

# Michaëlle Jean

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Michaëlle Jean is the **27th Governor General, Commander-in-Chief of Canada**, sworn in September 27, 2005, for a five-year mandate. As soon as the mandate ended, on October 1st, 2010, the United Nations immediately called on her to become **UNESCO Special Envoy** to support reconstruction efforts in Haiti, her country of birth devastated that same year as a result of a powerful earthquake that killed hundreds of thousands, with as many wounded and displaced. From 2011 to 2014, Michaëlle Jean also served as **Chancellor of the University of Ottawa**, where her offices as UNESCO Special Envoy were hosted. On November 30, 2014, Michaëlle Jean then becomes the **3rd Secretary General of La Francophonie** at the 15th Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Dakar, a position to which she devoted her whole energies from January 5, 2015, to January 3, 2019.

Seasoned stateswoman and diplomat, her voice is gifted with the power to convene everywhere in the multilateral sphere, in every UN forum, from New York to Geneva, all the way to the Security Council, as well as within the European Union, the European Parliament, the OECD, the African Union. Michaëlle Jean knows how to persuade, mobilize, educate, unite, and testify eloquently to the key issues and state of the world she has travelled extensively, from one continent to another. She is best known and appreciated for her convictions, her deep sense of the universal values, principles and rules of democracy, of the rule of law, of justice, and of the rights and freedoms which she never betrays. She has a proven capacity to engage with heads of state and government, in conjunction with players from the private sector, alongside local populations, women and youth in particular, innovative and sustainable multi-sectoral projects and programs, with a view to revitalizing economic, environmental and cultural ecosystems. Michaëlle Jean believes in the unique potency of fieldwork, in making investments in human capital, in capacity and knowledge building, and in modernizing education as well as vocational, technical and technological training. She knows how to mobilize youth with passion and gusto, how to inspire and help them identify opportunities for co-operation, how to create new and diversified synergies.

A woman of action and vision, Michaëlle Jean has demonstrated fearless commitment in the promotion of peace, including in countering terrorism, radicalization and extremism. Humanistic values, courage, tenaciousness, along with indomitable optimism and creativity are hallmarks of her character.

Born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 1957, Michaëlle Jean comes to Canada in 1968 with her parents, one of thousands of families fleeing the dictatorial regime of François Duvalier. She

experiences the great trials of a forced exile, what it means to start from scratch, to rebuild oneself. Quebec becomes her new homeland. At the Université de Montréal, she earns a Bachelor of Arts in modern literature and languages (Italian and Spanish). She is so gifted that she is entrusted with teaching Italian language and literature for two years, while pursuing with equal success her Master's in Comparative Literature. Three scholarships allow her to pursue her studies at the University of Perugia, the University of Florence, and the Catholic University of Milan. Michaëlle Jean is fluent in five languages: French, Haitian Creole, English, Italian, Spanish, and she reads Portuguese.

Starting in her 20s and for over 10 years, Michaëlle Jean is active within the Quebec women's movement, working tirelessly to help build a vast network with hundreds of emergency shelters for battered women and their children. The network will spread throughout Quebec into other Canadian provinces.

From 1988 to 2005, Michaëlle Jean enjoys an outstanding career as a journalist, presenter and news anchor on Canadian public television, both French and English networks. Her accomplishments in journalism earn her numerous awards, including from the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, which highlights her outstanding merit by naming her to the Ordre des Chevaliers de La Pléiade. She also takes part in **documentary films produced by her husband**, filmmaker, essayist and philosopher **Jean-Daniel Lafond**: "*A State of Blackness: Aimé Césaire's Way*," "*Tropic North*," "*Haiti in All Our Dreams*," "*Last Call for Cuba*," and "*A Woman of Purpose*."

Together, they founded and have chaired since 2010 the **Michaëlle Jean Foundation**, whose programs support, through art and culture, civic initiatives alongside some of the most vulnerable and disenfranchised—yet so eager and creative—young people in Canada.

tags : black-history-month