

THE POWER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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Michaëlle Jean was born on September 6 1957, in Port au Prince, Haiti. She immigrated from Haiti with her family at an early age. Fluent in five languages, she became the first black Governor General of Canada in 2005. Her roles as the Governor General included representing Canada during State visits, acting as the ceremonial commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, and presenting honours and awards. A socialist activist for women and children at risk, she planned to use the power her position had awarded her to assist disadvantaged women and young people. From 1979 to 1987, Michaëlle Jean worked with Quebec shelters for women who had been physically abused and helped create a network of emergency shelters where women could have a safe haven to go. She also worked with aid organizations for immigrant women and families to help them adjust to their new lives in Canada. Jean also focused strongly on violence towards female victims. In 2007 she participated in an historic private discussion with aboriginal women chiefs and elders in Saskatchewan to help resolve some of the issues concerning violence and abuse. Michaëlle Jean has helped various diverse Canadian sectors transition to living the great life in Canada that we all know and love. She focused on a multicultural, more open society and we should be grateful for the path she has paved for us.

In her role as acting commander in chief for Canadian Armed Forces, she went to Trenton, Ontario in 2007 to oversee the arrival of the bodies of six Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan. Shortly after that emotional duty, she made her first visit to see Canadian troops taking part in the offensive in Afghanistan. It was a dangerous trip to go on because of security reasons but she went anyway because she wanted to relate first-hand to the situation in Afghanistan. She stated “The women of Afghanistan may face the most unbearable conditions, but they never stop fighting for survival. Of course, we, the rest of the women around the world, took too long to hear the cries of our Afghan sisters, but I am here to tell them that they are no longer alone. And neither are the people of Afghanistan”. While there she met with Afghan women, Canadian Soldiers, Royal Canadian Mounted Police teams, humanitarian workers, and diplomats. It was a shining example of her commitment to strengthening Canada’s identity abroad.

In 2010, after her vice-regal duties ended, the government established the Michaëlle Jean Foundation which enabled her to focus on promoting education, culture, and creativity among youth from rural, northern and /or poor communities in Canada. In 2011, Michaëlle Jean was appointed as the head of an international organization known as la Francophonie to promote the French language at the 2012 Olympic games. This achievement allowed her to showcase her passion to defend the French language and culture and to show her respect for shared values of democracy and human rights. La Francophonie spreads over five continents and many countries. Some of those countries are not democratic and some are not particularly fond of practising respectable human rights in line with those of Canada. Jean focused on finding common ground to raise respect for the Francophonie by putting more emphasis on economic development. Jean will work closely with Prime Minister Trudeau to make sure her goal is achieved. As a woman and a proud francophone in control of an international organization which represents more than 270 million Francophones, she is able to proudly showcase Canada’s diverse heritage and unique identity to the world.

Michaëlle Jean has helped Canada in numerous ways through her work as Governor General, social activist and proud Francophonie Canadian. She has presented Canada in the best light possible and we have made great progress as a society by having a black woman so active in political and social matters contribute to our society as a whole. Michaëlle Jean is a modern, worldly person who is great at bringing people together. It’s astonishing how much she has done for our country and we should be very thankful for her work. I know I am.



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