All parts to personalise marked in yellow

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

First Lady Michelle Obama

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20500

United States of America

November 2015

One of our greatest hopes here at Southbank Centre has been that you might join us at the *WOW – Women of the World* festival, so when the Mulberry girls said they would make sure you got this letter, we couldn't have been more pleased. You may recall that you and I met briefly when you visited the school and gave a wonderful speech about growing up and forming your values.

I founded *WOW* festival six years ago, on the centenary of International Women's Day, because I was frustrated that we weren't celebrating amazing women and girls, having frank discussions about the obstacles that prevent them from achieving their potential, and taking action. I am the Artistic Director of Europe's biggest centre for the arts, Southbank Centre in London, so I had the power to do something to change the situation. Mulberry School for Girls has been Southbank Centre’s partner from the beginning, specifically in our *WOW* education programme, which aims for a gender-neutral curriculum and asks what a girl's education in the 21st century should look like. The girls continue to *WOW* us all.

I know the girls will tell you about *WOW*. It's a global festival of talks, debates, fun, performance, activism, mentoring, music and more. There are discussions on everything from girls’ education to the politics of Afro hair, from the hyper-sexualisation of girls in popular culture to what might be next for women in the Arab revolutions. There are talks on sexual violence in conflict, debates on confidence and self-identity, workshops on how to get a pay rise, a Beyoncé dance class, and women playing football all over the site. The festival is a catalyst for change and it's also great fun. *WOW* reaches girls and women from widely differing social backgrounds and gets a completely different sense of action and energy than what you might expect of a normal conference style approach.

Since *WOW* began, Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall has been very supportive and this year became our President. There have been *WOW* festivals in 15 places across five continents including New York (at the Apollo Theater), Sydney, Somaliland and Northern Ireland. The Duchess held a special reception for us in Washington as part of Their Royal Highness' tour, and in the next few months we will be in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India. Speakers at the festival have included Malala, Leymah Gbowee, Christine Lagarde, Vivienne Westwood, Salma Hayek, Patrick Stewart, Annie Lennox, Caitlin Moran and many women who don't have large public profiles but are doing extraordinary things.

The festival has brought about thousands of stories of change. The UK's first women's party, the Women's Equality Party, was founded at *WOW*. After being asked to give a 10-minute talk about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) at *WOW* London in 2011, campaigner Nimco Ali was inspired to build an Africa-led campaign, which resulted in new government policy to stop the practise, announced by David Cameron in July 2014. There are many more stories like this.

It would mean such an enormous amount to the women, and men, of Europe and the world, and to Mulberry School for Girls, if you were able to join us at *WOW* 2016 to give a keynote about girls’ education, *Let Girls Learn*, and then speak in conversation with the girls from Mulberry about why education is so important. Education is a uniting factor for all women – wherever you are, whatever your circumstances, education unlocks the door to other rights, eventually resulting in a more stable world. We greatly admire your work sharing this message across the globe, and your impact as a speaker at *WOW* would be tremendous.

I know you are inundated with requests for your time. But I hope you'll consider this invitation from myself and the girls, and use *WOW* festival as a powerful platform to talk about your work on this side of the pond, to an audience who will be inspired to further it.

The festival takes place from 8th to 13th March 2016, and of course we'll be completely flexible around your schedule.

**JUDE KELLY CBE**
Artistic Director, Southbank Centre