



"DYNAMITE": Fox's Crowley Endorses Film Alleging Obama's "Real" Father Is An American Communist

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A new "documentary" alleging that President Obama's real father is actually communist writer Frank Marshall Davis was enthusiastically promoted by Fox News contributor and *O'Reilly Factor* guest host Monica Crowley on her radio show last month.



Dreams from My Real Father, which was written, directed, and produced by conservative filmmaker Joel Gilbert, largely bases its premise that Obama is a "red diaper baby" born to the communist Davis on Gilbert's contention that the two men closely resemble one another (the authors of this story disagree). In an interview with *Media Matters*, the documentarian castigated both the mainstream and the conservative media for not following up on his work, which he compared to the Academy Award-winning Watergate thriller *All The President's Men*.

Though it has not been picked up for theatrical release, the film recently **made headlines** due to a campaign to mail millions of copies of the DVD to voters in swing states. On October 23, *The New York Times* described the effort as "the latest example of how secretive forces outside the presidential campaigns can sweep into battleground states days before the election."

Since its release in April, coverage of *Dreams* by conservative outlets has been relegated mostly to fringe websites like WorldNetDaily, where Jerome Corsi has written several articles promoting the film (when he hasn't been busy alleging that Obama is also **secretly gay** and **secretly Muslim**). Gilbert told *Media Matters* that without conservative talk radio, "it would be very hard to get information out" on the film, and indeed his promotional tour has featured numerous appearances on lower-tier conservative radio shows and a handful of interviews with larger shows like that of Michael Savage, as well as conspiracy-friendly broadcasts like *The Alex Jones Show*.

But alongside outlets that promoted the film like birther website WorldNetDaily and radio hosts like "conspiracy king" Alex Jones stands Fox News' Monica Crowley.

Last month, Crowley invited Gilbert onto her radio show for an extended interview. Previewing the segment, Crowley claimed that Obama "has been president for almost four years and we still don't know who he is." Blaming the "left-wing press" for their supposed lack of interest in vetting Obama, Crowley claimed that Gilbert has done "the actual investigative work into Obama and his background."

Crowley made it clear that she had already seen the film before hosting Gilbert and over the course of the interview repeatedly plugged the film's website, ObamasRealFather.com. Crowley labeled the film "just dynamite" and "very well done" and encouraged her listeners to "judge the story for themselves."



[Ed Note: the first segment of the interview, accessed via the film's official website, ran for nearly nine minutes and cuts off with Crowley teasing a second segment. The rest of the show is not available online. Gilbert did not have the second segment, and Crowley did not respond to requests for comment or to our request for the rest of the show tape.]

According to Crowley, Gilbert laid out "some very powerful evidence" in the film.

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MATT GERTZ >>>



Matt Gertz is deputy research director at Media Matters. A five year veteran of the organization, he has written extensively on media coverage of gun violence, voting rights, GLBT issues, and elections, and on media ethics. He holds a B.A. in political science from Columbia University.

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JOE STRUPP >>>



Joe Strupp, 46, is a 24-year veteran journalist who has been with Media Matters For America since February 2010. As an investigative reporter, he has interviewed top media leaders and conservative figures that include Rupert Murdoch, Geraldo Rivera and Andrew Breitbart. His work has ranged from in-depth reporting on The Washington Post editorial

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But the "powerful evidence" used by Gilbert in the film consists almost entirely of wild speculation and almost unfathomable leaps of logic.

For example, the film's thesis is premised on Gilbert's opinion that Obama looks more like Frank Marshall Davis than the elder Barack Obama. Gilbert repeatedly juxtaposes pictures of Davis and the president, going so far as to circle their supposedly similar features:



An Obama impersonator narrates the documentary; Gilbert uses this device to introduce any number of dubious claims ("Mom began skipping class, sneaking over to Frank Marshall Davis' house to hang out... He read her poetry, he played jazz records for her, and showed her his nude photo collection."). In reality, Gilbert's film provides no concrete evidence of a sexual relationship between Davis and Obama's mother, Stanley Ann Dunham - indeed, it provides no direct evidence they had any relationship at all. Instead, he strings together a web of conjecture.

Gilbert claims to have discovered pornographic photos taken months before Obama's birth of a woman Gilbert claims is Obama's mother. The filmmaker again dubiously cites physical resemblance in making this claim. Because Davis was known for taking pornographic photos, Gilbert concludes that these photos indicate that Davis and Obama's mother had an intimate relationship that resulted in President Obama's birth.

But Gilbert provides no direct evidence that Davis actually took the photos in question, instead buttressing his claim by pointing out that the photos were taken in a room containing jazz records ("Frank was a jazz guy") and a couch that resembles Davis' couch.

Asked about this lack of concrete evidence during his lengthy talk with *Media Matters* last week, Gilbert explained, "when you put all those things together, Frank's history, the nude photography, the teeth, the look, we have a lot of evidence and extremely high likelihood that is Ann. And there was a potential, and again we don't have the security cam footage, but potential for an intimate relationship."

Gilbert is not the first to claim that Davis was Obama's father, **litigious anti-Semite** Andy Martin offered a **similar allegation** in October 2008, based on what CNN described as "unnamed sources" and "without offering any proof." Right-wing media figures have also postulated that Malcolm X, an unnamed "American black," and an Indonesian man are Obama's "real" father.

At one point in the film, Gilbert supports his claim that the elder Barack Obama is not the president's father on the basis that the president's "real" birth certificate lists his father as "unknown." Gilbert fails to produce a copy of this alleged birth certificate or any evidence that it exists. When asked by *Media Matters* about the claim, Gilbert said a friend of Davis' father told him about the document.

"Right, we claim, again we have not seen a birth certificate, I don't know who has, and the information that I got, from actually one of Frank's friends, a very old elderly guy, he said they didn't put a 'father', quote-unquote, a father, so it would have been 'father: unknown', it was left blank," Gilbert stated. "That was my information, and that's what I included in the film though I have never seen it."

In Gilbert's view, Obama's actual birth certificate – which the film suggests is fabricated – is less reliable evidence than an unverified claim from a "very old elderly guy" that is supposedly a friend of Frank Marshall Davis.

Another sign that the film is based on exaggerated evidence is the disclosure posed at the beginning and the end, which states:

page to uncovering slanted reporting at Fox News.

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Director's Note

This film is based on actual events, interviews, and archives, as well as re-creations of probable events, using reasoned logic, and approximated conversations to provide a cohesive understanding of Obama's history.

Asked about this unusual means of reporting, Gilbert defended himself by pointing to Obama's biography *Dreams From My Father*, which he said features a similar "sketchy" disclaimer regarding composite characters and concluded that the president's book had "no real fact." He also alleged that Obama's autobiography supports his conclusion, telling *Media Matters*:

"Even Obama says in his book, he says things that allude to the fact that the Kenyan is not his father. He says when the Kenyan died I had no proof to show who my father really was to make a claim on the estate. He talks about his parents marriage, he says there was no record of a marriage license. There's no wedding, there's no cake. Over and over he's dropping breadcrumbs and hints."

Obama's "book is sketchy, there's no fact about most things, whereas this film is probably 90 percent fact," Gilbert concluded, "and the 10 percent that is not proven makes sense, because it's a result of the facts that exist."

Gilbert complained to *Media Matters* that major news outlets are ignoring his work because it is too explosive. "What I've found is nobody wants the scoop. In other words, they don't want to be the first one to show something new, for fear of being under attack," Gilbert claimed.

The documentarian also expressed frustration that conservative media have been reluctant to cover the film.

"Even conservative outlets like Newsmax.com, you'd think that they'd want to show something of an investigatory nature about Obama, I've worked with them for years," Gilbert said, later adding, "I was shocked in the land of the First Amendment, in the information age that the media was able to either be afraid and compromised or intentionally ignore something of great relevance to the American people."

Asked whether he thought the unwillingness of Fox News and other conservative outlets to cover the film might be a comment on the validity of its claims, Gilbert instead blamed *Media Matters*.

"I've been told that they're afraid of people like you," he told us. "They're afraid of *Media Matters*, they're afraid of MSNBC attacking and ridiculing them for covering something negative about Obama. That seems to be the dynamic that's been around for years."

The film was released July 24 on Amazon.com, Gilbert said, adding that he began selling advance copies on his website April 24. He estimated close to 200,000 copies of the DVD have been sold to date. In addition, the [film's website](#) states that four million free copies have been sent to homes in the presidential swing states of Florida, Colorado, Iowa, Ohio, New Hampshire, and Nevada, with plans to send another three million to Pennsylvania, Virginia, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

Asked about how he is able to fund the broad-based distribution of DVDs to swing states, Gilbert said his income from his previous movies is helping fund publicity efforts, but he does not accept political donations.

"We've made money from the sale of the DVDs, we've sold a lot of DVDs everywhere," Gilbert said. "The whole finances of it, I don't, like I said it is a privately held company, we have an investment from our previous films that have been successful, and helping to make this film successful we hope the media will come in and cover the content of the film and not only the coverage of the coverage as has been the case. And if so, that is worth millions of publicity right there so we are trying to get that to happen."

Over the summer, "a group of well-financed conservative activists" considered funding the distribution of Gilbert's film to battleground states through "a carefully targeted direct mail campaign or as an insert in Sunday newspapers in the weeks before Election Day," according to the October 23 *Times* article. That proposal was sunk after focus groups conducted by Republican strategist Frank Luntz were "revolted" by the film, "with its conspiracy theory paranoia and dubious evidence."

Still, Gilbert contends the movie's content is being unfairly ignored.

"It's a surprising, it's shocking," Gilbert told us. "I grew up, I was little during the era of Watergate, we thought of investigative journalism... you find out some news you want to have a scoop and report it to the public and everyone is excited to be the first to get new information and it's shocking that that's not the case in America, we have a very polarized media who seem to be concerned about either supporting a candidate or maintaining their commercial position and not doing anything that might be controversial. It has been a very disappointing experience to experience this lack of objective journalism in America."

Gilbert does have high hopes for the future of the film, however. According to Gilbert, he's been told he's "going to be nominated for the Pulitzer Prize." Told that **only newspapers and web outlets** are eligible for journalism Pulitzers, not documentary films, Gilbert disagreed.

time since 1917," President Obama noted that military also has fewer bayonets and horses because it has modernized. Rather than discuss President Obama's accurate point about military strength, members of the media are trying to figure out how many bayonets the military actually uses.

October 24, 2012 6:36 PM EDT

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TIMELINE: Fox News' Role In The "Climate Of Doubt"

PBS' *Frontline* recently aired a documentary titled "Climate of Doubt," examining how conservative groups, frequently funded by the fossil fuel industry, have pushed Republicans to reject the scientific consensus on manmade global warming. Here, *Media Matters* looks back at how Fox News has contributed to that "Climate of Doubt," often teaming up with industry to misrepresent science and attack all efforts to address this threat.

October 24, 2012 6:21 PM EDT

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