

Does the FLOTUS Actually Have a Job?

☒ Summer of 2011. Gas prices are high. Unemployment is at record levels. Consumer confidence is low and the threat of inflation is just around the corner. While millions of regular folks are battling their own economic problems, cancelling vacation plans and unable to get away even for a weekend, it was comforting to learn that the First Lady, Michelle Obama, is able to take a vacation to Africa with her two daughters, her mother, and her niece and nephew, along her entourage. Oops, sorry, it's not a vacation but an "official visit" – in other words, we're footing the bill.

Her visit is intended "to improve relations between the U.S. and Africa and promote youth engagement, education, health and wellness." Well, first of all, who died, and left her boss? We didn't elect her. When did she become a diplomat?

Improvement of relations between countries? Isn't that the job of the State Department and the numerous ambassadors that are given cushy jobs for raising lots of money for the sitting President?

Mrs. Obama's trip is being touted as one aimed at inspiring African youth. Why is Mrs. Obama so concerned about Africa youth when we've got serious problems at home with our own young people? Why isn't she traveling around the United States this summer and talking to American children and encouraging them to stay in school. According to a 2009 report by the Alliance for Excellent Education, seven thousand students drop out of school every day in this country.

Maybe it's because it's more fun to visit Africa with your mother, daughters, niece and nephew or maybe it's because when the family sat around the kitchen table and voted on where to

go on vacation this year, no one wanted to travel to Baton Rouge, Fresno, Chattanooga, or any of the other cities on the list of the ten worst dropout rate cities in the U.S.?

To be non-partisan here, former First Lady, Laura Bush, also went to Africa on an "official visit" to raise AIDS awareness and prevention. Wasn't it enough for us to send hundreds of millions of dollars to Africa for HIV/AIDS? Can anyone provide me proof that one person who met Mrs. Bush actually stopped having unprotected sex? To be realistic here, I wonder if she had traveled around the U.S. instead, would it have made any difference in the 55,000 new reported cases every year, an increase of 10% from a decade ago. Maybe she just should've stayed home.

It seems that First Ladies have to have a pet project to occupy their time. Some First Ladies stayed closer to home. Jackie Kennedy spent time working on the restoration of the White House and Lady Bird Johnson was interested in the Civil Rights Act and making Washington D.C. more beautiful.

Pat Nixon visited 39 of our 50 states and held the record as the most-traveled First Lady, before Hillary Clinton, visiting about 80 countries. I must say her journeys are most impressive and, yes, it appears that her visits were inspiring and encouraging to those folks living in disaster-hit areas.

Betty Ford was an activist for the legalization of abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment and Rosalynn Carter traveled to Latin America and Thailand as an emissary for her husband. Nancy Reagan's main focus was her "Just Say No" drug awareness campaign and Barbara Bush's was literacy.

Hillary Clinton, of course, traveled the most extensively, not so much on behalf of her husband, but in an attempt to ready herself for her own bid for the White House.

It seems to me that a First Lady just can't be a First Lady. She has to "do" something. If it were me, having worked all

my life, I'd be very happy to kick back, relax, dress up every now and then and be thrilled that someone else is cooking my meals. But, hey, that's just me.

I'm tempted to raise the ire of feminists everywhere by saying that First Ladies should just stay in the kitchen where they belong, but, in Michelle's case, she'd continue with her other campaign of telling all of us what we should and shouldn't eat.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.