

# First Lady Bush sticks up for Michelle Obama

By Eric Mayes

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PHILADELPHIA (NNPA) — It's not all partisan mudslinging in the presidential race as first lady Laura Bush expressed her support for Michelle Obama, wife of the presumed Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama.

Michelle Obama has come under fire by Republicans for a statement she made in February at a campaign stop in Wisconsin. She told the audience there that for the first time in her adult life, she was really proud of the United States. Laura Bush said mistakes are common during the pressure of a campaign.

"I think she probably meant 'I'm more proud,' you know, is what she really meant. You have to be very careful in what you say. Everything you say is looked at and in many cases, misconstrued," Bush said in an interview on ABC's "Good Morning America."

Michelle Obama later clarified the remark, saying she had always been proud of her country. She spoke publicly this week on a television talk show.

Laura Bush also said that

she admired the "grit and strength" that Hillary Clinton demonstrated in the hard-fought campaign for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, but said she would want to see a Republican woman as president.

Bush flew to Slovenia last Sunday after making an unannounced trip to Afghanistan — her third as first lady — to rally international aid for the war-weary Afghans. U.S. President George W. Bush left Washington on Monday for Slovenia for his final U.S.-European Union summit. He and his wife are also traveling to Germany, Italy, France, England and Northern Ireland.

In her interview, Bush said she has been paying close attention to the campaign for the November election. Clinton suspended her bid for the Democratic nomination and robustly threw her support behind Obama over the weekend after a long nominating contest for the party.

"Of course I want the woman to be a Republican woman," Laura Bush said. "But I will say, I have watched the campaign and I admired Hillary's grit and strength. I know what it's like

to run those campaigns, and so I'll have to say I have a lot of admiration for her endurance."

**Obama jumps in polls**

Sen. Barack Obama has pulled ahead of Sen. John McCain in the polls after Sen. Hillary Clinton ceded the field to her rival, according to the Gallup poll daily tracker.

The two men had been running in a statistical tie for weeks before Clinton's exit pushed Obama into a six-point lead over McCain.

According to Gallup, Obama had 48 percent of voters behind him compared to McCain's 42 percent.

"(This) represent(s) Obama's strongest showing versus McCain to date in Gallup poll daily tracking of registered voters," wrote Jeff Jones in Gallup's analysis of the data. "For much of the time since Gallup began tracking general election preferences in mid-March, McCain and Obama have been in a statistical dead heat."

The poll went on to note that his lead would widen by three points if Clinton were added to the ticket as his vice-presidential candidate.

That did not mean all



## VIEW FROM ABOVE

Guest Michelle Obama (third from left), wife of presumptive Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama, appears on the daytime talk show "The View" in New York. From left to right are regular co-hosts Whoopi Goldberg, Joy Behar, Obama, Sherri Shepherd, Elisabeth Hasselbeck and Barbara Walters.

Democrats thought an Obama/Clinton ticket was a good idea.

"There is not an overwhelming consensus among Democrats that Obama choose Clinton as his Number two," wrote Jones. "In the latest Gallup... update 53 percent of Democrats say Obama should pick his former nomination rival for vice president, while 36 percent say he should choose someone else."

Obama and McCain have sharpened their attacks on one another in the few days since Clinton suspended her campaign.

As Obama's campaign announced the launch of a

two-week tour of the country with a focus on the economy, Obama said he would tax oil companies on windfall profits and drew a parallel between McCain and President Bush.

"If John McCain's policies were implemented, they would add \$5.7 trillion to the national debt over the next decade. That isn't fiscal conservatism, that's what George Bush has done over the last eight years," Obama said.

Obama also called for the establishment of a Foreclosure Prevention Fund to help homeowners struggling in the credit crisis.

"If the government can

bail out investment banks on Wall Street, we can extend a hand to folks who are struggling on Main Street," Obama said.

McCain's campaign, earlier in the day, blasted Obama's economic plan.

"During just three years in the U.S. Senate, Barack Obama has already voted 94 times for higher taxes," said a statement released by McCain's camp. "Barack Obama doesn't understand the American economy, and that's change we just can't afford." McCain is expected to lay out his economic plan Tuesday.

Eric Mayes writes for the Philadelphia Tribune.

## Russert

(Continued from Page 1)

vered among his peers as Tim, he was truly a giant among broadcast journalists."

Russert was in the studio recording voiceovers for Sunday's "Meet the Press" broadcast when he collapsed, according to NBC. He had recently returned from a family vacation in Italy, which doubled as a celebration for the graduation of his son, Luke, from Boston College.

His death sent shock waves through a community that has come to love him for his polite style, and yet depend on him for his hard-hitting questions to whoever is seated before him on the set, including civil rights leaders. At NNPA deadline, his successor had not been named.

"The country has lost one of the best and fairest journalists to ever sit in a TV studio. I saw him recently and he told me fondly that people still approached him and called him 'Brother Russert,' which was a title I came up

with on an appearance of 'Meet the Press' several years ago," said activist Al Sharpton, president of the National Action Network. "I have done his show several times and he was tough but fair and was one of the few journalists that one actually prepared to face because you knew he was the best prepared talk show host of his time. All the while he never stopped being a gentleman."

Even Black politicians respected Russert as they recall him for his impact on national and international public affairs. The 60-year-old program, which Russert had hosted since 1991, was described by NBC as a "proving ground" for many national politicians.

"Undoubtedly, Mr. Russert has left an indelible mark on the world," Congressional Black Caucus Chair Carolyn C. Kilpatrick (D-Mich.), said. "His work reflects journalism at its finest. Mr. Russert was celebrated for his masterful as-

tuteness to detail and flawless sense of integrity. From his tenure in Capitol Hill press galleries to political gatekeeper at NBC, Tim Russert skillfully probed for news angles that would inform and educate consumers of news, while challenging his colleagues to regard their sacred profession with the utmost respect and accuracy."

Both Democratic and Republican presidential nominees Sens. Barack Obama and John McCain joined the praises for Russert, who was also a senior vice president of NBC and Othe Washington Bureau Chief.

Obama said he met Russert when he first spoke at the Democratic National Convention in 2004.

"He's somebody who, over time, I came to consider not only a journalist but a friend. There wasn't a better interviewer in TV, not a more thoughtful analyst of our politics, and he was also one of the finest men I knew,"

Obama said.

McCain described Russert as a journalist who asked "the tough questions the right way and was the best in the business at keeping his interview subjects honest."

President Bush, chimed in, describing Russert as "an institution in both news and politics for more than two decades... He was always well-informed and thorough in his interviews. And he was as gregarious off the set as he was prepared on it."

Russert had been widely rewarded for his professional influence. In 2008, *Time Magazine* named him one of the 100 most influential people in the world. He won an Emmy in 2005 for his part in the coverage of the funeral of President Ronald Reagan. He was also a recipient of the Radio and Television Correspondents' highest honor, the Joan S. Barone Award, and the Annenberg Center's Walter Cronkite Award. He had 48 honorary doctorates

and won numerous other top journalist awards for excellence.

Yet, unlike many journalists, there was apparently nothing about his professional demeanor that was haughty or puffed up. Rather, he appeared to walk in his profession as a second nature.

Of himself, he told *Time* magazine last year that his interviewing style was a deliberate strategy and that his views were not important.

"Lawrence Spivak, who founded 'Meet the Press,' told me before he died that the job of the host is to learn as much as you can about your guest's positions and take the other side," Russert said in the *Time* article. "And to do that in a persistent and civil way. And that's what I try to do every Sunday."

Russert had also written two books — "Big Russ and Me," published in 2004 in honor of his father, and "Wisdom of Our Fathers" in 2006. Both were *New York Times*

best-sellers.

He is survived by his wife, Maureen Orth, a writer for *Vanity Fair* magazine, and their son, Luke.

The description of Russert's style is perhaps best summed up by noted author, John Milton Wesley, the godson of famous civil rights and political activist Fannie Lou Hamer and childhood friend of Emmett Till.

"He had that light or glow I came to recognize in the men in media I want to emulate," Wesley wrote in a statement. "Those of us who experienced that sinking feeling on Friday when we first learned of Tim's passing knew immediately a little bit of our luster went with him. We knew each time we saw him work he made us better... He loved his work. He loved his family. He loved his country. He loved his friends. He loved his competitors. We never got enough of him because we knew he was 'that good,' and somehow if he knew it, he never let on."