

# Dunham Singletary

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## FAMILY CONNECTIONS

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Issue 3

July 15, 2007

Volume 4 ©

### This Issue

This issue will be a simple, if not short one. Gratia is involved in moving and has not been able to complete her next article on the succession and heirs of Jonathan Singletary Dunham. She will be back as a contributor in October. And, as for other contributions, I suppose it is summertime and people are on vacation and traveling. I have received only one other, a short report from Paul Dunham, for which I am grateful. I hope that will change, come fall.

What this boils down to is that I am the sole major contributor this time with Part II of my extended book review of Barack Obama's two books. Like Part I, this one is quite lengthy, so, for those of you who are willing, you have an adequate amount of reading in this issue. By way of justification for its length, our cousin Barack continues to be a very newsworthy person in the daily papers

and on television. He is running a strong second place to Hillary Clinton for the Democratic nomination for President. In this past, second quarter fund-raising report, required from all the candidates, he outstripped them all, including Clinton, surpassing her total by more than \$5 million dollars. No one else was even close. He raised \$32.8 million versus Hillary's \$27 million. Not bad for a first time out. And he did it from an impressive base of 258,000 individual donors—another record for presidential candidates this early in a national presidential campaign. He cannot of course buy the nomination. But now he certainly has the resources to compete for it full bore and Mrs. Clinton knows she is in horserace. Cousin Barack seems by these deeds certain to continue being our most newsworthy Dunham relative. I hope all or most of you will enjoy the background material on him contained in these on-going review pieces.

## Editor's Corner

by Sam Dunnam

Welcome to our twelfth issue. With this issue we mark the Newsletter's third birthday. We've gotten a few complaints and we've tried to address those—and we're still trying. But by and large the complaints have been few and we surmise that most of our readers like the Newsletter. We have gotten a few communications that have been complimentary and heart-warming and we do appreciate those. We've certainly invited feedback, and do still invite it. We enjoy hearing from you—*when* we do, which is not often enough. Whatever your reactions, we want to know them. Take time to write a quick, short Letter to the Editor ([sdunnam@techconsult.com](mailto:sdunnam@techconsult.com)).

This issue is preponderantly about Barack Obama, not by design but because only one other short article by Paul Dunham was forthcoming for this round. I should therefore start with an acknowledgement, then a few disclaimers. As I disclosed in the last issue, which contained Part I of my extended book review of Obama's two books, my wife and I are supporting him for President and we admit to being partial. It is difficult to avoid bias when you're writing about someone whom you like and admire.

But that is not the reason I have chosen to write about Obama for the DSFC Newsletter. The reason for writing about him here is that he is just now the best known and most prominent *Dunham relative* in the public eye. Since the publication of Part I in April, his public recognition has grown and spread. He continues to be extremely newsworthy. It's a *big deal* to run for President and to run seriously, not just as a token second or third tier candidate with negligible chance of securing one of the two main parties' nominations for the Big Contest in 2008. Obama is a very serious candidate and he could very well end up President. In which case all the copious background information provided in this multi-stage review of his two books you will perhaps reflect back on as worthwhile. That, at least, is my hope—for both the former and latter prospect.

Now a few remarks about this long book review itself. As it has evolved with me in the writing, what I am presenting here is not really a book review in the form that a conventional book review takes—those that most of us regularly read. (My wife continues to point this out to me.) Most of those are relatively short, a page or two, and they usually render critical judgments of the book being reviewed, either panning it or recommending it. Their primary purpose is to serve as a

guide to readers. They tell briefly what the book under scrutiny is about, then render critical judgments about the author's skill and execution.

What my "review" of Obama's two books seeks to accomplish is to give a summary of the two books' contents, using as much as possible of Barack Obama's own words. (This will not be so much the case with the second book, which is a different kind of book than the first.) The reason for this is my bias concerning what I enjoy most knowing about Dunham family history and genealogy: that is *about the people themselves*, as individuals, during their own lives. What kind of people *were* they? What were their talents or faults? What made them tick? What did they accomplish and why (or why not if they accomplished little). This is the substance and meat of peoples' lives. It is, for me, *the interesting stuff* (when we can get it) that we hang on the pegs of the pro forma information provided by genealogies: date and place of birth; marriage(s); land or property holdings; children; date of death and (if we know it) the place where buried. For most of our relatives, this pro forma information is *all* we get: just the legal recorded footprints they left in preserved public annals. Most people don't write autobiographies; fewer still are the

subjects of others' biographies. Sometimes, if we are lucky, correspondence will survive, and in it we may find something of our relative's character and personality.

This circumstance is very different in Barack Obama's case. He is only 45 years old. His personal history is quite extraordinary compared with the histories of most contemporary American politicians—indeed, compared with the histories of the overwhelming number of American male citizens. And it is quite interesting, even if Barack were not running for President. He was the first African-American ever to be elected president of the Harvard Law Review, the top honor for a law student in this country. At least one book publisher thought that fact interesting enough to give him a pre-paid book contract to write a book about himself and his background during the year after he graduated. He has not disclosed its terms. But it was enough money to allow him to support himself for a full year while he worked on the book.

The book he wrote, *Dreams From My Father*, turned out to be an intimate autobiography of a talented young man with an extraordinarily interesting personal history, written in a quite beautiful, expressive narrative style. Obama has a real talent for language. One takes away the im-

pression he could have easily been a successful professional writer.

So we have in Barack Obama a prominent Dunham relation who has already, at 45, given us a lengthy autobiography laying out much of his personal history, feelings, and aspirations—what I have called above “the substance and meat” of a life. So much insight into this man is revealed in his talent for and command of language that I have endeavored to quote him frequently and sometimes at length, so that the reader can appreciate directly the subtleties and nuances of his thoughts and sentiment. (These quotes have perforce stretched out the review.) Not only do we find out some of the substance about Barack. The books contain also portraits—fragmentary and partial to be sure—of his mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, and his maternal grandfather, Stanley Armour Dunham, those individual Dunham relations by whom and through whom we are connected to Barack. By my reckoning, Barack’s books would be precious finds if we had discovered them buried among the records in some dusty provincial courthouse, and even if he wasn’t as newsworthy as he is.

I have assumed that most of you probably will not be inclined to read in their entirety these two books. They are together a hefty read—of

just over a thousand pages. Therefore, I have tried to give you the reasonable next best thing: a running summary of them, told with generous excerpts from Barack’s own telling of his story. I have not sought to exercise the conventional book reviewer’s prerogative of critical evaluation. I shall probably do that in the conclusion of Part III, to be published in October. Do not infer from its absence that I find nothing to criticize; there are literary criticisms to be made. The main one is that in *Dreams* his accounts of Chicago and Kenya are too long. The book would be improved if he had condensed these accounts more. That said, let me close here with an apology to you for the length of this review. It would be improved (as my wife has urged repeatedly) if I had condensed it more.

## **Our Cousin Barack Part II: Chicago**

by  
Sam E. Dunnam

This article is Part II of my review of Barack Obama’s two books, *Dreams From My Father* (1995) and *The Audacity of Hope* (2006). Part I appeared in the April issue. It dealt primarily with Obama’s origins, upbringing, and early educational experience, up to his transfer from Oc-

cidental College in Los Angeles to Columbia University in New York. We left him in Part I having just arrived in New York City to attend Columbia for his last two undergraduate years.

Parts I and II both span Barack's story in *Dreams From My Father*. This first early book, written the year after he graduated from Harvard Law School, gives an account of his developmental years. In this respect, it is key to understanding the mature man today. The second book is a presentation of his seasoned views on politics and the life of the nation after he was elected a United States Senator in 2004. Most of *Dreams From My Father* dwells on his experience as a community organizer in deep South Chicago, and his trip to Kenya to meet for the first time his black family and relatives there; also, importantly, to learn more about his father's life and character. His experience in Chicago will be the focus of this Part II. It is, by his own testimony, the most important experience he had that shaped his emergence as an American politician.

It is typical of Obama to tell us very little about his book learning. In a Jay Leno interview one evening, when the topic of his education came up, Obama mentioned that he had attended Occidental College in L.A. and graduated from Columbia in New

York. When Leno reminded him that he had failed to mention his experience at the Harvard Law School, Obama smiled sheepishly and said, "Nobody likes a smarty pants."

Somewhat similarly in *Dreams From My Father*, Obama tells us nothing of what he studied at Columbia. What we do know is that he arrived to attend Columbia in a very idealistic frame of mind, having struggled during his later high school years in Hawaii and first two years at Occidental to find his identity as a black man in America<sup>1</sup>. In the process he was drawn to the continuing struggle of black people in the U.S. in the 1970s and '80s to achieve equality and justice. He believed that in New York he would have a greater opportunity to become involved in a broader black community.

The reality of New York was a shock to Barack's relatively innocent idealism. As we learned in Part I, he spent his first night in Manhattan sleeping in an alley with the homeless. Early the next day, fortunately, he found his friend, Sadik, who let him share his apartment until he found a place. That first morning he began to tell Sadik something of his idealistic ambitions and aspirations. Sadik responded:

*Well , amigo...you can talk all you want about saving the world, but this*

*city tends to eat away at such noble sentiments. Look out there. He gestured to the crowd along First Avenue. Everybody's looking out for number one. Survival of the fittest. Tooth and claw. Elbow the other guy out of the way. That, my friend, is New York. But...he shrugged, who knows? Maybe you'll be the exception. In which case I will doff my hat to you....(DFMF, p 179-80)*

Sadik's final advice was, *Stop worrying the rest of these bums out here and figure out how you're going to make some money out of this fancy degree you'll be getting.* (DFMF, p 180)

If it did not extinguish it entirely, New York was a dash of ice water on Barack's idealism. It exposed to him the almost unimaginable range of the human condition—also the allure of the temptation to seek out the comfortable life that his education, when completed, would put well within his reach. The disturbing fact that kept his ambition alive was the intense and growing polarization he saw between impoverished blacks trapped in New York's seething underclass, and the affluence, privilege, and wealth of those who reaped its benefits: *With the Wall Street boom, Manhattan was humming, new developments cropping up everywhere; men and women*

*barely out of their twenties already enjoying ridiculous wealth, the fashion merchants fast on their heels. The beauty, the filth, the noise and the excess, all of it dazzled my senses...*

*Yet... Beneath the hum, the motion, I was seeing the steady fracturing of the world taking place. I had seen worse poverty in Indonesia and glimpsed the violent mood of inner-city kids in L.A.; I had grown accustomed, everywhere, to suspicion between the races. But whether because of New York's density or because of its scale, it was only now that I began to grasp the almost mathematical precision with which America's race and class problems joined; the depth, the ferocity, of resulting tribal wars; the bile that flowed freely not just out on the streets but in the stalls of Columbia's bathrooms as well, where, no matter how many times the administration tried to paint them over, the walls remained scratched with blunt correspondence between niggers and kikes.* (DFMF, p 182)

Barack's few black friends who had ascended the class and wealth divide seemed secure in their newfound status, not inclined to look down again and extend a hand to those below—even if all around them, in

their law and accounting offices, the only other blacks were in menial roles, doing their daily long commutes to modest homes in Brooklyn or Queens. Even Harlem was out of reach for minimally adequate Manhattan housing: the high rents for the refurbished brownstones in Sugar Hill were well beyond their means. *[All] that remained were the rows and rows of uninhabitable tenements, in front of which young men counted out their rolls of large bills, and winos who slouched and stumbled and wept softly to themselves.* (DFMF, p 183)

Nor did there seem to be any viable and effective black “movement” any more. Grievances remained and simmered but purposeful action seemed to have evaporated. *Political discussions, the kind that at Occidental had once seemed so intense and purposeful, came to take on the flavor of the socialist conferences I sometimes attended at Cooper Union or the African cultural fairs that took place in Harlem and Brooklyn during the summers.*(DFMF, p 184) Lots of abstract talk, but no vision or impulse that promised a way forward.

Barack’s path through Columbia seemed destined to deliver him to one side of the social divide or the other: to a comfortable Manhattan middle-

class existence or to some as yet indiscernible, ill-defined role in pursuit of his ideals. *Unwilling to make that choice, I spent a year walking from one end of Manhattan to the other. Like a tourist, I watched the range of human possibility on display, trying to trace out my future in the lives of the people I saw, looking for some opening through which I could reenter.* (DFMF, p 185) Barack finally resolved this dilemma by becoming a community organizer in South Chicago. But we are getting ahead of the remainder of his stay in New York.

During the summer between his junior and senior years at Columbia, Barack’s mother, Ann (Dunham), and his sister, Maya<sup>2</sup> visited him in New York. During their stay, Barack had some long, meaningful conversations with his mother. His account of them gives perhaps the fullest portrait of his mother found in either book—and thus is of particular interest to his Dunham descendants.

One evening when the three of them were together, Ann found in *The Village Voice* an advertisement for the movie, **Black Orpheus**, a legendary Brazilian film that made a sensation when it was first released in the U.S. She insisted that the three of them go see it that evening. It was, Ann said, the first foreign film she had ever

seen. She was sixteen at the time.

*I'd just been accepted to the University of Chicago—Gramps hadn't told me yet that he wouldn't let me go—and I was there for the summer working as an au pair. It was the first time that I'd ever been really on my own. Gosh, I felt like such an adult. And when I saw this film, I thought it was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. (DFMF, p 186)<sup>3</sup>*

Barack describes his own impressions of the film:

*The story line was simple: the myth of the ill-fated lovers Orpheus and Eurydice set in the favela of Rio during Carnival. In Technicolor splendor, set against scenic green hills, the black and brown Brazilians sang and danced and strummed guitars like carefree birds in colorful plumage. About halfway through the movie, I decided that I'd seen enough, and turned to my mother to see if she might be ready to go<sup>4</sup>. But her face, lit by the blue glow of the screen, was set in a wistful gaze. At that moment, I felt as if I were being given a window into her heart, the unreflective heart of her youth. I suddenly realized that the depiction of childlike blacks I was now seeing on the screen, the reverse image of Conrad's dark savages, was what my mother*

*had carried with her to Hawaii all those years before, a reflection of the simple fantasies that had been forbidden to a white middle-class girl from Kansas, the promise of another life: warm, sensual, exotic, different. (DFMF, p 186-7).*

The insights that Barack took from his mother's reaction to the film prompted a series of reflections on love between the races. There would always be a residue of difference, he thought. *The emotions between the races could never be pure; even love was tarnished by the desire to find in the other some element that was missing in ourselves. Whether we sought out our demons or salvation, the other race would always remain just that: menacing, alien, and apart. (DFMF, p 188)*

A few days later in the apartment, Ann notices a letter to Barack's father in his hand. She asks if they are planning a visit. He told her something of his Kenya plans.

*'Well, I think it'll be wonderful for you two to finally get to know each other,' she said. 'He was probably a bit tough for a ten-year old to take, but now that you're older...'*

*I shrugged. 'Who knows?'*

*'I hope you don't feel resentful towards him,' she continued.*

*'Why would I?'*

*'I don't know.' We sat there for a while, listening to the sounds of the traffic below. ...Then, without any prompting, my mother began to retell an old story in a distant voice, as if she were telling it to herself.*

*'It wasn't your father's fault that he left, you know. I divorced him. When the two of us got married, your grandparents weren't happy with the idea. But they said okay—they probably couldn't have stopped us anyway, and they eventually came around to the idea that it was the right thing to do. Then Barack's father—your grandfather Hussein—wrote Gramps this long, nasty letter saying that he didn't approve of the marriage. He didn't want the Obama blood sullied by a white woman, he said. Well, you can imagine how Gramps reacted to that. And then there was a problem with your father's first wife...he had told me they were separated, but it was a village wedding, so there was no legal document that could show a divorce...'*

*Her chin had begun to tremble, and she bit down on her lip, steadying herself. She said, 'Your father wrote*

*back, saying he was going ahead with it. Then you were born, and we agreed that the three of us would return to Kenya after he finished his studies. But your grandfather Hussein was still writing to your father, threatening to have his student visa revoked. By this time Toot [Barack's grandmother Dunham] had become hysterical—she had read about the Mau-Mau rebellion in Kenya a few years earlier, which the Western press really played up—and she was sure that I would have my head chopped off and you would be taken away.'*

*'Even then, it might have worked out. When your father graduated from UH<sup>5</sup>, he received two scholarship offers. One was to the New School, here in New York. The other one was to Harvard. The New School agreed to pay for everything—room and board, a job on campus, enough to support all three of us. Harvard just agreed to pay tuition. But Barack was such a stubborn bastard, he had to go to Harvard. How can I refuse the best education? he told me. That's all he could think about, proving that he was the best.'*

*She sighed, running her hands through her hair. 'We were so young, you know. I was younger than you are now. He was only a few years*

*older than that. Later, when he came to visit us in Hawaii that time, he wanted us to come live with him. But I was still married to Lolo then, and his third wife had just left him, and I just didn't think...'*

Ann broke off for a moment, then began relating a story about their first date. As she spoke, Barack began to see her through adult eyes, as a young, innocent, idealistic girl.

*My mother was that girl with the movie of beautiful black people in her head, flattered by my father's attention, confused and alone, trying to break out of the grip of her own parents' lives. The innocence she carried that day...had been tinged with misconceptions, her own needs. But it was a guileless need, one without self-consciousness, and perhaps that's how any love begins, impulses and cloudy images that allow us to break across our solitude, and then, if we're lucky, are finally transformed into something firmer. What I heard from my mother that day, speaking about my father, was something I suspect most Americans will never hear from the lips of those of another race, and so cannot be expected to believe might exist between black and white: the love of someone who knows your life in the round, a love that will survive disappointment. She saw my fa-*

*ther as everyone hopes at least one other person might see him; she had tried to help the child who never knew him see him in the same way. (DFMF, p 192-3)*

Barack then jumps back to an incident with which he began the book: a long-distance call he received in New York one late fall morning when he was twenty-one. It was a scratchy, barely audible call from his Aunt Jane in Kenya, telling him that his father had been killed in a car accident.

This was just a few months after his mother and sister had visited him in New York. He had called his mother to relay the sad news, and *heard her cry out over the distance*. This news put his plans to travel to Kenya *on indefinite hold*, and terminated any prospect that he would ever get to know his father in person, for real. His father would remain for him, until he heard the accounts of Auma and Roy and went to Kenya finally, an almost mythic figure, gleaned mostly from his mother's stories and reports of him: strong, commanding, highly intelligent, ambitious, willful, capable. He knew directly only that one visit his father had made to Hawaii when he was ten years old. But this single encounter and child's impressions then did nothing to vitiate

the image of his father that he held. *I remembered his only visit—the basketball he had given me and how he had taught me to dance.* (DFMF, p 195) His distant African father became a powerful, inspiring figure in Barack's dreams. This is doubtless the image from which he derived the book's title.

*...I realized, perhaps for the first time, how even in his absence his strong image had given me some bulwark on which to grow up, an image to live up to, or disappoint.* (DFMF, p 195-6)

As Barack neared graduation from Columbia in 1983, he decided he would become a community organizer. That vocation had been inspired and shaped by Saul Alinsky: Alinsky's activism in the 1960s organizing the poor and dispossessed to achieve political ends became a national model for organizing grass roots constituencies thereafter. Conservatives saw organizers as 'professional agitators.' It was not a broadly popular activity, but it had had its successes.

*I didn't know anyone making a living that way. When classmates in college asked me just what it was that a community organizer did, I couldn't answer them directly. Instead, I'd pronounce on the need for change.*

*Change in the White House, where Reagan and his minions were carrying on their dirty deeds. Change in the Congress, compliant and corrupt. Change in the mood of the country, manic and self-absorbed. Change won't come from the top, I would say. Change will come from a mobilized grass roots.*

*That's what I'll do, I'll organize black folks. At the grass roots. For change.* (DFMF, p 199)

His friends and classmates, Barack says, would commend him for his idealism when he told them of his plans, *before heading for the post office to mail in their graduate school applications.* (DFMF, p 199) Most wanted MBAs or law degrees, then on to Wall Street or large, prestigious law firms and, in a short while, to handsome six-figure salaries. That was certainly an option for Barack now. There was a large demand then (which continues today) for smart, young blacks with excellent resumes and prestigious graduate credentials in the professions and upper tiers of the corporate world. There wasn't much demand, he would discover, for community organizers.

Barack had strong desires to work at advancing the cause of poor, underprivileged blacks, many of whom

still remained outside the American Dream in the 1980s. But—a credit to his good judgement—he never embraced any of the hard ideologies of doctrinaire political radicals.

*At the time, he says, about to graduate from college, I was operating mainly on impulse, like a salmon swimming blindly upstream toward the site of his own conception. In classes and seminars, I would dress up these impulses in the slogans and theories that I'd discovered in books, thinking—falsely—that the slogans meant something...But at night, lying in bed, I would let the slogans drift away, to be replaced with a series of images, of a past I had never known.*

*They were of the civil rights movement, mostly, the grainy black-and-white footage that appears every February during Black History Month, the same images that my mother had offered me as a child... [These images conveyed a] bolstering [of] my spirits, channeling my emotions in a way that words never could. They told me (although even this much understanding may have come later...) that I wasn't alone in my particular struggles, and that communities had never been a given in this country, at least not for blacks. Communities had to be created, fought for, tended like gardens.*

It is difficult to overemphasize the influence Barack's mother had had on him in childhood, especially in Indonesia<sup>6</sup>, after she made a decision to leave Lolo and take her talented child back to the United States where she could feel more secure about the future he would have. He once described her as “a kind of dreamy, 1960s liberal.” The adjective “dreamy” would have referred to her open-ended idealism and the youthful innocence that inspired it. She was a product of the ideals and optimism of the Kennedy years, and that idealism carried over into the civil rights movement that emerged under Lyndon Johnson later in the 1960s and 1970s, during Barack's childhood and early adolescence. Ann was clear-eyed enough to know that her son would mature in an America in which he would be *classified* a black man, with the potential disabilities that could entail. She sought to fortify him against those liabilities with many stories and histories of the civil rights movement and its black heroes and champions, such as Dr. King and Thurgood Marshall. These role models were reinforced by her stories and accounts of his father, which, in his absence, were magnified and idealized. These were the building blocks of his character and sensibilities as he emerged into early manhood.

They helped guide him through the inner struggles he encountered that, as Ann so clearly anticipated, he experienced in his last high school years and during his time at Occidental and Columbia, as he faced forging his identity as an American black man<sup>7</sup>.

Finding his place in a black community became a major goal for him. There were, however, two problems. First, the sense of black community, such as was present in the civil rights movement of the '60s and '70s, had dissipated in the Reagan years of the '80s. It was dormant and fragmented and had lost much of its energy and common purpose—well short of achieving the goals and aspirations that black people then had envisioned. Despite the progress that had been made, there was still widespread poverty and social decay among urban blacks in every American big city. The second problem was that Barack had never been part of that vibrant, energized black community that gave the civil rights movement its cohesion and effectiveness—except in his mother's teachings and stories. He now saw community organizing as a way that he might, using Saul Alinsky's precepts, help recreate a new black community, of which he would be a part and in which he might become a leader.

*Through organizing, through shared sacrifice, membership [would be] earned. And because membership was earned—because this community I imagined was still in the making, built on the promise that the larger American community, black, white, and brown, could somehow redefine itself—I believed that it might, over time, admit the uniqueness of my own life.*

*That was my idea of organizing. It was a promise of redemption.*  
(DFMF, p 201-2)

Now he tried to find a job as a community organizer: *in the months leading up to graduation, I wrote to every civil rights organization I could think of, to any black elected official in the country with a progressive agenda, to neighborhood councils and tenant rights groups. When no one wrote back, I wasn't discouraged. I decided to find more conventional work for a year, to pay off my student loans and maybe even save a little bit. I would need the money later, I told myself. Organizers didn't make any money; their poverty was proof of their integrity.* (DFMF, p 202)

Barack eventually found a job with a consulting house to international corporations as a research assistant. He was given an office in a high-rise

building in mid-Manhattan; he worked as an information executive, sitting each day before his computer screen, checking the Reuters machine that blinked bright emerald messages from across the globe. He seemed to be the only black in the company, ...a source of shame for me but a source of considerable pride for the company's secretarial pool. They treated me like a son, those black ladies; they told me how they expected me to run the company one day. (DFMF, p 202-3) When he confided to them his plans to become an organizer, their eyes told me they were secretly disappointed. Only Ike, the gruff black security guard in the lobby, was willing to come right out and tell me I'd be making a mistake.

*'Organizing? That's some kinda politics, ain't it? Why you wanna do something like that?'*

When Barack tried to explain his political views and motives, *Ike just shook his head. 'Mr. Barack,' he said, 'I hope you don't mind if I give you a little bit of advice. You don't have to take it now, but I'm gonna give it to you anyhow. Forget about this organizing business and do something that's gonna make you some money. Not greedy, you understand. But enough. I'm telling you this 'cause I can see potential in you. Young man*

*like you, got a nice voice—hell, you could be one a them announcers on TV. Or sales...got a nephew about your age making some real money there. That's what we need, see. Not more folks running around here, all rhymes and jive. You can't help folks that ain't gonna make it nohow, and they won't appreciate you trying. Folks that wanna make it, they gonna find a way to do it on they own. How old are you anyway?'*

*'Twenty-two.'*

*'See there. Don't waste your youth, Mr. Barack. Wake up one morning, an old man like me, and all you gonna be is tired, with nothing to show for it.'* (DFMF, p 203-4)

Barack paid little heed to Ike's advice then: *he sounded too much like my grandparents. But as time passed, I felt the idea of becoming an organizer slipping away from me. The company promoted me to the position of financial writer. I had my own office, my own secretary, money in the bank. Sometimes, coming out of an interview with Japanese financiers or German bond traders, I would catch my reflection in the elevator doors—see myself in a suit and tie, a briefcase in my hand—and for a split second I would imagine myself as a captain of industry, barking out or-*

*ders, closing the deal, before I remembered who it was that I had told myself I wanted to be and felt pangs of guilt for my lack of resolve.*

Then out of the blue, Barack got a call from his half-sister, Auma, whom he had never met, from Germany where she was studying. She wanted to come to New York to see him. He was excited at the prospect and offered to put her up. Concrete plans were made. But then, as the time approached, he got another call from her—this with news that a younger half-brother, David, had been killed in a motorcycle accident. Auma had to cancel her plans and return to Kenya for the funeral.

The keen anticipation of Auma's visit, the disappointment at its cancellation, the sudden shock of an unseen younger half-brother's death (whom now he would never know), induced in Barack a spell of deep reflection. He wondered at these emotional ties to blood relatives in Africa he'd never met; he pondered once more his idea of becoming an organizer, an internal promise that was still *a vague tug at my heart*. (DFMF, p 207) All this made him question anew the easy, comfortable life that he was growing to enjoy. These reflections would not leave him, and would not resolve.

Several months after Auma's call, he quit his job at the consulting firm and began searching in earnest for an organizing job. He turned down one generous offer from a prominent civil rights organization—too much an intellectual job of conferences and meetings with elected officials. He wanted something closer to the streets. For a while he drifted, taking on sundry unpaid temporary tasks, such as passing out flyers for an assemblyman's race in Brooklyn. His finances began to run thin. He realized he was engaged in something close to aimless wandering, having almost given up on organizing.

Then he got a call from Marty Kaufman, who had been a disciple of Saul Alinsky's back in the '60s. Kaufman said he was starting an organizing drive in Chicago and was looking for a trainee. It sounded promising. Kaufman said he would be in New York in several weeks and an interview was set up.

During the course of the interview, when they met, Barack gave him some of his biography. Some way into it Kaufman said: *Hmmm... You must be angry about something.*

*'What do you mean by that?'* Barack asked.

*Kaufman shrugged. 'I don't know*

*what exactly. But something. Don't get me wrong—anger's a requirement for the job. The only reason anybody decides to become an organizer. Well-adjusted people find more relaxing work.'*

Kaufman explained something of his own background. *He was Jewish, in his late thirties, had been reared in New York. He had started organizing in the sixties with the student protests, and ended up staying with it for fifteen years. Farmers in Nebraska. Blacks in Philadelphia. Mexicans in Chicago. Now he was trying to pull urban blacks and suburban whites together around a plan to save manufacturing jobs in metropolitan Chicago. He needed somebody to work with him, he said. Somebody black.* (DFMF, p 212)

He said most of the work would be with churches—*they're the only game in town*. The unions had lost much of their stature. Besides, *[t]hats where the people are, and that's where the values are, even if they've been buried under a lot of bullshit*, said Kaufman. (DFMF, p 212) The churches, however, could not just be easily pulled into an organizing effort. They might express support and talk a good game, but they would only really help if you could show them it was in their self-interest to do

*so, show them how it'll help them pay their heating bill.* (DFMF, p 212)

They discussed Chicago, to which Barack was a relative stranger. Segregation was deep-seated there, but Chicago had just elected a charismatic black mayor, Harold Washington, whom Barack admired. He'd tried to get a job with Washington but had received no reply to his inquiry.

Kaufman offered Barack the job and agreed to start him at ten thousand dollars a year, plus car and expense allowances; he could expect a raise in a few months *if things worked out*. After some reflection, Barack took the job.

Thus began Barack's long affair with Chicago, where over time he would put down deep roots and come to call home. He has said in many interviews that nearly everything he learned about politics and the attainment of political goals he learned working as a community organizer in South Chicago, where he spent over three years. Alinsky's approach to community organizing was a realistic one: it was directed to make people, nearly always poor and disenfranchised people, become aware of what their self-interests were, and, once aware, to show them how to come

together to achieve all or some of their goals. He advocated working within the system but also urged using any and all instruments of persuasion or pressure at hand within the system to make it produce for them.

An important conceptual tool for the community organizer was what Alinsky called a *power analysis*. It was essential to know who had the power to actually make decisions, allocate resources, hire people, create jobs, and generally achieve outcomes the organized group sought. One had to know who these people were, whether near or far up the political and organizational ladder; then one had to calculate backwards, as it were, back down the organizational hierarchy to concrete actions that the organizer's clients could, in concert, take. The goal was to exert decisive influence, to command the attention and response of those persons, to push them into acting. One had to know how to *get to* them, where their pressure points were. These were objectives only a determined organized group could accomplish. One can understand why Alinsky's organizing drives were not popular with the *status quo*.

The black churches in Chicago's deep South Side represented ready-made nodes in which a great number of

black residents had already come together, where they knew one another, saw one another, sometimes worked with one another to achieve other aims—though seldom political or social action ones.

Another critically important part of the organizer's task was to persuade and convince his clients that, if they all worked hard together as a cohesive group, they could actually achieve results. It was, in short, to give them *hope* they could succeed. Most of the poor and disenfranchised had long ago abandoned hope that anything they did could make a difference in their condition. They did not believe they had any influence or that anyone in authority cared or would listen to their grievances. Most knew they were being shamelessly neglected, denied resources to which they were entitled, and being denied justice. They just felt powerless to do anything about it. The community organizer had to overcome this inertia and resignation. He had to give them hope *as a precondition* of motivating them to act in their own behalf. This is one of the strongest lessons Barack took from his organizing work in South Chicago: that he could persuade people to come together and work together in order to overcome their most serious discontents—in short, that he

could give them hope. One can see and hear these themes today in his presidential campaign and in the title of his second book: *The Audacity of Hope*.

Marty Kaufman had made a start in the organizing work, and there were contacts and relationships that were passed on to Barack. His coming had been advertised beforehand by Marty and he got a warm welcome as he was introduced to some of the active residents whom Marty had already gotten involved. Barack had to make all these contacts and relationships his own, however, through direct personal contact. He found the people receptive, some warm and glad to see him, others more skeptical and standoffish, suspending judgement until they sized him up. That he was black helped. The mission of this organizing effort was to bring manufacturing jobs back to these neighborhoods in South Chicago; they had been hard hit by unemployment and changing neighborhood composition. Blacks had begun moving into these once all-white, lower middle and working class neighborhoods, with resultant white flight and plunging real estate values. This was a source of considerable racial tension. It posed a formidable obstacle for the new organizer to overcome, despite the fact that all—black and white alike—had a

common interest in finding new jobs to replace those lost by the departure of the manufacturing plants that had been the life blood of these communities.

Barack's main contacts were with the ministers of the black churches serving these areas; but also, importantly, in each neighborhood, with groups of a few of the more capable, involved women, who, for a host of different personal reasons, decided to become engaged in the effort. The pastors were too busy running their own churches to devote much time to it. Barack had to depend on these able women to accomplish the details and logistics—the handing out of flyers, alerting residents to meetings, reminding them to come, making sure there was coffee and refreshments, rounding up enough tables and chairs. With some of these women, he developed personal friendships. He got to know them and their children, who were, in the case of the younger ones, still around; he listened to their problems and concerns, and their stories, many tough and heart-breaking. Almost none, old or young, had husbands; nearly all were single moms (as his mother had been). They came to know him and value him as a friend they could look up to and trust, and they admired him.

What is admirable about these relationships is Barack's acceptance of these women just as they were, with no trace of condescension or social distance. They were poor and lived in the lower-most rung of Chicago's social strata; none was educated beyond a rudimentary level, few would have scored highly on an IQ test. His own intellect and education, and the relative privilege of his upbringing, set him far apart from them in these respects. Yet he accepted them and came to admire their courage and perseverance in dealing with their threadbare circumstances as best they could; he recognized and valued their simple dignity as human beings, and he came to like all of them and value them genuinely as his friends.

This quality, this insight and empathy that Barack brought to his work was quite different from Marty's approach. Marty thought of the work in terms more political and intellectual, more abstract, not so much in direct connection with these people as individuals. There was always a distance between him and those the organizing effort sought to serve, and this distance was felt by those he strove to mobilize.

One of the large, problem-plagued City housing projects in the deep

South Side's focus area was Altgeld Gardens, where many of the more abject unemployed lived. Marty had worked in Altgeld before Barack came. Some of Barack's involved women who helped with the work lived in Altgeld, and voiced complaints about Marty. *They complained that Marty didn't care about Altgeld...that [he] was arrogant and didn't listen to their suggestions.* (DFMF, p 252). Once when an unemployment center project to serve the neighborhood failed to work, Marty became livid. The aim was to get the City to establish a computerized unemployment center in the area. A university had been engaged to provide the computer resources to run it and to demonstrate its capability in a trial run. *Unfortunately, two months after [the trial run] was supposed to have started, no one had found work through the program. The computers didn't work right; the data entry was plagued with errors; people were sent to interview for jobs that didn't exist.* (DFMF, p 252) A grant of \$500,000 that the City was to make to the project had gone elsewhere. All this put Marty in a foul mood, which was evident to the residents. As he fumed and cursed the failures of others under his breath, the women from Altgeld weren't sympathetic. *All they knew was that \$500,000 had gone somewhere, and*

*it wasn't in their neighborhood. For them, the job bank became yet more evidence that Marty had used them to push a secret agenda, that somehow whites in the suburbs were getting the jobs they'd been promised.*

*'Marty's just looking out for his own,' they grumbled. Barack sought to mitigate their unhappiness.*

*I had tried my best to mediate the conflict, defending Marty against charges of racism, suggesting to him that he cultivate more tact. Marty told me I was wasting my time. According to him, the only reason Angela and the other leaders in the city were sore was because he'd refused to hire them to run the program. 'That's what ruins a lot of so-called community organizations out here. They start taking government money. They hire big, do-nothing staffs. Pretty soon, they've become big patronage operations, with clients to be serviced. Not leaders, clients. To be serviced!' He spit the words out, as if they were unclean. 'Jesus, it makes you sick just thinking about it.'*

*[S]eeing the still-fretful look on my face, he added, 'If you're going to do this work, Barack, you've got to stop worrying about whether people will like you. They won't.'* (DFMF, p 254)

Barack's experience with the black pastors in deep South Chicago was varied and also an education in the changing nature and context of black American politics and culture. Remember that Barack was still learning about these phenomena firsthand. Unlike most American blacks, he did not grow up in the American black milieu; he was raised in the white home of his white mother and maternal grandparents—in Hawaii and Indonesia. His first experience *inside* American black culture, as it were, was through his association with the few black classmates he had at Punahoe (high school) in Hawaii, and later, as he found himself classified black, through the black students' groups at Occidental and Columbia that he joined. These experiences stirred him to take up the cause of American blacks for social justice and equity, and these ideals in turn led him to his organizing job in Chicago, where now he found himself immersed among some of the most underprivileged and deprived black people in America. He had of course known about the plight of the large black underclasses in American big cities. He had seen them in New York. Now he was living and working among them every waking hour, trying to help them solve some of their legion problems.

One of the phenomena he encountered in his interviews with black pastors was black nationalism. It took several forms. The most common in South Chicago was the adoption of Islam. The Muslim faith had grown popular and appealing to American blacks as they searched for cultural roots in their native African past. Some felt inclined to abandon Christianity as “the white man’s religion.” The absolutism, simplicity, and strong moral discipline of Islam many found fortifying, as they struggled to pull together dissolute and broken lives and to forge confident new identities. One feature of nationalism was explicit anger, bordering on rage, against the white man. Barack had imbibed some of that in his black students groups in college. But it was an emotion that, however well he understood it, he could not really assimilate as his own; his background, after all, was a white mother and the home of his white grandparents in which he was lovingly reared.

The most virulent form of nationalism found expression in Minister Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam. It was a call for complete black separatism, for creating an insular, self-sufficient society with as few bonds of dependence to the white man’s larger society as possible. Farrakhan preached, and

called for, a stern pietism, for a cleansing purification from corruptions imposed by, or contracted from the white man’s corrosive world. It had a strict moral code that forbid any alcohol or drugs, as well as dietary rules (no pork) borrowed from traditional Islam. Other expressions of the black Muslim creed were less rigorous than the Nation’s and came in many varieties; most tended to be vague and diffuse.

*Among the handful of groups to hoist the nationalist banner, only the Nation of Islam had any significant following: Minister Farrakhan’s sharply cadenced sermons generally drew a packed house, and still more listened to his radio broadcasts. But the Nation’s active membership in Chicago was considerably smaller—several thousand, perhaps, roughly the size of one of Chicago’s biggest black congregations—a base that was rarely, if ever, mobilized around political races or in support of broad-based programs. In fact, the physical presence of the Nation in the neighborhood was nominal, restricted mainly to the clean-cut men in suits and bow ties who stood at the intersections of major thoroughfares selling the Nation’s newspaper, **The Final Call**. (DFMF, p 304-5)*

The attractiveness of Islam, as a

faith, was not the only form of nationalism out there. There was also a broader, less angry and threatening variety best described as Afro-centrism, which manifested itself both within mosques and in Christian churches; there was also what one might call “secular” Afro-centrism, which found expression mainly in black fashions and names. American blacks, still with many grievances, were beginning now to feel freer and many were searching for cultural roots they could call their own. That was its positive root. But it also had a darker negative one. That was anger and hate, expressed often as an indictment of everything white, that some of the more virulent nationalisms espoused. Barack did not doubt that the anger and hate were real and that they were out there, in the background emotions—conscious and unconscious—of most American blacks. Nationalism fed on this darker side of black emotion, and some expressions stoked it and encouraged it. Barack questioned whether to encourage its expression yielded any benefit, therapeutic or otherwise, longer term, and he questioned above all its political effectiveness, longer term. Yet he could not altogether deny its short term efficacy and attractiveness, especially to nationalists like Rafiq (a black Muslim minister he’d gotten to know).

*In a sense...Rafiq was right when he insisted that, deep down, all blacks were potential nationalists. The anger was there, bottled up and often turned inward, as when blacks strained to appropriate white physical characteristics, such as lighter skin or blue eyes (via contact lenses), or negatively, when black teenagers called each other “nigger” or worse—both instances Barack had painfully witnessed. Barack had to grant Rafiq’s case some plausibility.*

*I wondered whether, for now at least, Rafiq wasn’t...right in preferring that that anger be redirected; whether a black politics that suppressed rage toward whites generally, or one that failed to elevate race loyalty above all else, was a politics inadequate to the task.*

*It was a painful thought to consider...It contradicted the morality my mother had taught me, a morality of subtle distinctions—between individuals of goodwill and those who wished me ill, between active malice and ignorance or indifference. I had a personal stake in that moral framework; I’d discovered I couldn’t escape it if I tried. And yet perhaps it was a framework that blacks in this country could no longer afford; perhaps it weakened black resolve, en-*

*couraged confusion within the ranks. Desperate times called for desperate measures, and for many blacks, times were chronically desperate. If nationalism could create a strong and effective insularity, deliver on its promise of self-respect, then the hurt it might cause well-meaning whites, or the inner turmoil it caused people like me, would be of little consequence.*

*If nationalism could deliver. As it turned out, questions of effectiveness, and not sentiment, caused most of my quarrels with Rafiq. (DFMF, p 303)*

Barack concluded that nationalism could not deliver. Worse still, it diverted black efforts and sentiment away from paths that had promise longer term of real progress. It would be in the end damaging to the alliances, political and social, that blacks needed to make. And practically, much of it, such as Rafiq's frequent general diatribes against whites, were just talk.

*[W]hat concerned me wasn't just the damage loose talk caused efforts of coalition building, or the emotional pain it caused others. It was the distance between our talk and our action, the effect it was having on us as individuals and as a people. That gap corrupted both language and thought; it made us forgetful and en-*

*couraged fabrication; it eventually eroded our ability to hold either ourselves or each other accountable... [I]t was blacks who could least afford such make-believe. Black survival in this country had always been premised on a minimum of delusions; it was an absence of delusions that continued to operate in the daily lives of most black people I met....*

*The continuing struggle to align word and action, our heartfelt desires with a workable plan: didn't self-esteem finally depend on just this? It was that belief which had led me into organizing, and it was that belief which would lead me to conclude, perhaps for the final time, that notions of purity—of race or of culture—could no more serve as the basis for the typical black American's self-esteem than it could for mine. Our sense of wholeness would have to arise from something more fine than the bloodlines we'd inherited. (DFMF, p 309-10)*

Barack continued to work with Rafiq and other nationalists he had contact with in South Chicago, but in his own mind it was a futile pathway that had ultimately no exit for its followers.

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During Barack's time in Chicago his half-sister, Auma, finally was able to make the visit she had intended before David's death. He had never seen her before, but readily identified her at the airport and was overjoyed to see her. The bond of kinship asserted itself when he first saw her face in the crowd and a few minutes later when he gave her a big welcoming hug.

During the time she stayed—about ten days—they had long talks about family and especially about “the Old Man” as Auma called their father. Until that time Barack knew him only from his mother's and grandparents' stories; they had painted a portrait of a highly intelligent, commanding figure, overbearing perhaps, but possessed also of considerable charm and a natural capacity for leadership. His diligence, discipline, and ambition in pursuing his studies had always been held up as an inspirational model to Barack, especially by his mother. The one time he had seen his father, when he was ten years old and his father visited Hawaii to see him and his former wife and Dunham in-laws, nothing dislodged that idealistic vision.

Now Auma told him more of what his

father really had been like. Auma and her older brother, Roy, were the children of Barack Sr. and his first African wife. Auma was born, she said, while Barack Sr. was away in Hawaii and America, where he married Ann Dunham. By Auma's account, Barack Sr. married freely, with or without the benefit or obligation of formal legal arrangements. His own father, whom we shall meet in Kenya, was a Muslim, a faith which sanctioned up to four wives. Barack Sr. had no religious faith and felt no qualms from that quarter. When he finally returned to Kenya, after getting his Ph.D at Harvard, he brought home yet another American white woman named Ruth.

When he first returned to Kenya, he did very well financially. He got a job with an American oil company (Shell, she thought). *It was only a few years after independence, Auma continued, and the Old Man was well connected with all the top government people. He had gone to school with many of them. The vice-president, ministers, they would all come to the house sometimes and drink with him and talk about politics. He had a big house and a big car, and everybody was impressed with him because he was so young but he already had so much education from abroad.* (DFMF, p 323)

Ruth, Barack Sr.'s second American wife, had two children by him, Mark and David (it was this David who was killed). Ruth had refused to let Barack Sr.'s first wife (Auma's mother) live with them in the big house. But according to Auma he would still leave and go out with her occasionally. *As if he had to show people, you see. That he could also have this beautiful African woman whenever he chose.* (DFMF, p 323).

Then Barack Sr.'s fortunes began to change. He left the American oil company and went to work for the Kenyan Ministry of Tourism. But trouble soon developed inside Kenyan politics, Auma explained. *'President Kenyatta was from the largest tribe, the Kikuyus. The Luos, the second largest tribe, began to complain that Kikuyus were getting all the best jobs. The government [became] full of intrigue. Most of the Old Man's friends just kept quiet and learned to live with the situation. But the Old Man began to speak up. He would tell people that tribalism was going to the ruin the country and that unqualified men were taking the best jobs. His friends tried to warn him about saying such things in public, but he didn't care. He always thought he knew what was best, you see.* (DFMF, p 325) Barack Sr. refused to

change his behavior and things deteriorated. Kenyatta finally heard of his reckless talk and sacked him, saying that *because he could not keep his mouth shut, he would not work again until he had no shoes on his feet.* (DFMF, p 326)

From that time on he became virtually unemployable. Finally he got a small job in the Water Department. He began to drink heavily and stay out late and was even abusive with his wife and children. Ruth became very bitter at the changes in him, and, Auma said, began to treat her and Roy differently from her own children, Mark and David. Finally Barack Sr. had a serious car accident when he had been drinking. The driver of the other car, a white farmer, was killed. Ruth left him about this time. *For a long time the Old Man was in the hospital, she continued, almost a year, and Roy and I lived basically on our own. When the Old Man finally got out of the hospital, that's when he went to visit you and your mum in Hawaii.* (DFMF, p 327-8)

Things did not improve when he returned. Because of his long absence owing to the accident he lost his job in the Water Department. He had already lost the big house and big car, and now Barack Sr. and his shrunken

family had no place to live. *'Then we found a run-down house in a rough section of town, and we stayed there for several years. That was a terrible time. The Old Man had so little money, he would have to borrow from relatives just for food. This made him more ashamed, I think, and his temper got worse. Despite all our troubles, he would never admit to Roy or myself that anything was wrong. I think that's what hurt the most—the way he still put on airs about how we were the children of Dr. Obama. We would have empty cupboards, and he would make donations to charities just to keep up appearances! I would argue with him sometimes, but he would just say that I was a foolish young girl and didn't understand.'* (DFMF, p 328)

Then, she continued, Kenyatta died and things improved. *He got a job with the Ministry of Finance and started to have money again, and influence. But I think he never got over the bitterness of what had happened to him, seeing his other age-mates who had been more politically astute rise ahead of him. And it was too late to pick up the pieces of his family. For a long time he lived alone in a hotel room, even when he could afford again to buy a house. He would have different women for short spells—Europeans, Africans—but*

*nothing ever lasted. I almost never saw him, and when I did, he didn't know how to behave with me.* (DFMF, p 330).

He remained overbearing and imperious, insisting when she saw him on his parental prerogative to direct and guide her life. Therefore, she said, when she got a scholarship to study in Germany, she didn't tell him. She just left without saying goodbye. In Germany, however, with the perspective of time and distance, some of her anger began to subside and she felt she began to get some understanding of him. He was a man of great capabilities and intellectual acuity; he was proud and bold and had a strong sense of what his just desserts should be among the ranks of men; he was passionate and generous; but he was also controlling and domineering. His undoing—when his boldness became recklessness, and his clear vision became practical bad judgement—dealt a huge blow to his ego. He could not cope with it well; he become depressed and irrational, and showed even self-destructive tendencies (e.g., the drunken car accident). These were times in the depths of despair. But when his fortunes reversed, much of the old Obama came back again.

Auma continued: *... 'I could see what*

*he had gone through, how even he had never really understood himself. Only at the end, after making such a mess of his life, do I think he was maybe beginning to change. The last time I saw him, he was on business trip, representing Kenya at an international conference in Europe. I was apprehensive, because we hadn't spoken for so long. But when he arrived in Germany he seemed really relaxed, almost peaceful. We had a really good time. You know, even when he was being completely unreasonable he could be so charming! He took me with him to London, and we stayed in a fancy hotel, and he introduced me to all his friends and making a great fuss, telling his friends how proud he was of me...I felt like a little girl again. Like his princess.'* (DFMF, p 331)

She saw him one last time. He took her to lunch on the last day of his visit. They talked about the future. He offered her some money and insisted she take it. He promised to find her a husband when she returned to Kenya. He had by then, she said, fathered another son, George, by a young woman he was living with. Auma urged that with this youngest boy, he could really do right by him. He seemed to concur.

Auma at that point broke into tears.

*'Do you see, Barack?' she said beneath sobs. 'I was just starting to know him. It was just getting to the point where...where he might have explained himself. Sometimes I think he might have really turned the corner, found some inner peace. When he died, I felt so...so cheated. As cheated as you must have felt.'* (DFMF, p 332)

After Auma went to bed, Barack stayed up thinking. His feelings were not so much having been cheated. They were more profound than that—something approaching deep shock. A lifelong image of his father had dissolved as Auma told her story.

*I felt as if my world had been turned on its head; as if I had woken up to find a blue sun in the yellow sky, or heard animals speaking like men. All my life, I had carried a single image of my father, one that I sometimes rebelled against but had never questioned, one that I had later tried to take as my own. The brilliant scholar, the generous friend, the upstanding leader—my father had been all those things. All those things and more, because...he had never been present to foil the image, because I hadn't seen what perhaps most men see at some point in their lives: their father's body shrinking, their father's best hopes dashed, their father's face*

*lined with grief and regret.*

The image of his father that his mother had implanted had nourished and guided him up to now. This night it became stained and soiled.

*Yes, I'd seen weakness in other men—Gramps and his disappointments, Lolo and his compromise. But these men had become object lessons for me, men I might love but never emulate...It was into my father's image, the black man, son of Africa, that I'd packed all the attributes I sought in myself...And if later I saw that the black men I knew...fell short of such lofty standards; if I had learned to respect these men for the struggles they went through, recognizing them as my own—my father's voice had nevertheless remained untainted, inspiring, rebuking, granting or withholding approval. 'You do not work hard enough, Barry. You must help in your peoples' struggle. Wake up, black man!'* (DFMF, p 335)

Now he felt a giddy kind of liberation from this commanding image. *The king is overthrown...The emerald curtain is pulled aside. The rabble of my head is free is run riot; I can do what I damn well please. For what man, if not my own father, has the power to tell me otherwise? Whatever I do, it seems, I won't do much worse than he*

*did.* (DFMF, p 335)

But as these revelations about his father sunk in, more perspective returned. He was, in Barack's consciousness, now truly dead. He was no longer the inner commanding guide. Perhaps all he could impart now was the sad story of what had happened to him. Finally, it occurred to Barack that *for the all the new information, I still didn't know the man my father had been.* (DFMF, p 336)

Ten days later Auma's departure date arrived. Waiting for the plane to board, her thoughts turned to Alego, the small Kenyan village from which the Obamas had come, where Granny Obama still lived. They called it "*Home Square*"—*our grandfather's land... 'It's the most beautiful place, Barack... We need to go home, she said. 'We need to go home, Barack, and see him there.'* (DFMF, p 336-7) After she left, Barack's resolve to return to Kenya once more became a set commitment. He would make this visit after the completion of his work in Chicago, before his first term at the Harvard Law School. His account of Kenya comprises the last part of the book.

His work in Chicago continued. He had been there long enough now to

get a commanding grasp on what it was possible to accomplish and what not. He felt more confident and at ease in working with the residents. They had both some notable successes and some sharp disappointments. They were successful, with Barack's adroit leadership, in finally getting the City's commitment to fund an employment center in Roseland, a small insular community of single-family houses in the project area. The illustrious black mayor of Chicago, Harold Washington, had even been recruited to put in an appearance at the ribbon-cutting event when the employment center opened. "Harold," as he was affectionately called by Chicago's blacks was an almost mythic figure; to have solicited his presence for this event was quite a coup for Barack. At the same event, however, came a keen disappointment. Barack saw Harold's appearance at this event as high profile opportunity to get a commitment from him to appear at a rally they had been organizing for the project area in the fall. The rally would focus on other needs of the area that required the City's resources and initiative. He entrusted to Angela, one of his key black lady helpers, to make the request of Harold. He had appointed her to introduce Harold; she would have a chance to make the request of him directly as they stood on the po-

dium together before the ceremony began. He had carefully prepped her on how to seize the opportunity: *Do it while his scheduler is around. Tell him about all the work we're doing out here, and why...*(DFMF, p 339)

After the ceremony was over and Harold's limo had sped away, Barack (who'd stayed in the back of the big room) asked her anxiously if she'd made the request and gotten a commitment. Angela was still all atwitter in her excitement over having been on the same podium with the legendary Harold and was enjoying telling two friends of her thrill. He asked her a second time with more determination. She and her friends looked at him in a puzzled, uncomprehending way. 'What rally?' she answered. Barack went bananas. A key opportunity missed to engage the City's leading politician in exactly the right context! He was severely disappointed. Still, the employment center was a definite achievement and the mayor had come.

Overall, Barack's work was going well; it was bearing fruit and he had reason to feel he was accomplishing something. He was beginning to receive recognition from local leaders in the area, asked to sit on panels, conduct workshops. The local politicians knew his name. But problems

begin to develop with Marty. They had separated their efforts as Barack got a grasp on the South Side work. Marty meanwhile had shifted his efforts to Gary. One day Marty broached the subject of transferring him to another area. Barack resisted. Marty's approach was fundamentally different. He was driven by *the idea*—the social objectives and needs that a closed plant symbolized, not so much by the individual people involved, to whom he did not, or could not relate, very closely. Marty pushed on him some, but Barack pushed back. Finally Barack told him flatly that he wasn't leaving the South Side just now. They reached an accommodation. Barack would stay, he would make reports, they would have weekly meetings; otherwise Marty would leave him alone. Still, in the weekly meetings, Marty would remind him that he had opportunity there for only modest accomplishments. *'Life is short, Barack,' he would say. 'If you're not trying to really change things out here, you might as well forget it.'* (DFMF p. 347)

Such comments did not change Barack's resolve immediately. But the prospect of larger scale change, change broad enough and deep enough to change many peoples' lots and opportunities, that idea certainly

took root in Barack's background presuppositions about his own future. He does not say when he began thinking about a political career, but thoughts like these doubtless were an input.

As Barack got deeper into his work, he began to notice a subtle but ominous change in the air, one that manifested itself particularly in the young boys and teenage youth in the neighborhoods; ... *something different was going on with the children of the South Side that spring of 1987; ...an invisible line had been crossed, a blind and ugly corner turned.* (DFMF, 381) It was more than just the social pathology he had witnessed since coming to Chicago. *The drive-by shootings, the ambulance sirens, the night sounds of neighborhoods abandoned to drugs and gang war and phantom automobiles, where police or press rarely ventured...none of this was new....[I]t was more a change of atmosphere, like the electricity of an approaching storm. I felt it when, driving home one evening, I saw four tall boys walking down a tree-lined block idly snapping a row of young saplings that an older couple had just finished planting in front of their house. I felt it whenever I looked into the eyes of the young men in wheelchairs that had started appearing on the streets*

*that spring, boys crippled before their prime, their eyes without a trace of self-pity, eyes so composed, already so hardened, that they served to frighten rather than to inspire.*

*That's what was new: the arrival of a new equilibrium between hope and fear; the sense, shared by adults and youth alike, that some, if not most, of our boys were slipping beyond rescue. (DFMF, p 382)*

He became convinced that one of the most urgent issues facing these neighborhoods was school reform. Segregation wasn't much of a problem any more: most whites who could afford it had fled to Catholic and other private schools. But *Chicago's [public] schools remained in a state of perpetual crisis—annual budget shortfalls in the hundreds of millions; shortages of textbooks and toilet paper; a teachers' union that went out on strike at least once every two years; a bloated bureaucracy and an indifferent state legislature<sup>8</sup>. The more I learned about the system, the more convinced I became that school reform was the only possible solution for the plight of the young men I saw on the street; that without stable families, with no prospects of blue-collar work that could support a family of their own, education was their last, best hope.*

Barack's last big initiative in the South Side focused on efforts at school reform. He found that support, especially among the churches that had been allies in other efforts, was difficult to arouse. *The biggest source of resistance was rarely talked about—...the uncomfortable fact that every one of our churches was filled with teachers, principals, and district superintendents. Few of these educators sent their children to public schools; they knew too much for that. But they would defend the status quo with the same skill and vigor as their white counterparts of two decades before<sup>9</sup>. (DFMF, p 388-9)*

Nonetheless, he succeeded getting a program started. It was a proposal in a key South Side high school *for a youth counseling network, something to provide at risk teenagers with mentoring and tutorial services and to involve parents in a long-term planning process for reform. (DFMF, p 396)* Barack was able to turn over much responsibility for running this project over to Johnnie, an able assistant he had hired. His own thoughts were now beginning to turn elsewhere.

His oldest half-brother, Roy (Auma's older brother)<sup>10</sup>, now lived in Wash-

ington D.C., and he took a weekend off to fly to Washington and visit Roy, who, like Auma, he had never met. Roy, it turned out, had married an American Peace Corps worker. Auma had told him they were living in the United States.

The arrangements were that Barack would stay with Roy and his wife over the weekend in Washington. But when Barack arrived at National Airport<sup>11</sup>, Roy was not there. He called him and Roy answered, sounding apologetic. Was there anything wrong, Barack asked. It turned out that Roy at the time was having marital difficulties. He asked if Barack could stay at a hotel that night. He and the wife, he explained, had just had a little argument, things were a little tense just now and the social atmosphere would not be good. Barack should check into a hotel and Roy would meet him for dinner at eight o'clock.

When they met, Roy looked different than in the pictures Barack had seen of him. In the pictures he was slender, dressed in an African print, with an Afro, a goatee and a mustache. Now he was much heavier, wore thick glasses, the goatee was gone, and he was dressed in Western clothes. As Auma had said, though, *his resemblance to the Old Man was unnerving.* (DFMF, p 398). It still was.

In their evening together, Barack's impression of Roy was that he was a somewhat manic personality. There was excess in his speech and expression, in his driving (he was a frighteningly bad driver who drove too fast), and obviously in his eating. When Barack expressed alarm over his driving, he confessed that his wife, Mary, also complained of it—especially since the accident. Yes, he'd had an accident; but he brushed it off: *'Ah, it was nothing. You see I'm still here.'* (DFMF, p 399)

Over dinner, Roy confided that he and the wife were probably getting a divorce. She was tired of him staying out late and said he drank too much. *'She says I'm becoming just like the Old Man.'* (DFMF, p 400)

*'What do you think?'* Barack asked. Roy now became serious. *'The truth is,...I don't think I really like myself. And I blame the Old Man for this.'* (DFMF, p 400)

Then he launched into a long account of all the hard times Auma had related that she and Roy went through with the Old Man:

*...[O]f being yanked away from his mother and everything familiar; the Old Man's sudden descent into pov-*

*erty; the arguments and breakdown and eventual flight. He told me about his life after leaving our father's house; how, bouncing around from relative to relative, he had gained admission to the University of Nairobi, then secured a job with a local accounting firm after graduation; how he had taught himself the discipline of work, always arriving at his job early and completing his tasks no matter how late he was out the night before. Listening to him, I felt the same admiration that I'd felt when listening to Auma talk about her life, the resilience they had both displayed, the same stubborn strength that had lifted them out of bad circumstances. Except in Auma I had also sensed a willingness to put the past behind her, a capacity to somehow forgive, if not necessarily forget. Roy's memories of the Old Man seemed more immediate, more taunting; for him the past remained an open sore. (DFMF, p 401)*

Roy ordered another drink and continued with his account of the additional woes they went through, finally to the Old Man's death. As eldest son, Roy had had to make all of the funeral arrangements. There was contention over whether the service should be Christian or Muslim (the Old Man was in fact an atheist and altogether secular). Finally, they had

a traditional Luo mourning, which lasted three days (he was buried in Alego, beside their grandfather Obama). A great number of people attended. Then there came disputes over the Old Man's will and conflicting claims on the inheritance he left (which were ongoing). Finally, later there was David's death.

*'When David died,' Roy continued, 'that was it for me. I was sure our whole family was cursed. I started drinking, fighting—I didn't care. I figured if the Old Man could die, if David could die, that I would have to die, too. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I'd stayed in Kenya. (DFMF, p 403)*

Then there was Nancy, the American Peace Corps worker he'd been seeing. She returned to the States. He called her and said he wanted to join her. She assented, and he bought a ticket and came. They were married.

He thought he could start over in America, he said. But he'd discovered, you can't really start over. The old demons come with you and continue to haunt you. Roy was still wrestling with them.

Barack decided to leave the next day. Roy and his wife had things to sort out. They had breakfast the next

morning before the plane left, and Roy seemed in better spirits. They promised to get back together once things settled down. But Roy remained on Barack's mind. *The entire flight back to Chicago...and through the rest of the weekend, I couldn't rid myself of the sense that Roy was in danger somehow, that old demons were driving him toward an abyss, and that if only I was a better brother, my intervention would prevent his fall.* (DFMF, p 405)

Before leaving to visit Roy, Barack had confided to Johnnie that he would probably be leaving, perhaps as early as fall, maybe later. He had applied for admission to a number of prestigious law schools—Harvard, Yale, Stanford. It all depended on when he heard from them and got an acceptance from one. *I had told Johnnie only because I needed to know whether he'd willing to stay on and take my place as lead organizer—and maybe, too, because he was my friend and I needed to explain myself. Except Johnnie hadn't seen the need for explanations. The minute I told him the schools...he had grinned and slapped me on the back.*

*'I knew it! he shouted.*

*'Knew what?'*

*'That it was just a matter of time, Barack. Before you were outta here.'*

*'Why'd you think that?'*

*Johnnie shook his head and laughed. 'Damn, Barack, ...cause you got options, that's why. 'Cause you can leave. I mean, I know you're a conscientious brother and all that, but when somebody's got a choice between Harvard and Roseland, it's only so long somebody's gonna keep choosing Roseland.' ...I just hope your remember your friends when you up in that fancy office downtown.'*

*For some reason, Johnnie's laughter had made me defensive. I insisted I would be coming back to the neighborhood<sup>12</sup>. I told him I didn't plan on being dazzled by the wealth and power that Harvard represented, and that he shouldn't be either. Johnnie put his hands up in mock surrender.*

*'Hey, you don't need to be telling me all this. I ain't the one going nowhere.*

*'Yeah, well...I'm just saying that I'll be back, that's all. I don't want you or the leaders to get the wrong idea.'*

*Johnnie smiled gently. 'Ain't nobody*

*gonna get the wrong idea, Barack. Man, we're just proud to see you succeed.'* (DFMF, p 416)

But it was still spring and there was more work to do while he was still there.

In Barack's remaining time, he continued to make his rounds of interviews with the pastors of the area's black Christian churches. For these would continue to be the core of their organizing effort, both on the schools project and all others. In one particular church, in an older South Side neighborhood, he had an interview with a Reverend Philips—an older man who'd been a pastor in black churches most of his life. He seemed to know almost all the black churches in Chicago—and there were thousands of them. *He discussed Martin Luther King's visit to Chicago and the jealousy he had witnessed among some of King's fellow ministers, their fear of being usurped; and the emergence of the Muslims, whose anger Reverend Philips understood: It was his own anger, he said, an anger that he didn't expect he would ever entirely escape but that through prayer he had learned to control—and that he tried not to pass down to his children.* (DFMF, p 412)

As the interview drew to a close,

Barack asked him for introductions to other pastors who might be interested in organizing. One name he mentioned was the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Jr., pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ. Reverend Wright, Philips said, might be worth talking to; his message seemed to appeal to young people like Barack. As Barack started to leave, Reverend Philips asked: *'By the way, what church do you belong to?'*

*'I...I attend different services.'*

*'But you're not a member anywhere?'*

*'Still searching, I guess.'*

*'Well, I can understand that. It might help your mission if you had a church home, though. It doesn't matter where, really. What you're asking from pastors requires us to set aside some of our more priestly concerns in favor of prophecy. That requires a good deal of faith on our part. It makes us want to know just where you're getting yours from. Faith, that is.'* (DFMF, p 415)

Faith? What was his faith? Just now he could not answer that question. But he would not forget the old man's questions—nor his advice. As Barack continued meeting with the

area's black pastors, the question continued to come up. *'Had I heard the Good News?' some of them would ask me. 'Do you know where it is your faith is coming from?'* (DFMF p 423)

When he asked other pastors who else he should talk to, Reverend Wright's name kept coming up. *Younger ministers seemed to regard Reverend Wright as a mentor of sorts, his church a model for what they themselves hoped to accomplish. Older pastors were more cautious with their praise, impressed with the rapid growth of Trinity's congregation but somewhat scornful of its popularity among young black professionals. ('A buppie church,' one pastor would tell me.)* (DFMF, p 423)

Finally Barack met Reverend Wright. He was an interesting man. In his late forties, he had silver hair and a silver mustache and goatee. The day Barack met him he was wearing a three-piece suit. *He had grown up in Philadelphia, the son a Baptist minister. He had resisted his father's vocation at first, joining the Marines out of college, dabbling with liquor, Islam, and black nationalism in the sixties. But the call of his faith had apparently remained, a steady tug on his heart, and eventually he entered Howard, then the University of Chicago, where he spent six years studying for a*

*Ph.D. in the history of religion. He learned Hebrew and Greek, read the literature of Tillich and Niebuhr and the black liberation theologians. The anger and humor of the streets, the book learning and occasional twenty-five-cent word, all this he had brought with him to Trinity almost two decades ago. And although it was only later that I would learn much of this biography, it became clear in that very first meeting that, despite the reverend's frequent disclaimers, it was this capacious talent of his—this ability to hold together, if not reconcile, the conflicting strains of black experience—upon which Trinity's success was built.* (DFMF, p 426-7)

Later Barack himself would become a member of Trinity United and Reverend Wright his own pastor. How he resolved the issue of his faith he does not say here. He has called himself both a believer and a skeptic—though there is room both in Tillich and Niebuhr for such a 'provisonal faith,' and Barack has apparently read works of Niebuhr. Faith in the American black experience has been so intimately intermingled with hope that Barack perhaps decided he must affirm it to the extent he was able, understanding that many contemporary Christians maintain a sort of suspended judgment on many par-

ticalars of faith.

The Reverend Wright would marry Barack and Michelle Obama at Trinity; it would be their home church in Chicago, close to their house in Hyde Park. Barack doesn't say exactly when he decided to join Trinity. It likely wasn't at once, but a while later after he'd gotten to know Reverend Wright better. He does recount, however, one Sunday service he attended there in the fall, a short time before he left. It was one that left a memorable impression on him and that he has reflected on many times. That sermon may have been the stimulus that caused him, some time later, to join. It was entitled "The Audacity of Hope" and it was about the motive power of hope in fortifying people to face and overcome impossible odds and calamitous misfortune. Barack understood this well: hope is what he had first to instill in the poor and dejected people in his South Side project areas to motivate them to come together and work for change. He has adopted the phrase as a main theme of his presidential campaign and he used it as the title of his second book, which we shall examine later in this review.

On the day before Thanksgiving that fall, Harold Washington died—Washington who had been such a

symbol of hope and inspiration to Chicago's black people. Harold's death left a great political void among Chicago's blacks. When he was last reelected, *[he] said he'd be mayor for twenty years . . . And then death: sudden, simple, final, almost ridiculous in its ordinariness, the heart of an overweight man giving way.* (DFMF, p 435).

Once the tumult of grieving and the mourning had passed, his loyalists and supporters proved unable to regroup and decide on a strategy for maintaining control; and they could not decide on who to select as his rightful heir. *There was no political organization in place, no clearly defined principles to follow. The entire of black politics had centered on one man who radiated like a sun. Now that he was gone, no one could agree on what that presence had meant.* (DFMF, p 435) Harold's passing and its aftermath provided an object political lesson for Barack that he would file for future reference. He watched up close the sad spectacle of what had been a formidable political *tour de force* come unraveled and dissipate within a short time.

Later in the fall Barack gave what was both an appreciation luncheon for the twenty or so ministers whose churches had agreed to join his orga-

nizing efforts and a farewell luncheon for himself, though he did not announce his own departure until its conclusion. *[W]e discussed strategies for the coming year, the lessons learned from Harold's death. We set dates for a training retreat, agreed on a schedule of dues, talked about the continuing need to recruit more churches. When we were finished, I announced I would be leaving in May and that Johnnie would be taking over as director.*

*No one was surprised. They all came up to me afterward and offered their congratulations.* (DFMF, p 439)

So closed for Barack more than three years of what he has described repeatedly as one of the most valuable and rewarding experiences of his life, an experience that taught him almost everything he learned about politics.

That statement now may be somewhat an exaggeration after his wider political campaigns for the State Senate in Illinois and his statewide campaign for United States Senator in 2004. But he still repeats it.

What did he learn in South Side Chicago as an organizer that justifies this characterization of his experiences there? First, I think, he learned from Marty Kaufman that you cannot be

successful in organizing people, especially poor people overburdened with other problems, by appealing to lofty ideals and values. You have to address their concrete self-interests and their tangible needs. But at the same time, to undertake this kind of work, you yourself must be driven by values and ideals; you would hardly do it for its material rewards. But this observation can be generalized to apply to political constituencies far more fortunate and diverse than the poor and unemployed of South Chicago. All of us have our needs, problems and concerns, such as paying for health care and education. Some are more tangible than others. But unless ideals can blend with these concerns, we are not inclined to settle for talk about ideals and values only.

The second thing I think he learned was the necessity of being able to reach across the social and educational gap between himself and his South Side constituents, nearly all of whom were poor with meager educational attainments—some, indeed, illiterate—and acknowledge their simple human dignity as people with needs, wants, fears and hopes not dissimilar from his own. This was not so much something Barack had to “learn” as if it were an alien skill. Much of it was instinctive with him.

He is an empathetic and talented communicator. But certainly in his South Side work he saw the efficacy and essential role of this talent—of being able *to connect directly* with people on an accepting, sympathetic basis, absent any hint whatever of social distance, pretense, or condescension. If he could do this with his underprivileged South Side constituents, he can do it with anyone. And he does. An integral part of his charismatic appeal as a national politician is that people feel he is speaking directly to them, without airs, pretense or phoniness, and their response is to trust him and believe him.

The third thing I believe he learned was a set of vital lessons about *power*. Part of this education about power was from Saul Alinsky's organizing handbook: that power—political power—is an *emergent attribute from groups of organized people* with a common goal and purpose, willing to act as a coherent group *insistently*—even, if need be, *rudely*—to achieve their goal and purpose. That is the base premise of community organizing: that poor people, without influence or recognition, can only *gain* tangible power by acting together as a disciplined, coherent group. Enough people, acting insistently together, can bring to bear pressure on established hierarchies of social and politi-

cal power that otherwise would never pay them any notice. A second thing Barack learned about political power in Chicago is that an individual politician, if he is trusted enough to be recognized and revered as the *legitimate* custodian of a broad group's social and political power, can acquire and exercise considerable *personal* political power—power broad enough and deep enough to command or significantly influence resource allocation in large political subdivisions—cities, states, nations. Harold Washington was such a politician in Chicago. During his terms in office, Harold did not actually accomplish any great or lasting things—though certainly he opened to Chicago's blacks many jobs and opportunities that, but for him, they would never have had. But they trusted him and loved him. Above all, he embodied their *hopes* for a changed and better future. Once again we see here, as Barack surely does, the essential linkage between hope and political power. That raises a philosophical thought, one that Barack knows well: *hope is exclusively about the future*. The past is over and done with; it can never change. Only the future can change and be changed; the future is therefore the only plausible field for people's hopes. Politicians must perforce address peoples' futures to ignite

hope. These broad, basic concepts are today visible as general themes in Barack's presidential campaign.

Finally, in his presidential quest, a complaint has arisen among a few black groups that because he was raised in a white home, by a white mother and grandparents, and grew up in Hawaii and Indonesia, Barack is somehow outside the black American experience. His ancestors were not slaves, he has not been through the gauntlet of segregation and discrimination that most American blacks have suffered; he did not go through the civil rights struggles. He is, they say, *not black enough*.

Anyone who reads about Barack's three years of community organizing in Chicago's tough South Side must relinquish those complaints. Perhaps he felt that lack before he went to Chicago; he spoke of the inner imperative to go in terms of redemption. He was also driven by the internalized, idealized image of his outstanding black father whom he never knew. But in those three years in the South Side, he lived among, worked among and with, and embraced as close friends, some of the most down-and-out, deprived and dispossessed black people in America. Chicago, when he came there in 1985, was still among America's most seg-

regated cities, and Barack's clients in the South Side were among segregation's most damaged victims. He bonded with many of these people. He witnessed daily the social decay, the chronic unemployment, the poverty, the crime, the failed school system, the anguish and despair of single mothers, young and old, struggling to raise children against near impossible odds. He knows these grievances firsthand as well as any American black person. What sets him apart perhaps is that given his unique heritage and upbringing, his talent, and his privileged education, he understands that a black politics alone cannot solve these ills. He saw the failed efficacy, and noted the delusions, of black nationalism in South Chicago. The problems of American blacks can only find a solution inside their larger social context—within the total American experience.

After Barack left his organizing job in Chicago, before he entered Harvard Law School, he made finally a long postponed trip to Kenya to meet and know his African family there. The Kenya trip was also an important formative experience. It will be taken up in Part III of this review to be published in the October issue.

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## End Notes

1. For those readers who haven't read Part I, this was a problem for Barack because he was, first, a child of mixed parentage: his father was a black Kenyan from Africa, his mother a white woman from a Kansas family named Dunham. But his father left his mother when he was two, and he was raised in Hawaii by his "white family," by his mother and maternal grandparents. Hawaii, moreover, was a state whose population contained a greater mix of ethnicities than any other U.S. state on the mainland: native Hawaiians and Asians from virtually every Pacific nation in addition to U.S. whites. Most of Hawaii's people were shades of brown; there were very few American blacks there; and Barack fit right in, unaware in the innocence of childhood that he was different from anyone else. It was only in the later years of high school that he began *to be identified* as black by his schoolmates, both black and white, and had to face the lingering stigma that mainland blacks who were raised black had long had to suffer.

2. Technically, half-sister. Maya was Ann's second child by her second, Indonesian husband, Lolo, who became Barack's step-father. This was after Barack's Kenyan father, Barack, Sr., returned to Kenya, leaving his American family. Ann later obtained a divorce and married Lolo after a hiatus of four years, when Barack was six. They lived in Indonesia for almost another four years.

3. Coincidentally, I was also in Chicago at that same time (1958-60) attending the University of Chicago and living in Hyde Park, near the University. My wife and I also went to see **Black Orpheus** that summer at the same neighborhood art theater where Ann probably saw the film, about the same time. It had a long run there, two to three weeks, and we had much the same impression of the film as Ann did. It was a beautiful film, set in Rio during carnival, and filmed in gorgeous Technicolor.

4. I (the reviewer) am somewhat puzzled by Barack's reaction to the film. As I mentioned above, my wife and I thought it was a beautiful, enchanting film. It was a work of half-fantasy—the depiction of two lovers, in this case, two beautiful light brown Brazilian black people, reenacting in the enchantment of Rio's Carnival the simple, classic myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. A sinister, supernatural

"presence" (the master of Hades), never seen, pursues Eurydice throughout the film, with intent to carry her off forever to the underworld (in accordance with the myth). Orpheus, struck with love, is trying desperately to rescue her. The music and splendid scenery, combined with masterful cinematography, put the film in a class by itself among classic movies. Barack's reaction, therefore, remains puzzling. Perhaps he is reacting to the romanticizing of these of these simple, beautiful black people cast as mythic lovers.

5. University of Hawaii

6. These were the years between the times Barack was six and ten years old, when his promise must have been becoming evident to Ann, and her realization that the opportunities for him in Indonesia could never match those for him in the United States.

7. As Part I made clear, Barack was raised by his white mother and white maternal grandparents, thus, as it were, he was raised white. And in his childhood years in Hawaii and Indonesia, his honey brown color was a complexion widely shared by his childhood companions.

8. These were the years between the times Barack was six and ten years old, when his promise must have been becoming evident to Ann, and her realization that the opportunities for him in Indonesia could never match those for him in the United States.

9. As Part I made clear, Barack was raised by his white mother and white maternal grandparents, thus, as it were, he was raised white. And in his childhood years in Hawaii and Indonesia, his honey brown color was a complexion widely shared by his childhood companions.

10. A general point of interest here is that Chicago's schools have improved. But not without drastic measures. The current Mayor Daley's assessment of Chicago's schools and their problems was much the same as Barack's. He therefore, with the State Legislature's backing, took over the Chicago public schools and ran them as a division of City government; he was able to overcome many of their problems and Chicago's public schools today are a model of what serious reform can accomplish.

Since Barack calls Chicago home, he is certain, if nominated and elected President, to be a strong champion of school reform, with his interest (and knowledge) tracing directly back to his community organizing days in the South Side.

11. Now Ronald Reagan Airport

12. Barack made good on that promise. He came back to the neighborhood. He and his wife bought a house in Hyde Park, a (now) slightly upscale South Side neighborhood near The University of Chicago. He ran for the Illinois State Senate, and was elected, in the senatorial district of which the South Side is a part. And he remained there when he ran for the U.S. Senate in 2004. He remains there today as a Presidential candidate. The reviewer also has fond memories of those neighborhoods. I attended The University of Chicago in 1958-60 and my wife and I lived in Hyde Park. Barack's project area in his community organizing days was concentrated in an area running some 40 blocks + just south of Hyde Park, but it also included Hyde Park.

### **Paul Dunham: A Report on DSFC's DNA Testing Program**

Our DNA testing program has had 51 participants since it began about five years ago in January, 2002. We began by recommending that participants test at the 12-marker level. There were several reasons: (1) this level was recommended by our test-

ing organization, (2) it did not seem to be overly-burdensome financially and (3) the tests could be upgraded, if desirable, at an additional cost. Table 1 below shows the distribution of participants by testing level.

About half the participants were tested at the 12-marker level, slightly over one quarter at the 25-marker level and one-fifth at the 37-marker level.

We have discovered that the initial test level should be 25 markers rather than 12, and 37 markers are most useful. The larger number of markers provides more useful information, particularly about mutations. The 12-marker level seems to be simply a weeding device: either you are or are not related to others in the group.

The cost of upgrading from 12-markers to 25-markers is now an additional \$54. The cost to go from 12-markers to 37-markers is \$104 additional. Cost for moving from 25-markers to 37-markers is \$54 addi-

**Table 1. Number of participants by test level**

	<u>12-Markers</u>	<u>25-Markers</u>	<u>37-Markers</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>Number</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>% of Total</b>	<b>51.0</b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>

tional.

I recommend that everyone tested at the 12-marker level consider upgrading at least to the 25-marker level, if possible. If you are willing to upgrade but may be financially unable to do so, please let me know and I will try to find the means to do so.

I can be reached by e-mail at [pcdunham@msn.com](mailto:pcdunham@msn.com) or [pcdunham@pcdunham.net](mailto:pcdunham@pcdunham.net) or by telephone at 406-443-3283.

It would also be very useful if we had a greater number of participants. If I assume there are 100,000 Dunhams in the US our number of participants would amount to 5/100 of 1% of the Dunhams. Those tested at the 25 and 37 marker levels would constitute 3/100 of 1%. These numbers are not very significant although in terms of our genealogical understanding they have been very important.

I would be very happy to communicate with any potential Dunham male participants you might suggest. Paul C. Dunham