

Fashion Leader Comparison: Michelle Obama and Melania Trump

Alex Villane

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Summary by Bridgette Townsend

In *The Second Skin*, author Marilyn Horn defines a fashion leader as someone who is admired, inspires fashion, and is important in society. Anyone in the public eye can be considered a fashion leader, especially the First Lady of the United States. The two most recent first ladies, Michelle Obama and Melania Trump, may be fashion leaders but their background and style varies greatly.

Michelle describes herself as a mother with a lawyer background who has a passion for serving her community. She has instated many programs and initiatives that support education and healthy living for children. Melania, on the other hand, came to America as a model and worked on high-end fashion advertising campaigns. After her marriage to Donald Trump, she became a chairwoman on boards such as the American Heart Association and the Boy's Club of New York. Her intention was to use her position as First Lady to take on the issue of cyber bullying, but with her husband's use of social media, her campaign was heavily criticized. On the respective Inauguration Days, the women had two different styles. Michelle chose an outfit by a Cuban-American designer named Isabel Toledo. Her choice was not discussed with the designer and was essentially a surprise, giving an up-and-coming designer a chance to be seen by the world, essentially an "American Dream." Melania, on the other hand, wore a powder blue suit by Ralph Lauren, reminiscent of Jackie Kennedy's inaugural outfit. Her choice was seen as an unspoken commitment to her new role.

Michelle was known as dressing in a practical manner, relatable, affordable and simple. She wanted to be a role model to the typical American consumer and wore easily accessible brands such as J. Crew. She would mix in high-end designers for certain events and would wear designers who had connections to countries she was visiting, such as wearing Vera Wang to meet the Chinese President and his wife. Melania, on the other hand, tends to go for more high-end European designers, which many criticize since her husband's stance is pro-American manufacturing. Melania also does not take designers into consideration when visiting foreign countries; she wore an Asian-inspired dress by the Italian brand Gucci when meeting the Chinese president and first lady.

When you look at these two women, they both fit the standard of a fashion leader, but, in the case of a First Lady as a fashion leader, many say Michelle Obama fit the part well. She dressed practically and accordingly, and put a lot of thought into her outfits, carefully considering what designers and brands she wore. Although she is no longer First Lady, Michelle still continues to inspire, both through her fashion and her actions.