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## HTLA Residential Day 1: Self-Limiting Beliefs (Obamas)

### Selection of quotes from *Becoming* by Michelle Obama

Facilitator free to choose which one(s) to use to exemplify self-doubt/self-limiting beliefs/imposter syndrome.

"My worries going to high school, if they were to be catalogued, could be filed under one general heading: Am I good enough?"

"Not (good) enough. Not (good) enough. It was a doubt about where I came from and what I'd believed about myself until now. It was like a malignant cell that threatened to divide and divide again unless I could find some way to stop it." p55/56

High school got off to a good start and Michelle Obama notes: "with each little accomplishment, with every high school screwup I managed to avoid, my doubts slowly took leave." p58

But they returned as she entered the senior end of high school. Michelle Obama was in the top 10% of the year group and had an appointment with a school/college counsellor where she expressed an interest in applying to Princeton University.

"It's possible that during our short meeting the college counsellor said things to me that might have been positive and helpful, but I recall none of it. Because, rightly or wrongly, I got stuck on one single sentence the woman uttered."

"'I'm not sure', she said, giving me a perfunctory, patronizing smile, 'that you're Princeton material.'"

She goes on: "Failure is a feeling long before it's an actual result. And, for me, it felt that's exactly what she was planting – a suggestion of failure." p66

Michelle Obama did, of course, go to Princeton.

The doubts returned just before the announcement of Barack Obama's candidacy for Presidency. "I still held on to the worries I'd had since childhood. What if we are not good enough?" p230

And they flooded back when she became First Lady.

"For me it revived an old internal call-and-response one that tracked all the way back to high school... and found myself gripped by doubt. Confidence, I'd learned then, sometimes needs to be called from within. I've repeated the same words to myself many times now, through many climbs.

'Am I good enough? Yes, I am. Am I good enough? Yes, I am.'" p284



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## HTLA Residential Day 1: Barack Obama/Edith Childs

During his 2007-8 campaign to be the Democratic Presidential candidate, Barack Obama undertook a demanding inter-state tour to raise his profile. Halfway through he switched from large stadia to smaller venues where he had more opportunity to interact with people and hear their stories.

Farmers explained the pressures that led them to surrender their independence to large agribusiness concerns. Laid-off workers talked about the myriad ways that job-training schemes had let them down. Military spouses talked about the struggle to maintain the appearance of a normal life while partners were on dangerous missions...

These stories led to Obama's speeches **being less abstract, less a matter of the head, more a matter of the heart** as he reflected their stories back to them.

But he knew that he needed every single vote he could garner and, when a state legislator said she would give him her endorsement if he agreed to visit her community of Greenwood, South Carolina, Obama readily agreed – without any idea where he might be going.

Greenwood, South Carolina proved to be well off the beaten track. The visit was ill-timed at the end of 10 days of day and evening rallies, negative stories in the press, poor poll ratings, exhaustion and low mood. To compound matters, Greenwood involved a long drive in torrential rain. When he got there, the turnout was way below what he'd hoped for.

As he stood waiting to be introduced, he was startled to hear a voice shout out: "Fired up!" Without missing a beat, the rest of the room responded with a collective shout: "Fired up!"

The same voice then shouted: "Ready to go!" Back came the crowd: "Ready to go!"

Obama describes the source of the call-and-response as "a middle-aged black woman, dressed like she'd just come from church with a colourful dress, a big hat, and an ear-to-ear grin that included a shiny gold tooth."

This was Edith Childs, county councillor, private eye and the person who raised spirits at the start of community events, such as football matches, 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations and public meetings.

Obama couldn't help joining in, felt his spirits rise, felt 'Fired Up', felt 'Ready to go' and went on to have a successful, enjoyable meeting as well as securing the state legislator's vote.

**But he got more than that. He got the rallying call his campaign was missing.**

And so, "Fired Up! Ready to go!" became the finale of many of his 2008 speeches followed by a statement that is now a well-known quote:



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**“One voice can change a room.**

**And if one voice can change a room, then it can change a city.**

**And if it can change a city, it can change a state.**

**And if it can change a state, it can change a nation.**

**And if it can change a nation, it can change the world.**

**Your voice can change the world.”**

