

## Paranoid Dreams from D'Souza

Written by Dinesh Sharma

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Paranoid and delusional thinking is defined as the generalized distrust and suspicion of others. Individuals suffering from paranoid thinking may sometimes have dreams that are characterized by intuitions and feelings of grandeur bordering on pure fantasy. In art or film, one might give flight to such fantasies or daydreams without disrupting everyday social reality, especially, if you can convince others to assume your version of an alternative social reality, albeit temporarily.

Dinesh D'Souza's film "2016: Obama's America" manages to do just this while craftily walking the fine line between partial truths and fiction about the early socialization, family life and political philosophy of the 44th president of the US, Barack Hussein Obama, who also happens to be the first black president of the US with a multiracial, multicultural and multi-religious lineage and genealogy rooted in America, Africa and Indonesia.

D'Souza is overwhelmingly concerned with establishing an apparent anti-colonial strain in Obama's worldview acquired from his Kenyan father. The fact that his father was part of "the airlift to America" (1959-63), sponsored by civil rights leaders, non-profit organizations and the Kennedy family simply misses D'Souza's purview. Why? Because it does not fit the anti-American or anti-colonial narrative he imputes to Obama's father and to the president.

This is a significant 'sin of omission' if you're trying to understand the absentee father's anti-colonial sentiments that shaped the first black President. Instead, D'Souza finds a line in East African Journal in 1965 where Obama's father suggested 100% taxation to build the newly independent Kenyan economy. This is evidence for the motive for \$16 trillion U.S. debt under Obama, a large percentage of which was incurred by the Republican predecessor? But the son has become just like the father, according to D'Souza.

In another blatantly biased claim D'Souza states that the annexation of Hawaii in 1959 was primarily driven by colonization of the natives, while making not a single mention of the fact that native Hawaiians, unlike the mainland US, welcomed newcomers to the islands and married them. Thus, the interracial marriage rates in Hawaii have always been high. The sacrifices of Hawaiians in WW-II in the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attacks and prior to the annexation have gone missing from this distorted film.

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D'Souza fails to mention that Obama's maternal grandfather's service (Stanley Armour Dunham) in the war also deeply ties Obama to Hawaiian soil and to the memory of the Pearl Harbor attacks, the only other instance when America has been attacked at home prior to September 11, 2011. Why does D'Souza not include any suggestion of these important historical turning points in American life and Obama's biography? Because D'Souza wants you to believe that Obama is not really cut from the same American cloth as other presidents.

D'Souza peddles Indonesian history from Obama's autobiography, but fails to reveal the central reason for the disillusionment suffered by Obama's mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, in Jakarta in the late 1960's, namely, the nexus of American oil companies and CIA's deep involvement in the remaking of the fledgling democracy in South East Asia. When Ann Dunham landed in Jakarta, thousands of Chinese had been slaughtered by the Indonesian military in a bloody coup (1965-66). The U.S. had decided to place their man, General Suharto, in charge of the emerging Islamic democracy.

Clearly, D'Souza commits another significant 'sin of omission'. Why? Because D'Souza wants you to believe that Ann Dunham was somehow genetically predisposed to "not think well of America" as a liberal and passed this trait onto her son by idealizing his anti-colonial African father.

It can be argued that Obama's landmark election in 2008 was partly a reflection of several secular trends: emerging multipolar world; globalization led by American firms; direct effect of American decline due to wars in Iraq and the AfPak region; and Obama's global biography resonated to these global challenges Americans face in the 21st century.

Instead, D'Souza seems intent on targeting the anti-colonial shades of the president inherited from the ghost of his father through some mysterious cultural transmission, which is highly suspect given his father abandoned him at the age of two years and met him only once in the winter of 1971.

This fundamental misattribution in the film and many others littered throughout this baldly election year propaganda make this a baffling achievement from a reportedly serious conservative thinker who worked in the Reagan White House. It is packaged very slickly, however, to persuade an audience, who may not be aware of the biographical and historical details or unable to detect the inaccuracies.

Based on the majority of the published reviews of the film, only D'Souza's right wing supporters seem to really 'get' how this anti-colonial virus may have been passed on from the father to the son, eventually driving an improbable rise to the American presidency to level it once and for all or to make America a dethroned superpower.

D'Souza's film further obscures the 'narrative truth' with many outright factual errors or 'sins of commission', as reported by the Associated Press. For instance, he blames Obama for the national debt of \$16 trillion but never explains the doubling of the debt under Republicans in 2008. D'Souza fails to mention the killing of Osama bin Laden and the escalation of drone strikes in Afghanistan and Pakistan, while accusing Obama of harboring Muslim sympathies. He

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ignores the non-partisan polling data which repeatedly indicates Obama has the lowest approval ratings in the Muslim majority nations due to drone attacks.

Despite these mind-numbing fallacies, there is a perfectly rational way to understand D'Souza's wild interpretations in film-making. He represents for our times what Richard Hofstadter called a generation ago "the paranoid style of American politics".

"American politics has often been an arena for angry minds.... I call it the paranoid style, simply because no other word adequately evokes the sense of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy that I have in mind."

As a new immigrant who could have expanded the circle of knowledge, D'Souza disappointingly has hitched his wagon to a regressive trend in American politics, which produces more irrational heat and dust than a reasoned judgment. He has taken one of the more hopeful and inspiring American stories in many generations and turned it into a dark and sinister documentary for political gains.

D'Souza's paranoid dreams do not align with the American dream and are not good for this country or the world.

### Bio:

Dinesh Sharma is a cultural psychologist, marketing consultant and an acclaimed author, with a doctorate from Harvard University. He is a senior fellow at Institute for International and Cross-Cultural Research, St Francis College, NYC, and a columnist for Asia Times Online.

His biography of the 44th President of the US, titled "Barack Obama in Hawaii and Indonesia: The Making of a Global President" (Praeger, 2011), was rated as the Top 10 Books of Black History for 2012 by Book List Online, American Library Association. He is currently editing a book on Obama's global leadership in 25 different countries, "Crossroads of Leadership: Globalization and American Exceptionalism in the Obama Presidency" (Routledge, 2013), which is due to be published after the general election.