



YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN IN CHARGE
FOUNDATION, INC.

Junior Editor's Report

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Those Who Have Dared to Be Different

There have been many times in my life when I've answered discussion questions in class about historical figures and presidents who were "the first of their kind" in the title they held. I have answered many questions about who they were and what their impact was; but last week, my English teacher proposed a different question when discussing the possibility of having a woman be president for the first time in relation to what history has seen when observing women hold such positions: Why don't these figures immediately present or fight for their more radical viewpoints when finally granted the power to make the changes? This question immediately made me realize that these specific types of public figures have had the often-overlooked job of setting the precedent.



For the people who are first to represent a specific group, it is always about being the right person at the right time along with saying and doing the right thing at all times; and I am definitely not the first person to come to understand this harsh reality. A really good example of this is the story of Claudette Colvin who was a Black teen who refused to give up her seat nine months prior to Rosa Parks. But why wasn't she the face of the movement? Because she was a darker-skinned, pregnant teenager. With such traits, she wouldn't have been a "good" representation of Black people at that time.

The second person that came to mind was former First Lady Michelle Obama. When questioned about why she never wore traditional braids while serving as First Lady, she responded by saying that at the time, America was still getting adjusted to having a Black family in the White House and that the nation was not "ready." As the first Black First Lady, Michelle had to be an ideal representation at all times, and hairstyle was something she had to sacrifice. Her existence was radical enough.

Under this social expectation to be an example and perform for people looking for something to criticize, these representatives have had to suppress their true desires or go unrecognized. This is not necessarily an example to follow but more of a concept to understand when proceeding in life.