

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE IS HONORED TO ANNOUNCE THE
“MICHELLE OBAMA AWARD FOR MEMOIR,”

A NEW CREATIVE WRITING AWARD

to commemorate the forthcoming publication of her book

THE LIGHT WE CARRY

New York, NY—October 12, 2022 --Penguin Random House, the world’s largest trade book publisher, today announces the **Michelle Obama Award for Memoir**, an annual creative writing award named in honor of Mrs. Obama within its signature Creative Writing Awards (CWA) program. The **Michelle Obama Award for Memoir** will recognize one high school senior who attends public school with a college scholarship of \$10,000 for their original literary composition in English in the category of memoir/personal essay.

“I know firsthand how nerve-wracking it can be to share the most intimate stories from your life with the world,” said Mrs. Obama. “But after publishing my memoir *Becoming*, I’ve learned that writing your own story can be a powerful tool. When we share the whole of ourselves, we offer others the opportunity to not only see us as we are, but maybe even think about themselves in a new way. This allows us to harness the things that set us apart and helps us see the world as the nuanced, messy, beautiful place that it is. That’s why I am so excited about this new award, and I can’t wait to read what this next generation of young writers will share with us all.”

“Through her decades-long commitment to supporting educational opportunity and mentorship, Michelle Obama has established herself as a forceful champion of the creative potential of young people,” says David Drake, President of Crown, the Random House imprint that published *Becoming* and will publish her forthcoming book, ***THE LIGHT WE CARRY***. “Just as her own memoir *Becoming* inspired millions of readers of all generations to recognize

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the value of their own stories, we hope the **Michelle Obama Award for Memoir** will encourage students to discover and cherish the power of their own voice through storytelling.”

The Penguin Random House Creative Writing Awards program chose to name its award for memoir/personal essay in recognition of Mrs. Obama’s long-standing commitment to mentorship and education as well as her inspiring leadership in encouraging young people to discover the power of telling their own stories. The award commemorates the forthcoming publication of Mrs. Obama’s new book ***THE LIGHT WE CARRY*** (Crown, November 15, 2022, \$32.50) and her bestselling memoir ***BECOMING*** (Crown, 2018).

Since 1993, the Creative Writing Awards program has awarded more than \$2.8 million to public high school students for writing within five categories: original poetry (the Amanda Gorman Award for Poetry), memoir/personal essay (now the Michelle Obama Award for Memoir), fiction/drama, spoken word composition (the Maya Angelou Award for Spoken Word), and the NYC Entrant Award. In partnership with the grassroots non-profit We Need Diverse Books, the program empowers and celebrates hundreds of young writers each year and underscores Penguin Random House’s commitment to identifying and nurturing new literary talent.

The 2022 competition launches on October 12 and closes on February 1, or until 1,000 applications have been reached, whichever occurs first. Current high school seniors who attend public school in the United States, including the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories, and are planning to attend college – either a two-year or four-year institution – in the fall of 2023 are encouraged to apply.

In addition to scholarships, Penguin Random House hosts a virtual development week for the Creative Writing Awards winners each summer that includes one-on-one virtual meetings with Penguin Random House editors, networking workshops, a panel about career opportunities in publishing, and fireside chats with Penguin Random House authors. The week concludes with a virtual awards ceremony.

Mrs. Obama posted news of the award on her social this morning:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CjnSERkOrpl/?igshid=NDc0ODY0MjQ%3D>

Winners will be announced and posted on the Penguin Random House Creative Writing Awards website at www.michelleobamabooks.com/scholarship in June 2023.

Michelle Obama served as First Lady of the United States from 2009 to 2017. A graduate of Princeton University and Harvard Law School, Mrs. Obama started her career as an attorney at the Chicago law firm Sidley & Austin, where she met her future husband, Barack Obama. She later worked in the Chicago mayor’s office, at the University of Chicago, and at the University of



Chicago Medical Center. Mrs. Obama also founded the Chicago chapter of Public Allies, an organization that prepares young people for careers in public service. She is the author of the #1 global bestseller *BECOMING* and the #1 national bestseller *AMERICAN GROWN*. The Obamas currently live in Washington, D.C., and have two daughters, Malia and Sasha.

Penguin Random House, the world's largest trade book publisher, is dedicated to its mission to ignite a universal passion for reading by creating books for everyone. The company, which employs more than 10,000 people globally, was formed on July 1, 2013, by Bertelsmann and Pearson. As of April 1, 2020, Bertelsmann is full owner of the company. With more than 300 imprints and brands on six continents, Penguin Random House comprises adult and children's fiction and nonfiction print and digital English- German- and Spanish-language trade book publishing businesses in more than 20 countries worldwide. With over 16,000 new titles, and more than 700 million print, audio and eBooks sold annually, Penguin Random House's publishing lists include more than 80 Nobel Prize laureates and hundreds of the world's most widely read authors.

About [WNDB](#)

We Need Diverse Books is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that runs twelve exciting initiatives united under one goal—to create a world where everyone can find themselves in the pages of a book. Established in 2014, WNDB strives to support and amplify diverse literature by mentoring marginalized creators, providing resources to diverse publishing professionals, and donating diverse books to schools and libraries nationwide. Learn more at diversebooks.org.