

Valerie Jarrett

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Valerie June Bowman Jarrett (born November 14, 1956) is a Senior Advisor to the President of the United States and Assistant to the President for Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs in the Obama administration. She is a Chicago lawyer, businesswoman, and civic leader. Prior to that she served as a co-chairman of the Obama–Biden Transition Project.^{[2][3]}

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Personal life

Jarrett was born in Shiraz, Iran, to American parents James E. Bowman and Barbara Taylor Bowman. One of her maternal great-grandfathers, Robert Robinson Taylor, was an architect who is sometimes cited as the first accredited African American architect.

Her father, a pathologist and geneticist, ran a hospital for children in Shiraz in 1956, as part of a program where American physicians and agricultural experts sought to help communitize developing countries' health and farming efforts. When she was 5, the family moved to London for one year, later moving to Chicago in 1963.^[4] Her parents were both African-American; on the television series *Finding Your Roots*, genealogical research and DNA testing indicated that Jarrett also has French, Scottish, and Native American ancestry.^[5] As a child, Jarrett spoke Persian and French.^[6] In 1966, her mother was one of four child advocates that created the Erikson Institute. The Institute was established to provide collective knowledge in child development for teachers and other professionals working with young children.^[7]

Jarrett graduated from Northfield Mount Hermon in 1974. She earned a B.A. in psychology from Stanford University in 1978 and a juris doctor (J.D.) from the University of Michigan Law School in 1981.^[8]

In 1983 Jarrett married William Robert Jarrett, son of *Chicago Sun-Times* reporter Vernon Jarrett. She attributes her switch from a private to a public career to their daughter Laura's birth and her own desire to do something that would make their daughter proud.^[9]

To one reporter's emailed question about her divorce, she replied, "Married in 1983, separated in 1987, and divorced in 1988. Enough said."^[9] In a *Vogue* profile, she further explained, "We grew up together. We were friends since childhood. In a sense, he was the boy next door. I married without really appreciating how hard divorce would be."^[9]

Career

Chicago municipal politics

Jarrett got her start in Chicago politics in 1987 working for Mayor Harold Washington^[10] as Deputy Corporation Counsel for Finance and

Valerie Jarrett



Senior Advisor to the President

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 20, 2009

President Barack Obama

Preceded by Barry Jackson

Assistant to the President for Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 20, 2009

President Barack Obama

Preceded by Julie Cram

Personal details

Born Valerie June Bowman^[1]

November 14, 1956

Shiraz, Iran

Political party Democratic Party

Spouse(s) William Jarrett (1983–1988)

Alma mater Stanford University
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Career

Chicago municipal politics

Jarrett got her start in Chicago politics in 1987 working for Mayor Harold Washington^[10] as Deputy Corporation Counsel for Finance and Development.^[11]

Jarrett continued to work in the mayor's office in the 1990s. She was deputy chief of staff for Mayor Richard Daley, during which time (1991) she hired Michelle Robinson, then engaged to Barack Obama, away from a private law firm. Jarrett served as commissioner of the department of planning and development from 1992 through 1995, and she was chairman of the Chicago Transit Board from 1995 to 2005.^[11]

Business administration

Until joining the Obama administration, Jarrett was the CEO of the Habitat Company, a real estate development and management company,^[12] which she joined in 1995. She has been replaced by Mark Segal, a lawyer who joined the company in 2002, as CEO. Daniel E. Levin is the chairman of Habitat, which was formed in 1971.^[13] Jarrett was a member of the board of Chicago Stock Exchange (2000–07, as chairman, 2004–2007).

She was a member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Chicago Medical Center from 1996 to 2009, becoming vice manin 2002 and chairman in 2006.^[14] She also served as Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the University of Chicago and a Trustee of Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry.^[15] Jarrett serves on the board of directors of USG Corporation, a Chicago based building materials corporation.

Jarrett's previous year's income, in a 2009 report, was a \$300,000 salary and \$550,000 in deferred compensation from the Habitat Executive Services, Inc. *The Wall Street Journal* also reported that she disclosed receiving payments of more than \$346,000 for service on boards of directors that reflect her political ties, work in Chicago real estate, and Chicago community development. She was paid \$76,000 for service as a director of Navigant Consulting, Inc., a Chicago-based global consulting group with governmental clients. She received \$146,600 from USG and \$58,000 to serve on the board of Rreef American REIT II, a real estate investment trust based in San Francisco. The Chicago Stock Exchange, Inc., paid her \$34,444.^[16]

Adviser to Barack Obama

Jarrett is one of President Obama's longest serving advisers and confidantes and was "widely tipped for a high-profile position in an Obama administration."^{[17][18]}

“ Unlike Bert Lance, who arrived from Georgia with President [Jimmy] Carter and became his budget director, or Karen Hughes, who was President [George W.] Bush's communications manager, Ms. Jarrett isn't a confidante with a particular portfolio. What she does share with these counterparts is a fierce sense of loyalty and a refusal to publicly say anything that may reflect poorly on the candidate—or steal his thunder.^[17] ”

On November 14, 2008, President-elect Barack Obama selected Jarrett to serve as White House Senior Adviser and assistant to the president for intergovernmental relations and public liaison.^[19]

Jarrett is one of three senior advisers to President Obama.^[20] She holds the retitled position of assistant to the president for intergovernmental affairs and public engagement,^[20] managing the White House Office of Public Engagement, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, and Office of Urban Affairs; she also chairs the White House Council on Women and Girls and the White House Office of Olympic, Paralympic, and Youth Sport.^[21] She was part of the US State Visit to the UK in May 2011.^[22]

She said that the 2011 report *Women in America*, which the administration produced for the Council on Women and Girls, would be used to guide policy-making.^[23]

Jarrett has a staff of about three dozen and receives full-time Secret Service protection.^[24]

Additional leadership positions

In addition to being senior adviser to the president, Jarrett holds other leadership positions and completes further duties. Among those include chairing the White House Council on Women and Girls and co-chairing the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault.^{[25][26]}

Relationship with President Obama



Obama speaks to Jarrett and other aides during a senior staff meeting in August 2009.



Barack Obama chats with Valerie Jarrett in the Blue Room, White House, 2010.

Relationship with President Obama

In 1991, as deputy chief of staff to Mayor Richard Daley, she interviewed Michelle Robinson for an opening in the mayor's office, after which she immediately offered her the job.^[27] Michelle Robinson asked for time to think and also asked Jarrett to meet her fiancé, Barack Obama. The three ended up meeting for dinner. After the dinner, Michelle took the job with the mayor's office, and Valerie Jarrett reportedly took the couple under her wing and "introduced them to a wealthier and better-connected Chicago than their own." She later took Michelle with her when she left the mayor's office to head Chicago's Department of Planning and Development.

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Obama speaks with Jarrett in a West Wing corridor.

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External links

- Valerie Jarrett (http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/staff/valerie-jarrett) at Whitehouse.gov
- Valerie Jarrett (http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/Profiles/Valerie_Jarrett_topic.html) collected news and commentary at *The Washington Post*
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- Works by or about Valerie Jarrett (http://worldcat.org/identities/np-jarrett,%20valerie) in libraries (WorldCat catalog)
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Preceded by Julie Cram	Assistant to the President for Public Liaison and Intergovernmental Affairs 2009–present	

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