



As Heard on Beck Radio: Does Obama's Ring Really Have 'There is No God Except Allah' Inscribed in Arabic?

Faith

DOES OBAMA'S MYSTERY RING REALLY HAVE 'THERE IS NO GOD EXCEPT ALLAH' INSCRIBED IN ARABIC?

Posted on October 10, 2012 at 6:30pm by  Billy Hallowell

A World Net Daily (WND) [report](#) alleging that a ring President Barack Obama wears on his left hand includes the Islamic and Arabic phrase, "There is no God but Allah," has been making its way across social media and the blogosphere.

The article cites two Obama critics as sources who claim that the president has been wearing the ring, which apparently now doubles as his wedding band, for *the past 30 years*. We'll let [WND describe the scenario to you](#) in the outlet's own words:

As a student at Harvard Law School, then-bachelor Barack Obama's practice of wearing a gold band on his wedding-ring finger puzzled his colleagues.

Now, newly published photographs of Obama from the 1980s show that the ring Obama wore on his wedding-ring finger as an unmarried student is the same ring Michelle Robinson put on his finger at the couple's wedding ceremony in 1992.

Moreover, according to Arabic-language and Islamic experts, the ring Obama has been wearing for more than 30 years is adorned with the first part of the Islamic declaration of faith, the Shahada: "There is no god except Allah."

Some critics will likely seize upon this article to claim that Obama is a Muslim and that this is the proof that's needed to out his purportedly secretly-held faith. After all, the alleged phrase that some claim is in the ring's design is part of the shahada, the First Pillar of Islam and the declaration of belief that adherents must accept in order to be counted as Muslims.

It's important to note, though, that "Allah" — at least in this instance — is more closely translated to mean "God." Thus, a more accurate interpretation is, "There is no god but God." The second part of the shahada is "Muhammad is the prophet of God." This latter portion is not said to be present on Obama's ring (the shahada in its entirety reads, "There is no god but God and Muhammad is the prophet of God").

Critics should probably take pause, though — particularly those making the jump to claim that the ring is



President Barack Obama's ring
(Photo Credit WND)

somehow slam-dunk proof of Obama's supposed devotion to the Islamic faith. This first part of the shahada, though specific to Islam, is a tenet that any monotheistic adherent can relate to. Furthermore, some critics claim that using the word "Allah" as WND (and as many others generally do) tends to make it unfairly seem as though the saying is exclusive to Islam.



President Barack Obama eats a french fry while meeting with supporters about voter registration last month. Notice his intricate wedding band. (Photo Credit: AFP/Getty Images)

If the ring were said to have the second portion of the shahada, then eyebrows would likely raise a bit more. After all, Muhammad is confined to Islam and such a statement being present on jewelry would certainly be indicative of Islamic inclination.

Knowing that these elements were at play, TheBlaze decided to speak with experts at some of America's leading universities. One academic, a professor at Duke University, provided a candid assessment, but asked to remain off-the-record. Based on the images and analysis present in the WND report, he said that the script present on Obama's ring appears to be Arabic and that it does, indeed, include the first portion of the shahada.

"I think this is accurate," he said of the description surrounding the ring.

That in mind, the professor said that he believes the president's claims that he is a Christian and that the purpose for the ring might be more rooted in other sentiments that lay outside of the Islamic religious tradition. In fact, some individuals wear rings similar to Obama's for personal protection, he said.

“Usually people in the Middle East — they wear such rings just for protection against any evil [spirits], car crashes — to keep them safe from evil,” he explained.

While the academic contends that Obama may be wearing a ring that publicly pronounces a belief in one God, gold, in some areas of the Middle East, is not a metal that many Muslim men are permitted to wear. Thus, by some standards and in certain localities Obama’s ring would disqualify him from entering a mosque or even participating in worship — theoretically, speaking.

While the Duke scholar seemed certain of the Arabic script present on the ring, Harvard University’s Dr. Ali Asani, a professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures, told TheBlaze that the images of Obama’s ring were not clear enough to make a determination.

“I’d actually have to see it much closer to see exactly what it says,” Asani said.



Photo Credit WND

While he disagreed with the Duke professor that the script is definitively Arabic and that it is, without question, representative of the first portion of the shahada, Asani did agree on one major point: Even if it is the first section of shahada, such a determination would, in itself, mean very little.

“It’s very clear that its not the whole shahada — of course in the shahada there the two different phrases. One is inclusive,” he explained. “It’s a statement any monotheist could accept — that there’s only one god. It’s only the second part that’s exclusivist.”

With monotheism being the central underpinning of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the universalist nature of the shahada’s affirmation of a solitary God can be embraced by any adherent of the aforementioned faiths, Asani corroborated.

As far as the Duke professor’s claims about gold, Asani agreed, but he offered a caveat — that the policy on

wearing gold jewelry differs based on Islamic tradition and interpretation.

“It depends on whose interpretation of Islam,” the professor said. “Some ultra-conservatives have this [restriction on gold but] lots of Muslim men wear gold rings.”

Unlike the Duke expert, Asani said that he had not seen any other rings reminiscent of Obama’s (*pending the shadada truly is inscribed in the ring*). “Usually the calligraphy is not part of the design itself,” he explained.

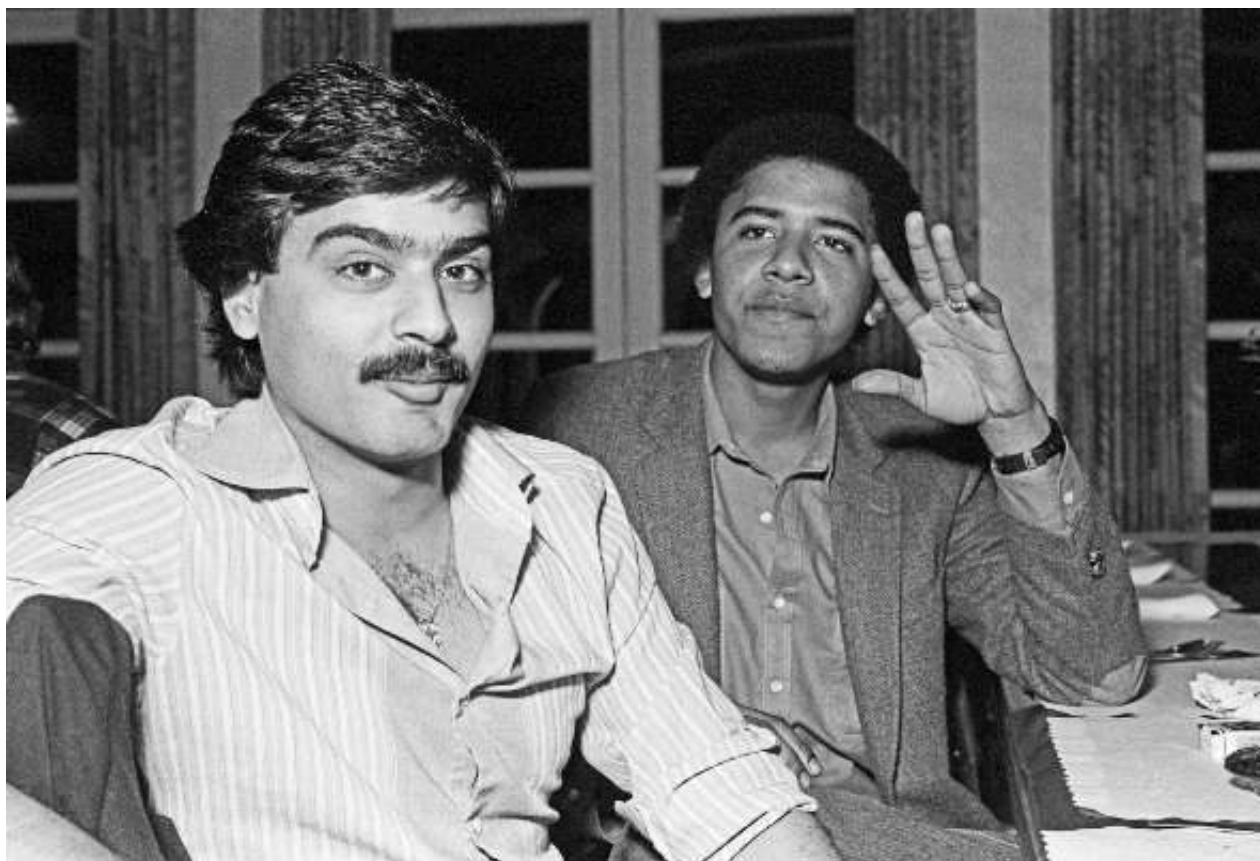
In discussing potential motivations for wearing the ring, if, indeed, its description is accurate, Asani entertained the notion that a relative might have given it to Obama — a theory that TheBlaze posited during the interview. Asani, who was born in Kenya, described having a similar situation in which his father gave him a gold ring that belonged to his grandfather — a piece of jewelry that he still wears today.

As WND notes, a 2009 [New York Times](#) article claims that Obama’s ring did, indeed, come from Indonesia. The description reads, “Michelle’s was traditional, but Barack’s was an intricate gold design from Indonesia, where he had lived as a boy.” While the article doesn’t note that Obama purportedly wore the ring years before his wedding, it does seem to corroborate the notion that it came from the nation that Obama once called home.

After speaking with the Duke and Harvard experts, TheBlaze reached out to Raj Bhala, Associate Dean for International and Comparative Law at The University of Kansas School of Law to capture his take on the reports surrounding Obama’s ring. While he had not read the WND report, he mirrored the sentiment presented by the other scholars we spoke with. Even if the ring is, indeed, the shahada, he said, “So what?”

“Let’s suppose he is wearing a ring that says ‘there is no god but God,’ ‘there are no deities but God,’ ‘nothing is worthy of being worshipped in the universe except God.’ What that would mean is the president is a monotheist,” Bhala said. “He believes in a single God. He’s in the abrahamic tradition of Jews, Christians and Muslims.”

Rather than serving as a sign of devotion to Islam, Bhala noted that Obama may actually be making a Christian proposition and exhibiting his personal faith in Christ by wearing the ring.



Barack Obama and his roommate Hasan Chandoo at Occidental College circa 1981. Notice Obama is wearing the alleged ring in this photo, years before his wedding took place. (Photo Credit Tom Grauman/New Yorker magazine)

These interview subjects provide a stark contrast to Islamic scholar Mark A. Gabriel, whom [WND interviewed](#) for the outlet's article on the subject (Gabriel, too, said that many Muslim men do often wear gold, despite religious regulations in some areas against the practice).

"There can be no doubt that someone wearing the inscription 'There is no god except Allah' has a very close connection to Islamic beliefs, the Islamic religion and Islamic society to which this statement is so strongly attached," he told the outlet. "Christians never use the statement. By wearing the shahada on jewelry, a person communicates that Allah is in control of all circumstances. Allah controls you; Allah is the one and only one."

Certainly, Obama's ring is fascinating and, considering its history, it must hold special meaning to the president. Consider the brief historical account that WND provides in its analysis (this is being shared mainly to showcase the allegation that [Obama has been wearing the ring](#) on his wedding finger for decades):

As WND reported in July, previously published photos have shown Obama wearing a gold band on his wedding-ring finger continuously from 1981 at Occidental, through graduation at Columbia in 1983, in a visit to Africa in 1988 and during his time at Harvard from 1988 to 1991. But none, until now, have displayed the ring with enough detail to identify it as the one he currently is wearing.

WND reported a satirical edition of the Harvard Law Review published by students in 1990 contains a mock Dewers Scotch profile advertisement poking fun at Obama. Among a list of Obama's "Latest Accomplishments" is: "Deflecting Persistent Questioning About Ring On Left Hand."

So, it seems the situation is a complicated one. Regardless of where one stands, learning the true history behind the ring and the president's reasoning for continuing to wear it would be a fascinating feat.

The topic was also discussed by TheBlaze's editors during Wednesday's "Blazecast." Watch the discussion in the clip below (at around 47:00):

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