



POWER POSE Kehinde Wiley (left) and former president Barack Obama shake hands at the unveiling of Obama's official portrait.



ASPECIAL MOMENT Michelle Obama (left) and Amy Sherald smile as Sherald's painting of the former First Lady is presented.

FROM TOP: MARK WILSON—GETTY IMAGES; SAUL LOEB—GETTY IMAGES

PAINTING HISTORY

Official portraits of former president Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama appear in the nation's capital.

Before leaving office in January 2017, President Barack Obama took care of an important piece of official business: He chose an artist, Kehinde Wiley, to paint his portrait. First Lady Michelle Obama chose Amy Sherald to paint hers. Their selections mark the first time African-American artists have been tapped to paint official presidential portraits. On February 12, the works were unveiled at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, in Washington, D.C.

"Being the first African-American painter to paint the first African-American president: It doesn't get any better than that," Wiley said at the event.

In Wiley's portrait, Obama is surrounded by vines and flowers. There are chrysanthemums, the Illinois state flower, standing for Obama's Chicago roots; African blue lilies for Kenya, where his father was from; and jasmine for Hawaii, where Obama was born. "What I am doing is charting his path on Earth," Wiley said, explaining his work.

In Sherald's painting, Mrs. Obama wears a white dress with geometric shapes. She sits confidently, with one hand beneath her chin.

"I am humbled, I am honored, I am proud," Mrs. Obama said after she and Sherald unveiled the painting. "Young people, particularly girls and girls of color—in future years they will come to this place and see someone who looks like them hanging on the walls in this incredible institution."

The National Portrait Gallery has a full collection of presidential portraits. It commissioned the Obama portraits in October 2017. At the unveiling, President Obama praised Wiley and Sherald. "[Michelle and I] had an immediate connection with the two artists," he said. "We are both very grateful to have been the subject of their attention for this brief moment." —By Constance Gibbs



IT'S OFFICIAL Dom Peters is sworn in as Oregon's first Kid Governor.

THE KID IN CHARGE

Oregon's first Kid Governor says kindness is the best policy.

Many kids have been bullied. Fifth grader Dom Peters decided to do something about it. He ran for office.

On January 8, Dom, 11, was sworn in as Oregon's first Kid Governor, at the State Capitol, in Salem. Fifth graders across the state elected him from among eight finalists in Oregon's first annual Kid Governor contest. Its aim is to teach students about government, voting, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

Dom ran his campaign on an antibullying platform. It appealed to kid voters. "I've seen a lot of bullying, and I've been bullied," Dom told reporters at his first press conference. "I want to stop it."

Oregon's Kid Governor program is one of many efforts nationwide to bring civics education back to

schools. It is based on a similar program in Connecticut, which this year also elected a Kid Governor, Megan Kasperowski. The hope is that other states will follow suit.

Brian Cofrancesco, of the Connecticut Public Affairs Network, helped launch Kid Governor in 2015. Government and civic

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—Dom Peters

engagement are often not introduced until high school, he says. "Our goal was to create a meaningful civics experience for younger students."

THE REAL DEAL

Oregon's secretary of state, Dennis Richardson, launched the Kid Governor program there. He says it is important for young people to learn early on how to participate in a democracy. "You want to learn how government works, how campaigns function, and how to evaluate the candidates you're voting for," he told TFK.

Richardson has been impressed with how seriously Dom takes his role. "The fifth graders in Oregon

made a good choice for their first Kid Governor," he says.

As Oregon's fifth-grader-in-chief, Dom is making a series of videos to teach students about the three branches of government. And he will talk with lawmakers about the problem of bullying.

Dom will also move forward with keeping one big campaign promise. He is starting the Super Kind Writers' Club to inspire kids to share their stories about the importance of treating others with fairness and sympathy. "Sometimes, kids see problems from a different perspective than adults, and have different solutions," he told TFK.

Adults are listening. "Dom is the real deal," says Jo Moore, his teacher at Willamette Valley Christian School. "Even before running for office, he would step forward to stick up for people."

Is the Kid Governor planning a career in politics? "I haven't decided on that yet," Dom says. "I'm going to see where life takes me."

—By Brian S. McGrath