

[» Mobile Home](#) » [CLICK](#)

## Michelle's campaign fashion

By Karin Tanabe, Amie Parnes | 10/4/10 @ 4:25 AM EST

Michelle Obama's sartorial taste is well-established at this point: bright dresses with bold patterns, shifts in colors that would send most women running in terror. Pantsuits? Only rarely: She's left them to the likes of Hillary Clinton and Nancy Pelosi. But when she heads out to campaign for Democrats later this month, will Obama tone things down to leave room for her message to ring loud and clear? When you're practically a fashion icon, what's appropriate for the stump?

POLITICO spoke with six tastemakers to find out how Obama can hit the right fashion notes on the trail. Their advice? Don't get too conservative, dress to look approachable, and don't be afraid of showing off those arms.

Lucky magazine Editor-in-Chief Brandon Holley told POLITICO that Obama should continue her habit of wearing "young designers and affordable elegance."

"When she wears a J. Crew cardigan, it tells women across the country that she's approachable," Holley said.

Nor should she be afraid of re-wearing. Obama, Holley said, is a master at "shopping her own closet and not doing the Sarah Palin shopping spree." This also makes her more relatable to American women.

But need she ditch her signature dresses and go the more conservative route? For the Sept. 11 memorial in Shanksville, Pa., Obama chose a relatively staid cornflower-blue silk suit by Narciso Rodriguez.

"That's Hillary territory and not really how I see her," Holley said of the pantsuit. "[Obama] has a signature look, and, in that vein, she should stay with it. I don't like paper doll first ladies that look like they're just wearing whatever a stylist throws on them."

Washington-based stylist Lauren Rothman agrees with Holley's initial point: Obama's threads should appeal to her crowds on the trail.

"You want to be quiet with your clothing, but you want to be empowering," Rothman suggested, adding that FLOTUS has done just that: "She's revolutionized fashion for the masses."

So how can the first lady keep her signature look without her duds distracting from her message?

Glamour magazine contributor Tracey Lomrantz suggested that Obama try some new designers. "I'd love to see her embrace Tory Burch in general," said Lomrantz. "She's a gifted designer when it comes to the classic, all-American prepster-with-polish thing; that certainly describes Michelle's style to a T."

Lomrantz also suggested designers Bibhu Mohapatra, Marc Jacobs and Victoria Beckham. In fact, there's one dress from Beckham's spring 2011 collection that Lomrantz thinks would be perfect for the trail: a bright yellow frock with three quarter length sleeves.

"I'm obsessed with the idea of Michelle Obama wearing this dress, not only because it would make for one of the oddest designer/client pairings in history (a Spice Girl and a White House resident), but because I truly think it would flatter the first lady's figure," she said. "[Obama] is also a huge fan of bright colors, and she's one of the few people on the planet that could pull off bright marigold with ease."

(For her part, Rothman would like to see Obama "in an emerald green sheath ... or maybe a great trench or some kind of 'take my breath away' jacket with a pencil skirt," she said, recommending that "camel is [also] a fantastic color for her and a very 'in' color.")

Lisa Birnbach of "The Official Preppy Handbook" thinks there's one Obama must-have for the road: "I have never seen her in a blue blazer. She should have one. Even her kids could use one," she said.

Mary Tomer, author of "Mrs.O," a well-read blog that follows just everything the first lady wears to public events, suggested the first lady stay with the affordable classic stores that cater to the everyday American woman. Tomer also had a specific dress in mind for Obama's stump-hopping: a Talbots Ponte Knit Sheath in Cherry Brandy.

"[The sheath] is a garment that travels well, is easily personalized with an oversize accessory, and is appropriate for professional, political environments. Best yet, it projects the first lady's harmonious combination of strength and femininity," said Tomer.

J. Crew would go gaga if Obama draped her shoulders in one of their preppy pieces again, and Tomer had in mind one of their dresses that could work on the trail: J. Crew's wool origami sleeve-less sheath. Yes, tastemakers of America want Obama to show off her guns.

Also? "It would be the perfect backdrop for one of Mrs. Obama's jeweled, vintage brooches," Tomer pointed out.

But not everyone wants her to go the affordable route. Paul Wharton, a D.C.-based stylist and television personality (you may have glimpsed his signature tresses on "Real Housewives of D.C.") thinks the campaign trail might just be the place to go high end.

"I'd love to see her infuse a bit of high end outerwear from Jean Paul Gaultier's ready to wear collection for Hermes. As we strive to come out of this recession, it gives us all something to aspire to and there's no better model to inspire us than our first lady," Wharton said.

But he won't faint if Obama doesn't embrace couture on the stump. As he said, "by showing us some of her favorite daily wear from J.Crew and White House/Black Market and accessorizing with classic handbags, shoes and hair styles, First Lady Michelle Obama is an American style star."

SHARE:



Facebook



Twitter