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Craig Robinson: Yeah, it's tough, it was tough. You're, you're really paying me back now, because now I can't walk down the street without people like, are you Michelle's brother?

Michelle Obama: It's like, I love it.

Craig Robinson: Can I take a picture?

Michelle Obama: I love it. It's like payback. payback.

Craig Robinson: [laughs]

00:00:26 MUSIC

00:00:45 BREAK 00:01:10

00:01:14 Michelle Obama: Hi everyone, I am Michelle Obama, and this is the Michelle Obama podcast. In this episode, I'm going to be talking about a type of relationship that means a great deal to so many of us. And that is our relationship with our siblings, so I'm going to be talking to, my hero, my first hero. My big brother, Craig Robinson. Craig was everything to me growing up. Smart, hard working, popular, all of that. After high school he went on to become a star basketball player at Princeton, and then played professionally overseas. 00:01:54 He was very successful in business, and investment banking, and he has written a book of his own. But to me, he will always be my big brother. And this relationship couldn't be more vital to who I have become. So, without further ado, welcome to my show, Craig,

00:02:16 Craig Robinson: Thank you for having me on your show, and that sounds so odd. Oh, my sister has a show, and I'm on it.

00:02:23 Michelle Obama: And, my brother is here, with me, on my show. We're gonna just talk about life, our life growing up, um, and it's probably good to start at the beginning.

00:02:35 Craig Robinson: Do you remember moving from South Parkway, to Euclid?

Michelle Obama: No, cause I was one. I was a baby. I have no memories from when I was a baby, so no, OK OK, so we have to explain this, parkway gardens,

Craig Robinson: We have to explain that.

Michelle Obama: Was in the 'hood, right, yeah. Mm hmm.

Craig Robinson: Right, and it wasn't quite a project, it was a coop. But it was kinda subsidized housing, and in the back, was the, train yard, and it was, a young boy's dream, to sit there and just watch all of

these things going on, there were cranes back there, there were trucks back there, men with hard hats, and lunch boxes, oh man,

Michelle Obama: Say a little boy's fantasy, sitting and watching, grown men with lunchboxes and helmets, [laughs]

Craig Robinson: Boxes, and mom used to let me sit out there and eat my lunch, when they were eating lunch, and watch what they were doing, oh I remember that,

Michelle Obama: You and your little boy wonder thought, we're living large! We are in the back in the alley, by the trains! You could've been, in a castle,

00:03:37 Craig Robinson: I did! there, there's a big, 8 foot fence, with a top layer of barbed wire, three rows abo-

Michelle Obama: That was just cool,

Craig Robinson: It was like, barbed wire? Are you kidding me? Do you know if you threw an apple and you hit that, it would stick?

Michelle Obama: [laughs]

00:04:02 Michelle Obama: What do you remember most about the Euclid house?

Craig Robinson: I remember, a couple of things. I remember first and foremost in the summertime, how hot, it got.

Michelle Obama: Oh yeah, because there was no A/C!

Craig Robinson: I don't think, was A/C invented back then?

Michelle Obama: You know, [laughs] Our aunt Robbie, owned the home, with her husband, Terry, uncle, Victor Terry,

Craig Robinson: Victor Terry, yes,

Michelle Obama: But we called him Terry for some, strange reason,

Craig Robinson: a distinguished, the most distinguished man we knew at the time... distinguished.

Michelle Obama: we ever knew, I mean, Terry was, he was trip, you know, now we know it as distinguished, but when we were little he was just kinda odd,

Craig Robinson: It was like, why is this guy dressed up all the time?

Michelle Obama: He wore a three piece suit every day. Every day.

Craig Robinson: Every day.

Michelle Obama: He'd be mowin' the lawn, with his fedora on,

Craig Robinson: And the, he still had the vest on, he took the jacket off, when he was cutting the grass, but he still had the vest on, yeah,

Michelle Obama: Yes, when he was cutting the grass doin' yard work, [laughs] he was a little bit relaxed, his tie on every single day

Craig Robinson: Tie!

00:05:03 Michelle Obama: When I think of Euclid, when I think of our childhood, I think of music. Music was the backdrop of everything. We didn't do anything without music, and that's because our father, was a big jazz lover, and had a huge jazz uh, album collection, that he, that he cherished and our maternal grandfather, Southside, was a big music enthusiast. And he had, he had a wall full of jazz albums.

Craig Robinson: I remember, both of those homes, Southside's home and our home where you walk in, and dad's got a record playing. And it could've been Dizzy Gillespie, or Miles Davis, or,

Michelle Obama: Thelonius Monk, was one of his, we thought that was some made-up name.

Craig Robinson: Thelonius Monk, was one of his, favorites, yeah, we did. [laughs]

Michelle Obama: Thelonius Monk, it's like really? Dad, is that really his name? Who did that? Who did that to that man.

00:05:59 Michelle Obama: The thing I liked about them, is that they, they didn't treat their albums and music as, you can't touch these, you just little kids, you, we were taught how to use, a record player properly, remember, you had to learn how to take the the album out of the vinyl, and you couldn't touch the side, you couldn't put your fingerprints on it,

Craig Robinson: Yeah, fingers on the,

Michelle Obama: You had to hold the rim like it was a precious disc, and you'd just blow on it, you know to clean it, [poof] just a light blow, you couldn't spit on it, you know, it was a light blow. Then you'd lay it on the turn table, put it on the first song, and let it play. You know, and we, used to like a certain song on an album, you tried to put it in that little groove, and you'd always get in trouble, because you,

Craig Robinson: Because it would go, werrrr! yes, right

Michelle Obama: Or you'd scratch it, you know, but we were still allowed to figure it out, you know, it was, there was nev, never any hands off, so we had our own albums, and played our own music, and one of my favorites was the Jackson 5,

00:07:07 Michelle Obama: Stop the love you save, and ABC, on the B side, that was that little record, on our, yeah, on our little bitty, little makeshift, record player,

Craig Robinson: Mm hmm, Yes, 45, Record player,

Michelle Obama: It wasn't the stereo system, but it was the thing you plugged in, and you could put the disc, in the 45, to play it, mm hmm.

Craig Robinson: So you could play it, yeah,

Michelle Obama: Mm hmm, but we used to love playing the Jackson 5.

Craig Robinson: [sings] Stop the love you say baby,

Michelle Obama: [sings] Darling take it slow,

Both: [sings] Or someday you'll be all alone,

00:07:47 Michelle Obama: And then, Robbie, lived downstairs, and taught piano, so, you know, we heard piano music, trickling up through the floorboards, of students good and bad,

Craig Robinson: Right, yeah,

Michelle Obama: Playing lullabies and we both took piano lessons, although you gave up quite early, but you never looked like you practiced, you never did,

Craig Robinson: Nah, uh, well, I pr-, I would practice,

Michelle Obama: I never saw it [laughs]

Craig Robinson: But I would practice the bare minimum, if if they said you should practice thirty minutes I would practice thirty minutes and like fifteen seconds. And that's it, I'm done, I'm going on to the next thing.

Michelle Obama: It's like and that's it, I'm done, I'm out.

Craig Robinson: Uh, and you were very hard on yourself. I'm gonna digress a little bit, because you would practice, and here's our practice. I'm playing the tune, and I hit a wrong note, I just keep going, and I finish it off, and then I'll go back again. You practice, you dun dun dun da dun er- uh, I gotta start over. dun dun dun da dun er- gotta start over. Dun dun dun da dun dun dun da dun, der, and you just kept starting over, cause you had to play the whole thing perfectly,

00:08:52 Michelle Obama: Whole thing through perfectly, well that was,

Craig Robinson: That's, that's maddening.

00:08:58 Michelle Obama: You all teased me a little bit about the perfectionism, but you didn't make me feel bad about it, you know,

Craig Robinson: No, it was it was it was like a badge of honor, slash, joke, slash, I hope she grows out of this, [laughs]

Michelle Obama: [laughs]

00:09:18 Craig Robinson: I remember you saying I've got a good idea, [laughs]

Michelle Obama: [laughs]

Craig Robinson: We can't get mom and dad to stop smoking, let's break all their cigarettes!

Michelle Obama: It's like, sounded like a good plan!

Craig Robinson: And it sounded like a great idea.

Michelle Obama: Well that was after a couple of other attempts, we tried to dip their, remember we took the tips of the cigarettes and dipped 'em in hot sauce, and lemon juice, thinkin' that that would [laughs]

Craig Robinson: Dipped 'em in, in lemon juice, and then put hot sauce on it, that that would turn them off,

Michelle Obama: That that would turn them, that they would've notice, that their cigarettes were damp, [laughs] that they would just think, oooh, cigarette butts are hot, you know maybe I should cut this out, you know, [laughs]

Craig Robinson: And I, I remember, distinctly, dad putting one in his mouth, and going, there's something wrong with these filters, [laughs]

00:10:09 Michelle Obama: And it didn't work. So I guess we figured after we dipped them, dipped the tips in lemon juice and hot sauce, then, what was left, but to just crush them, into, into teeny pieces,

Craig Robinson: Just destroy 'em,

Michelle Obama: So who actually did the crushing, I don't remember,

Craig Robinson: No we both did, I remember, because there was, there were like two cartons underneath the sink, and we opened,

Michelle Obama: And, and we didn't even realize how expensive cigarettes were, you know, mmm hmm, yeah, yeah,

Craig Robinson: Cigarettes were, yeah, and we broke, two cartons worth, but the really, scary but funny thing about that whole thing was, when mom, when they got home, and they were looking for their cigarettes, and they were going around the house, and we're sittin' there, trying to look innocent,

Michelle Obama: And we're and we're sitting there, in front of the TV, looking like, mmm, right [laughs]

Craig Robinson: And, but, but, always thinking, it's working, they won't be able to smoke, they're gone, this'll be the end of it,

Michelle Obama: They won't know, they won't notice, that their cigarettes are missing, and this'll be it. Right they'll be like Oh, well, can't find our cigarettes, I guess we're done with that bad habit,

00:11:06 Craig Robinson: And then finally, mom steps on the garbage can, and the top lifts up, and she's, Frasier! Frasier! Get in here! Craig! Michelle! What is going on! Well, and by then, we were in tears, crying, like oops!

Michelle Obama: Cause it's like, now we didn't really, think this through. This, this isn't how this was supposed to end,

Craig Robinson: This, this is not how we thought the reaction would be.

Michelle Obama: We were supposed to end happily, with people, with our parents going, well you young people were correct, and I'm glad you threw away our cigarettes, and now we know the error of our ways, it didn't work out that way, we got in trouble.

Craig Robinson: We got in trouble.

Michelle Obama: We got in so much trouble.

00:11:50 Craig Robinson: Give me, one of your best memories.

Michelle Obama: Once I, got up the gumption to go outside, cause you know what kind of kid I was, right, I'm like, [laughs]

Craig Robinson: Whoa, yeah, whoo, you had a, there was a force field around that house, you never left

Michelle Obama: I know, and I write about it in the book, it's like I really did believe that little kids were kind of messy, you know, I mean, and my, I liked my little world, of my dolls, and the scenarios I would set up with my blocks, and your G.I. Joe's, you know so there was that part of the house for me, that felt like a sanctuary, it's like, in our little play space, I'd have my world set up, and I was very territorial,

Craig Robinson: Oh, yes yeah I notice, I noticed, I didn't read too much about how you used to keep me away from your situations,

Michelle Obama: I think I wrote about that, I think I was honest about the fact that I didn't want you interfering, I didn't want your energy, because I created a whole world for myself, where Barbie and Ken, they were divorcing, or they had a baby, there was some drama, going on, and I felt like your play energy, would mess with my, the plot line, of my, of my doll life. I remember that about Euclid, you know, playing in the house, until, I got ready, to be outside, with the other kids,

00:13:07 Craig Robinson: You loved your inside. But you would come out in the backyard because you were, you, you'd play with me, and I don't think people really know, you used to play football, in the backyard, you would play baseball in the backyard, we'd play wiffleball, you could hit, you could catch, we'd play, running bases, when we had a third, if dad came back there,

Michelle Obama: Well I was like your little, play dummy,

Craig Robinson: Yes!

Michelle Obama: Because, and I talk about this, because that was, the part of the beauty of our relationship, even though I could be a little brat, you always included me. And dad always expected me, to be able to be your equal in sports, so you never babied me, you know, like, you, you can hit the ball, you can catch, you can run, you can throw, and you guys, you, you and dad never excluded me from learning how to box, learning how to do everything that the boys were doing. And I really reveled in the fact that I could keep up with my big brother. Yes.

00:14:05 Craig Robinson: Aw, well that's good, but, it was selfish, 'cause I knew once you got good you could come up with us to the park and be on our team.

Michelle Obama: [laughs]

00:14:16 Michelle Obama: But our neighborhood community, was something that I enjoyed, riding our bikes, you know, learning how to ride your bike, for the first time, on the sidewalk, and then you'd graduate to being able to cross over to the other side, that was a big step, it's like, OK I'm on this side of the street, and now mom has given me permission to go to the corner, and ride my bike across to the other side of the street and ride up and down that. And then you could graduate to riding in the street. Up and down the street.

Craig Robinson: Just, up and down the street. The big step was going around the block. Whaaaaah!

Michelle Obama: Wooooaaaah! That's just like,

Craig Robinson: Do you remember the first time, we rode around the corner together, around the block?

Michelle Obama: Absolutely, yes. Tell the story. I wanna hear your version of the story.

Craig Robinson: That was, oh, it was, first of all, I was so proud that mom let me have you with no supervision off the block.

00:15:11 Michelle Obama: She worked that up to be like you were taking me to the moon!

Craig Robinson: I, you would've thought I was taking you in the car somewhere. I almost crashed, cause I was too busy turning around, looking at you to make sure you were right behind me! I was like you OK?! I'm OK! you OK?! I'm OK! You know, thinking about that, that was a big milestone for mom, letting your kids be independent, and you know, I, I think, things that mom and dad let us do that way, sorta helped our development.

Michelle Obama: You have to teach kids how to be independent, which means that at some point you've got to trust them that they can make decisions on their own, which, now that we're parents, you kinda think, how hard that is, to let your kids, go. You know. To let a five year old, and a, you were seven?

Craig Robinson: Seven.

Michelle Obama: It showed that she trusted you. You know, which, meant that I could trust my big brother, right.

Craig Robinson: Yeah, isn't that something.

00:16:10 Craig Robinson: You know, I don't know if you know this, but, at Bryn Mawr, where we went, both went to grammar school, in sixth grade, was when they started teaching sex education, and you know how mom and dad were about telling us the truth about everything, right, and I was very inquisitive, so, the, the test that the teacher gave us, was just a group of words. And we had to identify if the, if the words were male, female, or both. Well, I got all but one word right. Now, part of it was because I could, take tests the right way, cause I knew, if I didn't have this piece of equipment, it probably was the women, and,

Michelle Obama: Mm hmm, you're probably right.

Craig Robinson: The one I got wrong, menstruation.

Michelle Obama: [laughs] uh huh.

00:17:04 Craig Robinson: Hadn't heard the word, ever, because I'm older than you, and you hadn't gotten there yet, and mom never talked about it. So I put that under, Men. Because it had menstruation.

Michelle Obama: Men-struation. [laughs]

Craig Robinson: That that wasn't a problem. The problem was I only got one wrong, so mom got a call from the school, saying, we have something we'd like to talk to you about. We had a sex ed test, and your son got too many right.

Michelle Obama: That's crazy.

Craig Robinson: Isn't that crazy.

Michelle Obama: Yeah.

Craig Robinson: And she, went up to school, and talked to,

Michelle Obama: So what were they, were they accusing you of cheating, were they accusing you of being, being a pervert, what?

Craig Robinson: No, no, they, I don't know what they were accusing me of,

Michelle Obama: I mean, what was, what was the problem?

Craig Robinson: I think the problem was, they were worried I was too far ahead, to be in the class with all these kids who didn't know the,

Michelle Obama: For sex ed?

Craig Robinson: For sex ed.

Michelle Obama: Where were they gonna put you, in an advanced sex ed class?

Craig Robinson: I don't know, yeah, I don't know,

00:18:00 Michelle Obama: Were they gonna send you to the playboy mansion? I don't, I mean, what, uh, it's like sometimes the logic, of grown people, as they deal with children. Right.

Craig Robinson: And it's, it is a real testament to mom's parenting, because she didn't go crazy, she want up and talk to the teachers, and, said, did it ever dawn on you, that, when kids ask you questions you just tell them the right answers?

Michelle Obama: Mmm hmm.

00:18:33 Michelle Obama: I think for me, having a voice, a lot of it happened because I always knew I had parents that would back me up. They would get us, if we did something wrong, they would, they weren't these kind of, our kids can never do no wrong, but when we were right, you know, when it was fair, when we had truth on our side, they were right there with us, so it made it easy to go to, adults who were in charge of us, and just ask simple questions like this isn't fair. I don't know why you, you're accusing me of that, you know, and a lot of kids don't have that. We were we were fortunate to have that in our parents.

Craig Robinson: Absolutely.

00:19:16 Craig Robinson: Another fond memory of dad, was the time I asked him, I said hey dad, are we rich? And he didn't rush to an answer, like no, we're not rich. He said to me, Why, what do you think? Do you think we're rich? And I said, and this was typical Robinson parenting, right. Ask you the question that you just asked them while they were thinking about how they were gonna answer it. And I said, well, we get to eat out every now and then, we go to a dr- the drive in, which we, you know,

Michelle Obama: [laughs] That was a big deal,



00:19:53 Craig Robinson: That was a big deal, going to the drive in, and we have our own car, a lot of our friends didn't have cars, you know, we live in a nice place, I was like, by golly, we must be rich. And he said, well, you know, if you think we're rich. I'm gonna show you. The next time I get paid, I'll show you how our budget works. So, Friday he gets paid, he gets paid all of his check in cash. And he was like, hey, Kat, come in here, cause he used to call me Kat, and I'd go in their bedroom, and, on the bed, he's laid out, what, was probably, you know, 400 dollars, but it looked like it was like, 2000 dollars. Sittin' on the bed. And, he said, well, here's what I get paid. And I was like, Oh my god! We ARE rich!

00:20:46 Michelle Obama: [laughs]

Craig Robinson: And he was like wait, whoa, wait a minute, hang on, he was like, where do we live? I was like we live here, and he was like, well we have to pay rent here, and I was like oh, yeah, that makes sense, so how much is that? And he takes a few twenties off, and he puts that aside, so that goes over there, and I was like man, we, so we, we are rich. And he was like, whoa, whoa, that car out there, that deuce and a quarter, that costs so we have to pay for that every month, that's \$100 a month, so he takes another hundred dollars off, and he proceeds to do this with all the bills, and we get down, to where he's got like, \$50, and I'm still thinking, \$50! That's a lot of money. And he was like well wait, wait, we gotta buy groceries. And we have to buy gas for the car, and, you guys like eating out every now and then, so he got down, um, to where there was \$20 left. 00:21:42 For the week. And then he said he had to give us a little allowance. And it basically got down to where there was \$10 left. Now I left out a very important part, because here's where I get my, sort of fiscal responsibility. Before he did anything, he took out \$20 and paid himself and said, that goes into a savings account. And I think that's the kind of, lesson that could've been learned in a bunch of different ways, but he had a way of making that one, I mean that's, I remember that like it happened two weeks ago.

Michelle Obama: Mm Hmm.

00:22:32 Anna Holmes: This conversation with the former First Lady, Michelle Obama, continues after the break.

00:22:48 BREAK 00:23:18

00:23:22 Michelle Obama: Well, everybody knows I love my big brother, and you were one of my favorite people in the whole wide world, you were my first hero, but, it's not like you're not a pain in the butt sometimes. For example, going to college with your big brother, who is a star athlete, entering Princeton and trying to, you know, create my own space, and having this big, looming shadow, of a brother over me, that was kinda, a pain. [laughs]

Craig Robinson: Yeah, it's tough, it was tough. You, you're really paying me back now, because now I can't walk down the street without people, like, are you Michelle's brother? Can I take a picture? [laughs]

Michelle Obama: It's like, I love it. I love it. It's like payback. payback.

00:24:09 Craig Robinson: But what about you? Now, you were an athlete, who didn't play organized sports. That's how I, always described you, because I've, I've seen you run as fast, as boys, and play softball with the boys, but you chose, not to play organized sports. In high school.

Michelle Obama: Mm hmm, some of it, was, as the younger one, I was trying to contrast myself against you. And because you were the sport kid, even though I liked sports, it was almost like people assumed, you know, you must play basketball. You know, so, little stubborn me, was still like, Oh, you, you assume I should play basketball? Well I'm gonna go over here, and I'm gonna learn how to dance. And I'm gonna do ballet, and I'm gonna do, all these things, because basketball is what my brother does, don't define me by what he does, I do something else. And I will do it, just to spite you. Don't make me,

00:25:03 Craig Robinson: Now that's the Meesh I know! that's the Meesh I know! Everybody, you heard that? You heard it here first.

00:25:09 Michelle Obama: It also makes me think, when we talk about sports, and all that, I think about, how, important sports and athletics, and movement, has been to, our family. Um. How much our dad's disability played a role in how, we value sports, and how we value movement, and I was just wondering, if you thought about that too.

Craig Robinson: You know, I, it, it took me a while to come to grips with the fact that dad had, had MS, as a disability. Um. Multiple sclerosis, and, I didn't really come to, the realization that he was disabled, until we'd go somewhere, and people would say hey what's wrong with your dad's leg? and I'd be like, oh, yeah, I, he's got a bad back, he walks with a limp, he's had it all the time, but it doesn't affect, what he has to do, he gets up and does everything. So, most of my childhood, I blocked that out. I blocked out the fact that he had a disability until it started to get progressively worse.

00:26:15 Craig Robinson: And he started having to use the crutches and get around, and then when we would go places, it was better, if we had a wheelchair, and, that kind of thing, and then we started to really dig into what was wrong with him. I always think about, you know, how much we miss dad, and, the way I handle that, is I have this sort of fuzzy idea of what happened when he died. And you did such a, an eloquent job in, in your book, Becoming, talking about that whole process, and it made me, helped me relive a lot of the stuff. And people ask me all the time, they say, you know, you and your sister, seem really close, and I'm like of course, we're really close, and they ask us if we, ever fight, and, outside of you being a little kid, not wanting me to play in your space, we never, ever fight, or argue. And, the last time we did was when dad died.

00:27:18 Michelle Obama: We argued over what kind of casket to get dad. And I was like, my emotions said, get him the most expensive thing, because that shows our love, and it can't be cheap, and, you were like, he's dead. And, dad wouldn't want us to spend a bunch of money on a box, and, we got into it.

Craig Robinson: We did.

Michelle Obama: But I don't remember it. You remember.

00:27:42 Craig Robinson: I, to me what I remember was really, the aftermath of it. Because I know we argued about the coffin, but the best part about the fight was, that, we tried to have a real fight, and we didn't know how. We didn't know how to fight, cause we never got into any fights, and so, mom, just

starts laughin', is like, do you all hear yourselves? You all hear yourselves? Frasier would be here crackin' up. And then we started, we were like laughin' and cryin' at the same time, that's how I remember that, and my question to you, is, what kind of went through your mind, looking back now, on, dad's death, and, how do you see that having, played out in our lives? Him dying so early.

00:28:33 Michelle Obama: Dad was always the glue for the whole family. Not just us, but for mom's side of the family, as well as his side of the family. He was, the, the patriarch, you know. People came to dad, because dad couldn't come to everybody, so that made our house, a hub, in so many ways. And I think when we lost him, it threw us for a second. It's like, OK, here's our, here's our core, our core was missing. And so, we had to kind of rebound. And, remember, all that he taught us. And understand that family is key, we won't have dad as our excuse. To, keep things going, so we've got to be pretty consistent about setting up rituals, and routines, and, as a result, we were always close, but I felt like after dad's death, we were closer, you know,

00:29:35 Craig Robinson: Oh yeah.

00:29:39 Craig Robinson: Well I got, I, I, I, I'm trying to remember the, when I really started being protective of, who you, because, you were such a mature, youngster, that, I was never worried about somebody, being with you who, I had to worry about. I knew you could take care of yourself. But I remember once you got to college, that was when I was like, anybody, does anything untoward, you gonna have to deal with me.

Michelle Obama: Yeah which was not, that helpful, you know,

Craig Robinson: Yeah it just ruined your whole dating, college,

Michelle Obama: I mean I don't know what it did, who knows the amount of play I could've gotten.

00:30:22 Craig Robinson: There may have been one or two guys you dated that I absolutely did not like. But for the most part, your decisions on who to date, were solid, you know, just being able to, judge people, and develop your own relationships, and be able to navigate that, at a young age, and you were usually a pretty short term dating, eh, lemme date this guy for a month, nah, and then lo and behold you meet, uh, Barack Obama. So after a while, you were like finally gonna let us meet him. You drove up in your nice black Saab, and you were driving of course, and he gets out of the passenger side, and I remember the first thing mom said, Oooh he's tall, he's kinda good lookin'.

Michelle Obama: What you thought of him, was important to me,

Craig Robinson: Right,

00:31:15 Michelle Obama: So, I did ask you, in the, the way that we learned, that you could check out the character of another dude, was to, take him on the court, and play some basketball.

00:31:27 Craig Robinson: Yeah. And I'm like whoa, wait a minute, wait a minute, these are professionals I play with, we can't just be bringing some guy there, it'll make him look bad, so I was like, ugh, lemme figure how to do this out. So we have this pickup game, and, when you play pickup basketball, a lot is based on integrity. Because you have to call your own fouls, there are no referees. And there's always that guy who, acts like he's a good dude, until, he has to make his own calls, and he's callin' fouls all the time,

well Barack wasn't that guy, and that was good to see, that was the first thing. The second thing, is, he could actually play a little bit. He wasn't lying about that he played, about how good he was,

Michelle Obama: About how good he was,

Craig Robinson: He was just like, I play a little bit, and, it spoke a lot to his authenticity, as far as I was concerned.

00:32:22 Michelle Obama: That was kind of a big star, in his column, that said, OK we can keep going forward. So thank you for that, thank you for that.

Craig Robinson: Yeah, yeah, my pleasure, I'm glad it worked out.

00:32:34 Michelle Obama: Because of dad's death, you were the person that I would go to, so, in in that way, I depend on you, more. For all the things that dad would do, for that double check. For that gut check, for that, I'm feeling nervous, just like when Barack was running, for office, you know, I mean, it's like, talking to you about my fears about it, you know, having you assure me that this is gonna be OK, like, you were the one that said, you know, you married a guy who has this kind of ambition, and this, in his heart, so, what are you gonna do. You might, I don't know if you remember what you said,

00:33:15 Craig Robinson: Oh I remember it, I remember, because, you were in one of your moods, where you were like, nah, I want my husband to be like Frasier Robinson. And, first of all, that's not fair to anybody. That dude, he was a special guy, and there was no way you were gonna put that pressure on any guy, it wouldn't ever work, you'd never be married, but second of all, was what I said about, I was like listen, you're trying to penalize, because, let's face it, none of us thought, that Barack could do what he was talking about doing. You know, I mean I remember,

Michelle Obama: Well I don't know that he thought, he

00:33:51 Craig Robinson: No, well, I will tell you, he may not have told you this, but when we first met, and he came over for the first Thanksgiving, I figured I'm gonna do the brother in law thing and take him to the side, hey man, dad's not here, what do you think you're gonna be doing for your future, and he was like, well, I would love to try this political thing, and I was like oh, really, like, so like like what do you want to run for Mayor, or for Alderman, and he's like you know, eh, may, more, a little bigger than that, so, maybe I'd run for Congress, or, run for the Senate. Or maybe even run for President. And I was like, shhhh shhh man, you don't want to say that too loud around here, folks'll think you crazy!

Michelle Obama: [laughs]

00:34:33 Craig Robinson: And lo and behold, he makes it.

00:34:42 Craig Robinson: Do you remember when you first became, First Lady? I mean actually the first time when we were having dinner, waiting for the results to come in?

Michelle Obama: Yeah, at the, at the Hyatt, or wherever we were.

Craig Robinson: And we had this dinner, we were gonna have, that was gonna be normal, no TV's, nobody had their phones on the table, and all the kids were there, and we're sittin' there trying to talk about things, as if we were, you know, had just played, had had the kids had a soccer match, and we were over on a Saturday afternoon, like we would normally do. And all of a sudden, [phone buzz] You hear Barack's phone buzz, [buzzes] then you hear your phone buzz, then you hear my phone buzz, but Barack looks at his phone, and he, he takes a look at it, holds it up, looks at it, straight on, parallel, sets it back down. And he says, Well it looks like we're gonna win. And you were like, Oh. And no one said anything. For what felt like, fifteen minutes. But it probably was just, you know, forty seconds. And, mom said, Well I guess we'd better get ready. [laughs]

00:35:56 Michelle Obama: [laughs]

Craig Robinson: And all I could think of, was oh my gosh, Barack's gonna be President and you're gonna be the First Lady.

00:36:11 Craig Robinson: And then let's jump ahead, to see you guys on that stage, well first of all, when you guys went out on stage before we did, just to,

Michelle Obama: At Grant Park, lit up,

Craig Robinson: At Grant Park, lit up, filled with people, a whole row of media,

Michelle Obama: The bulletproof glass, the first time,

Craig Robinson: With the bulletproof glass, and, everything, just came hittin', it was like, this has to be a television show, and then you guys, go out there, and it's like, you're, the Beatles.

00:36:36 [clip: Barack Obama: hello Chicago, <cheers> If there is anyone out there, who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders, if the dream of our founders is alive in our time. Who still questions, the power of our democracy. Tonight is your answer. <cheers>] 00:37:08

00:37:09 Michelle Obama: And it was eerie, because it was a warm, November night, which was unusual, to be that warm in November.

Craig Robinson: Yeah, it was, it was unusual, it was unusual, ... yeah

Michelle Obama: And it felt so, eerily silent. You know, I mean people were excited, it was, it felt palpable, but it also felt, like a calm, in a way, that, because the whole city was shut down, in order for this thing to take place, in Grant Park, so all the people had to get to the park on public transportation, or on buses,

Craig Robinson: Or walk, yeah,

Michelle Obama: Or walk, and those tens of thousands of people all parked somewhere in the city and walked to that park that night.

00:37:46 Craig Robinson: And, and what I remember, distinctly, was there was a feeling of, both, relief, and hope. And what people ask me all the time, once you got there, was, hey how do you deal with the

fact that people say all these horrible things about your sister, and your brother in law, and, you know they don't understand, how we view, life, right, and I always would tell them I was like, listen. We grew up with Frasier and Marian Robinson. First of all, you do not really care what people who don't know you think about you. That if you're doing what you love to do, and you're doing the best job that you can do, it doesn't matter what those people say, and I just used that when I would listen to people talk about you, on Fox, or on CNN, or they'd, you know, they'd write mean stories and people would try and get me to be upset about it, and I was like listen, these two are doing what they love to do. And they're trying to do the best for the most people. And that makes me proud.

00:39:00 Craig Robinson: I think that's what made you a wonderful First Lady. And just, watching you go from, the sort of not for profit, into the White House, was, um, spectacular.

00:39:17 Michelle Obama: I never questioned that I would have the support of my brother, and my mom, although, when we, when Barack was elected, and it was time to move, to the White House, one of the things that I wanted, was to have mom come, and live with me, but when I asked mom, would you come move to the White House? She was like, no, you don't, I don't need to be in the White House, I'm fine here, and you, cause mom had been helping me with the kids all through the campaign, and even before that, just balancing things, but, who was the one who was able to convince mom to move to the White House?

Craig Robinson: I, I was able to convince mom to move to the White House, but,

Michelle Obama: Why? Because,

Craig Robinson: Because I'm her favorite, that's why. I'm the favorite, but

00:40:00 Michelle Obama: Yes, let the record show. Yes, yes, let's just take a moment to pause, America. Yes, Michelle Obama, is the least favorite child,

Craig Robinson: [laughs]

Michelle Obama: That Marian Robinson, loves her son, and I could be First Lady, I could be the queen of England, and she's still gonna be like, where's Craig? When's Craig comin'? [laughs] So thankfully, you convinced her, that her poor daughter,

Craig Robinson: Yes, and I think mom kinda understood when I presented it to her, that, you, guys are gonna be so busy, she's not gonna be intruding at all, the, deciding factor was the girls really needed some stability while you all were trying to figure out what this new part of life was gonna be.

00:40:50 Michelle Obama: And trying to create some continuity in their lives, with this big transition, was so important, and we all knew that, so, it wasn't just, mom moving, but, everybody, in our family, our friends, made it a point, to be there for us, so it was almost like every major thing we did in the White House, we invited our friends and family, and created new traditions, everybody came to the White House with us, which had to have been a huge sacrifice on you all's part.

Craig Robinson: Yeah, but we all felt like we were part of the team, of, hey let's help, you guys help this country, you know, and by helping you guys, meant helping the family.

00:41:40 Craig Robinson: Of all the things that people want to talk about with you guys in the White House, right, Air Force One, the White House itself, Camp David, the most questions I get are about secret service.

Michelle Obama: Mm hmm, yeah.

Craig Robinson: So, people think that that's this glamorous thing that you have, that they don't realize is so, intrusive, and out of the ordinary. So how do you, how do you deal with that.

00:42:09 Michelle Obama: Well first of all, to the credit of the secret service, they have some of the most professional people there. Um, trained, they care about what they do, they know what they're doin', you know, so first of all, we have to go in thinking, this is their job too, right. Because if something happens to me, or to the girls, there's a congressional hearing. Somebody could lose a job, and I would have to explain that to the girls, it's like, you know, I would joke, and it's like, you know what the secret service are here to protect the Commander in Chief of the United States of America, we are ancillary to that. You know, we are protected because if something happens to us, it could jeopardize the security of the nation, not because they care about you, Malia. [laughs] It's like they don't want to follow around an eight year old, either. You know, think about how not fun it is for them to be sittin', in a car while you're at a play date, but with that said, you know, Malia and Sasha each had a pretty extensive detail, you know, each of them had a armored car that they were in, with two drivers and a lead car, with more men, with guns, and some women, and a follow car. Imagine a second grader, that's how Sasha went to school every day. That's how Malia went to school every day. 00:43:21 This was all great when the kids were little, right, because, their agents were like their best friends, it was like uncles, and so you had agents that, they were out at recess, with the rest of the kids, pushing, the kids on the swings, and they were in classrooms, and kids would bring the agents cookies, and make sure, so the whole school kind of started to know, you know that Malia and Sasha had a detail. We also were lucky that the girls went to the school with the Biden grandkids, um, as well and are good friends, so, Malia and Sasha weren't the only kids in their school with a detail, so that kinda helped. Like when Barack was coaching the vipers, Sasha's fourth grade uh, rec basketball league...

00:44:11 Michelle Obama: These fourth grade girls, from their school, were on a parent-led, team, and, Maize Biden was also on the team, so, imagine on any given Sunday, when the girls were playing, you know, you have, me in the gym, the President of the United States, the Vice President, the second lady, Jill there, and everybody's detail is in this little, YMCA gym,

Craig Robinson: Packed house.

Michelle Obama: Packed house. Half of 'em, because we brought like a hundred people, that are guarding us. And you've got agents linin' up on the wall trying not to cheer, and Joe's yellin' at Maize, and screamin' score, score! It, it was a scene, it was kind of a spectacle. The, the leaders of the most powerful nation were in a gym, watching fourth grade girls, go up and down,

Craig Robinson: In bad basketball.

Michelle Obama: In bad basketball.



00:45:15 Craig Robinson: What I want to know is, at what point did you say, OK, although I'm the First Lady, I'm gonna treat these girls and their activities, like I'm a regular mom.

Michelle Obama: Yeah, I mean that just came with it, it was like, if they're gonna be normal, we have to be normal parents. We made sure they had responsibilities, and so, we had to do things like, institute rules that the housekeepers couldn't clean the girls' rooms, and that they had to make up their own beds, and have a set of chores, at least, you know, we grew up, you know, we, each of us, we had our own set of responsibilities,

Craig Robinson: Right, right, right,

Michelle Obama: I don't know if, I remember what you did, but I know I had to clean the bathroom, we each had to do the dishes, we had our shared nights of doing the dishes. What was your -- what what did you do?

00:46:09 Craig Robinson: I had Monday Wednesday Friday, you had Tuesday Thursday Saturday, and mom did 'em on Sunday. I also had yard duty, cut the grass, rake the leaves, I also, and, and what are you like, I don't know what your duties were,

Michelle Obama: Well, I, they weren't my duties, I thought they were just,

Craig Robinson: Did you take the garbage out? I took the garbage out,

Michelle Obama: I'm sure I took the garbage out at some point,

Craig Robinson: Yeah, after I left, but I, spent my years taking the garbage out.

00:46:32 Craig Robinson: Even though, that times have changed, we both have tried to give our kids these responsibilities, that, sorta were, given to us, and, it, somehow we feel like it's made us better people, so I think that's one of those things that, for you to be able to do that even at the White House, is, is really admirable, and I'm, I'm sure mom, I'm sure mom, now as a grandparent, was like, don't make those girls clean their rooms,

Michelle Obama: You know, and you know that's how mom was, you know, as a grandmother, she showed up totally different. You know,

Craig Robinson: She sure did, she sure did,

00:47:06 Michelle Obama: Cause she spoils our kids, it's like, she acts like, you know, why do they have chores? It's like, because you taught us, to be, where, who are you, lady?

00:47:24 Michelle Obama: We grew up with elders in our midst, I mean, and we watched people age, you know, when our Aunt Robbie got, she developed cancer, she had to be taken care of, remember when Terry, her husband got older, he had dementia, and would, you know, there was always the, uh oh, Terry got out. You know,

Craig Robinson: Yeah, one of the memories that's most vivid in my mind, is, dad asking me, now remember, dad can barely get himself around, and he asked me to come down, and help him give Terry a



bath, because he really couldn't give him a bath and lift him up, and to see dad bathing this man, and this man being so thankful, you know, I get, I'm, I get choked up just thinkin' about it,

00:48:12 Michelle Obama: And he was, Terry, uncle terry was a dignified man, this was the,

Craig Robinson: Dignified, yes.

Michelle Obama: This was the man who wore three piece suits and a fedora, he was a Pullman porter, he was an elegant man, but he got old. And he couldn't care for himself, and it was just a given that, our parents, but we also saw the toll, that that can take, because there was a period of time, when Robbie was really sick, and before she got care, that mom was, she was working, she was taking care of us, but at night, she would have to bathe her, and make sure she got fed, and I remember, how tired mom was, before she decided you know what I can't do all of this by myself, but I think because of mom's experience with Robbie, um, she is very determined to be independent,

00:49:04 Craig Robinson: At some point she's gon' be livin' with one of us,

Michelle Obama: One of us, you know,

Craig Robinson: And it's just a matter of who it's gon' be,

Michelle Obama: And I'm the mean one, so,

Craig Robinson: So it'll probably be, us but that's quite alright,

Michelle Obama: No no I'm mean in terms of I'm the one that's gonna make the call, cause you won't, mom will be like fallin' in the bathroom, and you're like well she wants to live on her own. She will definitely live with one of us. But everybody loves mom, so you know, it's more a fight over who, gets to have her, [laughs]

00:49:35 Craig Robinson: Yeah.

00:49:43 Michelle Obama: And the other thing, that, I kinda, take away from our childhood, and I think one of the reasons that we get along so well, the fact that, I never felt like I was competing with you. And I think that mom and dad did a good job of, recognizing us as individuals. And so I've tried to do that with Malia and Sasha, is like, give them a moment, you know, to show me who they are. Right, because you know, like I said earlier, kids come here with a certain temperament, I was always feisty, I was always an internal perfectionist, Sasha's temperament is different from Malia's, that's different from Leslie, your daughter, that's different from Avery, and it's like you've got to give them space, and parent the kid you have, not the kid you want. And mom I, and dad were good about that. So I always felt secure in who I was, and fine with who you were. You know, your success was my success. I wasn't competing with you. So I'm trying my best to make sure that Malia and Sasha feel like they're on the same team, even though they're two girls, and, all that, their success is each other's success, that's all you have. That sibling relationship, is special.

00:51:10 Michelle Obama: What dad showed us, is that in order to build, meaningful relationships with people, is that you have to show up for them. Relationships, whether it's sibling, or parent-child, or friend, relationships, they don't happen through osmosis, they happen because, they, they make a decision to be

very deliberate about connecting with people. And, the connection can look like a bunch of different things, right, it can be a phone call, it can be a text, it can be a whole dinner, or set of conversations, what, what I saw in our father, was that, nothing replaces getting on the phone and calling somebody, showing up for somebody. I know that, if I call you, and I need you, you will call me back. [laughs] Right away. You may call back and go, you OK? But you show up, and, I want to show up for you, so that's what I would tell people, it's like we learned that you gotta show up for people.

00:52:12 Craig Robinson: That's, that's a really good one, you have to show up is absolutely right.

Michelle Obama: I can always, trust who you are. And I don't know that everybody can say that about their siblings, you know. Um, that, I know, I know who you are, through and through, I mean, that's, that's the wish that I have for all of our kids. Is that, all of our nieces and nephews, our kids, that they show up in the world. I don't care, who, who they are, what their titles are, I don't care how much money they make, I don't care whether they're famous or not, I want them to show up, with empathy, with, consistency, with honesty, you know, with decency, and, if we, if we can pass on to them, those traits that our parents passed on to us, I will tap out, and view us as successful old people. [laughs] When the time comes.

00:53:14 Michelle Obama: Well I wanna thank you, my big brother, Craig, for uh taking time to be on my podcast! This has been an enlightening conversation, full of fun, and laughter, and humor,

Craig Robinson: But this was really, enjoyable.

Michelle Obama: Love you,

Craig Robinson: Love you.

00:53:37 Michelle Obama: Well, as you can see, I am so grateful for the relationship that I have with my brother. To be able to trust him, to be able to count on him, to know that he's always gonna show up for me, that's a gift that, I cannot replace. And so if you have a sibling in your life, whether that's by blood or by choice, I hope that you'll take some time to dig into that relationship with them too. I bet it will be as meaningful for you as it was for us.

Thanks so much for listening everybody, and I will talk to you again soon.

00:54:18 Anna Holmes: The Michelle Obama Podcast is a Spotify Original, presented and produced by Higher Ground Audio in collaboration with Dustlight Productions.

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The song you heard at the beginning of this show is “Spaceships” by Tank and the Bangas.

Thanks for listening to The Michelle Obama Podcast. 00:55:46

00:55:48 BREAK 00:56:08