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With 'Dreams From My Real Father,' Have Obama Haters Hit Rock Bottom?

by Michelle Goldberg | Sep 28, 2012 4:45 AM EDT

A pseudo-documentary that slimes Ann Dunham, the president's late mother, is being mailed to swing-state voters. A look at the film and Dinesh D'Souza's book, *Obama's America*.

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So this is what it's come to.

After four years of invective, four years during which the right has called President Obama a traitor, a communist, a fraud, an affirmative-action case, a terrorist-sympathizer, and a tyrant, its shrillest voices have been reduced to the most primal insult of all. They are calling Obama's mother a whore.



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For a while now, pictures purporting to show Obama's mother, [Stanley Ann Dunham](#), modeling in 1950s bondage and fetish porn have been floating around the darker corners of the Internet. Now, though, they've made their way into a pseudo-documentary, Joel Gilbert's *Dreams From My Real Father*, which is being mailed to voters in swing states, promoted by several Tea Party groups and by at least one high-level Republican. At the same time, Dinesh D'Souza's latest book, *Obama's*

America—the first of all his works to hit the top spot on *The New York Times* bestseller list—has a chapter essentially calling Dunham a fat slut. If Obama is reelected, it's hard to imagine where the right goes from here.

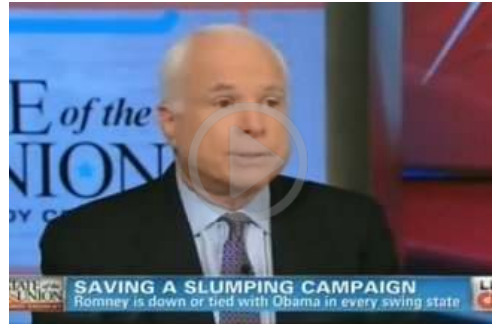
It's tempting to ignore *Dreams From My Real Father* because it's so preposterous. The movie claims that Obama's actual father was the poet and left-wing activist Frank Marshall Davis, who Dunham met through her father, who was a CIA agent merely posing as a furniture salesman. "My election was not a sudden political phenomenon," says the narrator, speaking as if he were Obama reading his autobiography. "It was the culmination of an American socialist movement that my real father, Frank Marshall Davis, nurtured in Chicago and Hawaii, and has been quietly infiltrating the U.S. economy, universities, and media for decades."

Davis enjoyed taking nude photos of women, and the images said to be of Dunham, to which the director pays lascivious attention, are presented as evidence of their intimate relationship. "These photos were taken a few weeks before 1960, when Mom was about five weeks pregnant with me," the narrator says. "Frank then sold the photos to men's mail-order catalogs."

What matters here is not that a lone crank made a vulgar conspiracy video, one that outdoes even birther propaganda in its lunacy and bad taste. It's that the video is finding an audience on the right. Gilbert claims that more than a million copies of *Dreams From My Real Father* have been mailed to voters in Ohio, as well between 80,000 and 100,000 to voters in Nevada and 100,000 to voters in New Hampshire. "We're putting plans in place, as of next week, to send out another 2 [million] or 3 million, just state by state," he told me.

Newsbeast discusses President Obama's early life and his reelection campaign.

Gilbert won't say who is funding this distribution, and there's no way to verify his numbers. Had he not made other right-wing documentaries in the past, I might suspect that the whole thing is a brilliant conceptual art project about the limits of anti-Obama credulity. But the fact is, people are reporting receiving the disc in the mail. Tea Party groups and conservative churches are screening it. It was shown at a right-wing film festival in Tampa during the Republican National Convention, and



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Debates Rarely Nudge the Needle

Presidential debates can be memorable, but they rarely influence voters, writes Miranda Green.

by Miranda Green

by Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum Council in Missouri. Alabama GOP Chairman Bill Armistead recently recommended it during a speech, saying, "I've seen it. I verified that it is factual, all of it. People can determine."

Meanwhile, D'Souza's book, *Obama's America*, the companion volume to his hit documentary 2016, is enjoying its fifth week on *The New York Times* bestseller list, though it has fallen to the No. 4 spot. *Obama's America* makes the same argument as his 2010 bestseller, *The Roots of Obama's Rage*: that Obama is motivated by an anti-colonial animus against Western power. "Obama views Muslims who are fighting against America in Iraq and Afghanistan as freedom fighters, somewhat akin to Indians or Kenyans fighting to push out their British colonial occupier," he wrote in the 2010 book. He writes more or less the same thing in the new one. The primary difference is that while before he mainly focused on Obama's father, now he turns his attention to Obama's mom as well.

A writer once considered a legitimate conservative intellectual has been reduced to sputtering "yo mama" at our president.

D'Souza argues that part of the reason Ann Dunham sent Obama to live with her parents in Hawaii was so she could pursue affairs with Indonesian men. "Ann's sexual adventuring may seem a little surprising in view of the fact that she was a large woman who kept getting larger," he writes. On the next page, he continues, "Learning about Ann's sexual adventures in Indonesia, I realized how wrong I had been to consider Barack Obama Sr. the playboy ... Ann ... was the real playgirl, and despite all her reservations about power, she was using her American background and economic and social power to purchase the romantic attention of third-world men."

There is no evidence for any of this—D'Souza mentions the name of exactly one man who Dunham had a relationship with after her divorce. Even if it was true, however, it's hard to see how it's relevant to Obama's supposed taste for subversion, since as D'Souza himself points out, Obama wasn't living in Indonesia at the time. The chapter is simply an expression of glandular-level contempt. It shows that a writer once considered a legitimate conservative intellectual has been reduced to sputtering "yo mama" at our president.

After the last four years, perhaps we shouldn't expect anything more. That itself, however, is telling. In 2001, the Republican activist Barbara Olson was quoted saying, "Look at Bill Clinton's mother, as opposed to George W.'s mother. Is your mother a barfly who gets used by men? Or is your mother a strong woman who demanded respect for her ideas and always received it?" She was widely condemned and issued an abject apology. D'Souza's nastier words, by contrast, have barely caused a ripple. Conservative groups haven't been scandalized by their association with Gilbert's movie. This is who they are. There's nothing left to be shocked about.

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Michelle Goldberg is a senior contributing writer for *Newsweek* and The Daily Beast. She is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* and *The Means of Reproduction: Sex, Power and the Future of the World*, winner of the 2008 *J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Award* and the Ernesta Drinker Ballard Book Prize. Goldberg's work has appeared in *Glamour*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Nation*, *New York* magazine, *The Guardian*, and *The New Republic*. Her next book is about the world-traveling

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Earlier this summer, Mitt Romney sent an email to fundraisers that included what he probably hoped would be a handy Venn diagram illustrating exactly how President Obama has failed to follow through on his promise to lower...



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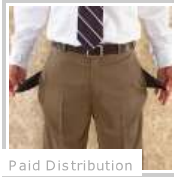
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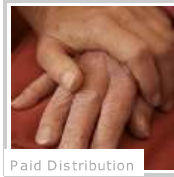


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LorenC

1 hour ago

Consider the 'Obama's mother posed nude' nonsense officially debunked:

<http://barackryphal.blogspot.com/2012/10/fever-dreams-from-my-real-father-1-nude.html>

The pictures were published as early as 1958, two years before the Dunham family moved to Hawaii.

1 LIKE REPLY

Jeanneliza

40 minutes ago

@LorenC

So...Ann wasn't in Hawaii when these photos were taken, but on the off chance that this is Ann Dunham, Gilbert is guilty of distributing child porn. What a respectable and reliable source...

" If Gilbert truly believes that these ARE somehow pictures of a 15-year-old Ann, then he's been distributing hundreds of thousands of DVDs featuring nude and erotic pictures of someone **he believes to be an underage girl.**"

LIKE REPLY

Cathy Brown

1 hour ago

Racism as evidenced in this election season shows two things : Many Americans no longer need it as a psychological crutch; many still need it as a psychological crutch. But its rabid resurgence now in the GOP ads is very disconcerting and emotionally painful in the America the world looks up to as the nation where the underdog can most possibly scabble a chance. Still racism in the campaign (a form of social darwinism in modern terms) in America is at the level of Psych-ops and has not been evidenced in outright violence , so far, hopefully. It is already much too late to "Believe" in supremacy. A mixed race man has been The commander-in -Chief for four years , and before that there was republican Colin Powell as Chief of the Joint



The Blowout Scenario

What if Obama doesn't just win, but wins huge? Michael Tomasky on the consequences of a landslide.

by Michael Tomasky

Ti eh



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by David Frum



Romney's Negativity Trap

Howard Kurtz on how Romney can't escape his narrative of failure—and why that could undermine Obama.

by Howard Kurtz