

The Obama Portraits

by Gary Fouse



Back in 1970, when I was a newly-hired US Customs agent, I had to have my photo taken for my credentials. I never wore my hair long like many of my generation, but often I waited a little too long before getting a haircut. Such was the case when I had my photo taken. A day or two later the asst. agent in charge, an unfriendly sort to begin with, came to my desk with the photo telling me to go out and get a haircut and have a new photo taken that looked like a federal special agent.

That brings me to the present, and I was reminded of that incident when I saw the newly unveiled portraits of Barack and Michelle Obama that will be exhibited in the National Portrait Gallery along with all the previous presidents. One is tempted to tell the Obamas to go back and have them done over and come back with portraits that look like a president and first lady. To be specific, Obama looks like he is sitting in the outfield in Wrigley Field. As for the portrait of Michelle, let's just say I think I could have painted that. And that dress! These two pictures will stand out like a couple of Picassos mixed in

with the Dutch Masters.

Then we learn that the artist who painted Mr Obama, Kehinde Wiley, has a curious penchant for painting black women holding