has had to face opponents and critiques by the media, politicians, and citizens. But he has also had to contend with opposition and critiques that have played on race and racial stereotype. Many African Americans as a witty quip but rather that it revealed the unspoken desire for retribution by Whites who are not agreeable to the idea of an African American president. (142)

The whites attempt to satire Barack Obama by mocking and joking is reflected in the extract. Even becoming the president of America, some of the whites dominate him because Barack was from black community and the black community is taken as imperfect even now.

During the campaign Obama placed the economic concerns of middle class workers on the same level with the suffering felt by African-Americans. He has championed the idea that most people are interested in five things: education, income, housing, healthcare, and justice. In the book *Becoming*, Michelle Obama expresses

her ideas by acknowledging her life as a big process of 'becoming' always. She asserts her struggle in the American society being black lady as:

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 mother, a daughter torn up by grief. And until recently, I was the First Lady of the United States of America—a job that's not officially a job, but that nonetheless has given me a platform like nothing I could have imagined. (ix-x)

It was true that white supremacy was synonymous with white men in hoods cowering behind a mantle of anonymity in an effort to terrorize African-Americans, Jews and anyone else who crossed them. In such situation, Michelle Obama never imagined to hold the position of the 'first lady' belonging to black community. In the study time, she was only one black student. But she hopes to over cross white supremacy.

Thus, Michelle Obama's *Becoming* depicts the actual picture of African-American people and their miseries where they are subjected to be ambiguous and indifferent to their original identity under the shadow of the white supremacy. The cultural dominance imposed upon the black community acknowledges their 'consent'. In this way, this is political and racial representation of Afro-American lady Michelle Obama. Through this book *Becoming*, she shows the ambivalence of power that does not allow her to be open for every act and thought she has dreamed of making them come true. Being president of the United States of America, which was taken as supreme power of the world, Michelle Obama and Barack Obama regarded them as powerless due to hegemony of white supremacy pushing them into the ditch of greater

confusion to know themselves who they actually are. Mrs. Obama, being a lawyer, author, and former first lady, her depiction of cultural domination and its relationship to every aspect of African-American life, she has given the reader a solid foundation of historical, contextual and sociology dimensions of the same groups. Through such references, we can conclude that being a political power holder, nothing can be changed abruptly. The cultural hegemony is deep rooted in the American society which is very hard to cross. In this way, Michelle Obama and Barack Obama outwardly seem powerful but inwardly seem powerless in her memoir *Becoming* not because of other causative agents except ambivalent identity.

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