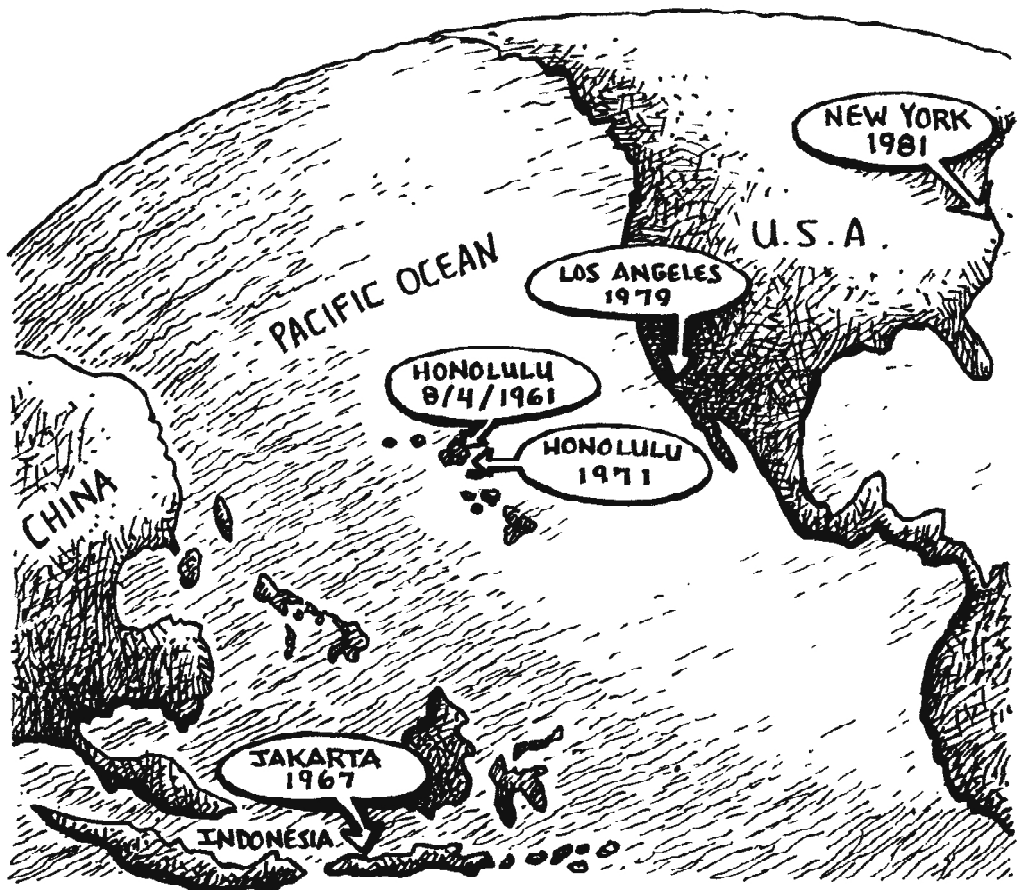


## I. ORIGINS 1961-1985

Barack Obama is a blend of extraordinary diversity: parents from Kenya and Kansas; an education in Indonesia, Hawaii, California, New York, and Massachusetts; employment in Chicago's poorest communities, leading law firms, and premier university; elected positions in the Illinois and United States Senates; and best-selling books that merge personal history and political action.

The result is a politician who asserts that we are all linked, and that while idealism must serve realism, pragmatism requires purpose. His latest book, which carries the inspirational title *The Audacity of Hope*, contains the following conclusion: "We should be guided by what works."



The Obama family traces its modern lineage to Hussein Onyango Obama, a Kenyan member of the Luo tribe born in 1895 near Lake Victoria. Onyango was a restless man of ambition. He was one of the first in his village to wear western clothing, walked for two weeks to Nairobi to find work, braving leopards and other dangers, and served with the British armed forces in World War I. He visited Europe, Myanmar and Sri Lanka as a soldier and briefly converted to Christianity, but abandoned it for Islam and added “Hussein” to his name following the war.

Senator Obama’s father, Barack Hussein Obama, Sr., was born in 1936 in Nyangoma-Kogelo, Siaya District, also near Lake Victoria, to Onyango’s second wife Akumu. She quarreled with her husband and left when Barack was nine. The boy was raised by Onyango’s third wife. He was a precocious student but chafed at traditional village employment, which included tending goats. He took success in high school for granted, became boastful and truculent, and was expelled. He quarreled with his father, left the family lands, married his first wife Kezia in 1954 at age 18, and by his early 20s found himself employed as a shop boy in Nairobi with two children and little money. A pair of American teachers befriended him and helped him apply to U.S. universities. In 1959 he secured admission, after many rejections, to the University of Hawaii to study economics: the institution’s first African student.

Obama, Sr. wore religion lightly. “Although my father had been raised a Muslim, by the time he met my mother he was a confirmed atheist, thinking religion to be so much superstition,” his son has written.

Obama’s mother’s family history begins with her parents Madelyn Payne and Stanley Dunham—grandparents of Barack Obama who cared for him during high school. Payne was a Kansan raised by “stern Methodist parents who did not believe in drinking, playing cards or dancing.” Nonetheless, their daughter, one of the best students in her high school graduating class, often visited Wichita to listen to big bands. On one

of these outings, she met Stanley Dunham from the oil-town of El Dorado, Kansas, a furniture salesman “who could charm the legs off a couch.” Dunham was a Baptist from the “other side of the railroad tracks.” It later emerged that he was also a seventh cousin, once removed, of Vice-President Dick Cheney and also a seventh cousin, twice removed, of President Harry S Truman. Payne’s family did not approve of the liaison, and the pair married in secret a few weeks before Madelyn graduated from high school. She told her parents after she received her diploma.

During World War II, Dunham joined the Army and served under General George S. Patton. Madelyn worked on a Boeing B-29 assembly line in Wichita. Obama’s mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, was born in 1942 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. But her father wanted a boy, thus the name, which grieved the girl.

Dunham moved the family frequently: California, Kansas, Texas, and finally Mercer Island in Washington state—now a high end home for wealthy Seattle residents, then a somewhat isolated and bucolic suburb. Madelyn became vice-president of a local bank. The family attended the East Shore Unitarian Church. Ann, as she preferred to be known, thrived in the intellectual atmosphere of the local high school, where her philosophy teacher challenged his classes with texts like *The Organization Man*, *The Hidden Persuaders*, and *1984*. She was offered admission to the University of Chicago in 1958 at the age of 16. Her father said she was too young to go.

In 1960, Ann graduated from high school and the family moved to Hawaii. Stanley got a job at a large furniture store, Madelyn at the Bank of Hawaii, and they bought a house near the University of Hawaii. Ann, 18, enrolled as a freshman. In a Russian language class, she met Barack Obama, Sr., 23, who told her he was divorced. They gathered with friends on weekends to listen to jazz and discuss politics and world affairs. Ann was the only woman. She was, “the original feminist,” according to Neil Abercrombie, now a Democratic congressman from Hawaii who participated in the meetings.



On 2 February 1961 the pair slipped away to Maui and were married. The wedding—Obama, “black as pitch,” Ann, “white as milk”—would have been illegal in 22 states. Ann dropped out of college. On 4 August Barack Hussein Obama Jr. was born at the Kapi’olani Medical Center in Honolulu. The motto of the hospital was *Kulia I Ka Nu’u*: “Strive for the Highest.”

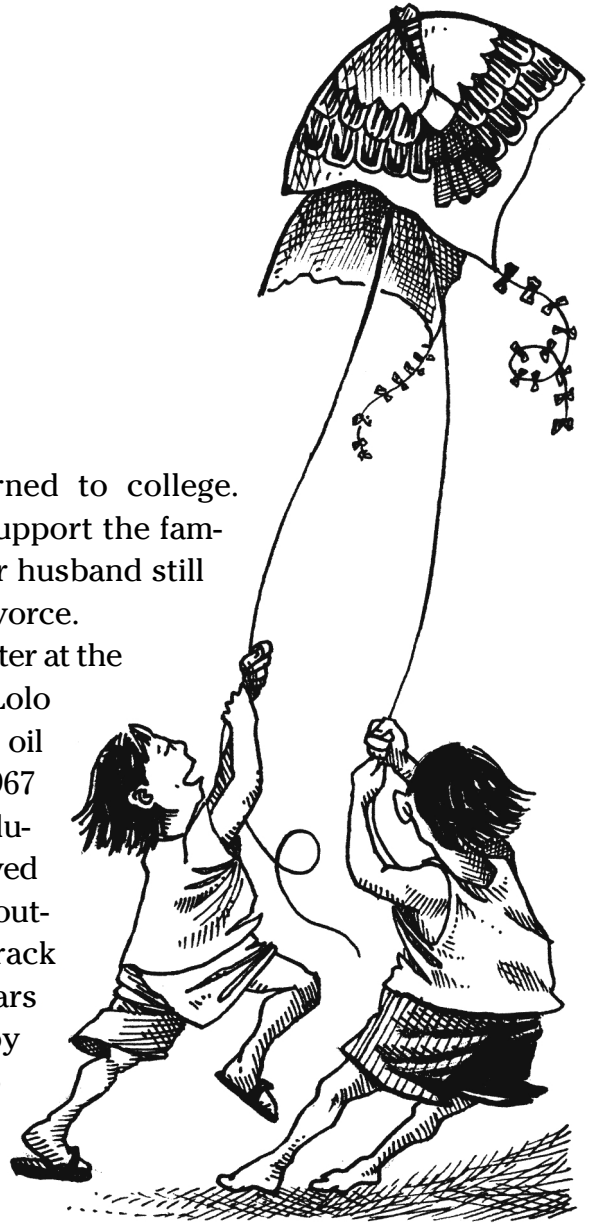
The couple moved into a small apartment near the university. The following year, just three years after he had arrived, Obama completed his studies. He obtained two offers of admission to obtain a Ph.D. in economics. The first, from Harvard, was unfunded. The second, from the New School in New York, included a stipend. Obama chose Harvard. Unfunded, he did not take his family. He left Ann and his son in Honolulu.



In 1963, Ann returned to college. Food stamps helped support the family. After two years, her husband still absent, she filed for divorce.

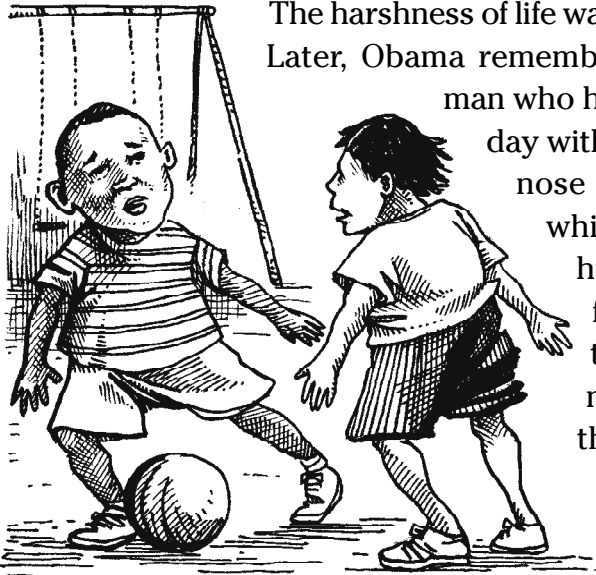
At the East-West Center at the university she met Lolo Soetoro, an Indonesian oil company manager. In 1967 he proposed, she graduated, and the three moved to his home on the outskirts of Jakarta. Barack Obama Jr., then six years old, was impressed by the change. Soetoro had acquired a pet monkey for him. Baby crocodiles inhabited

the garden. He learned to speak Indonesian and attended the local Catholic Franciscus Assisi Primary School. "The children of farmers, servants and low-level bureaucrats had become my friends, and together we ran the streets morning and night, hustling odd jobs, catching crickets, battling swift kites with razor-sharp lines—the loser watching his kite soar off with the wind," he wrote later in his memoir.



The family prospered. Soetoro got a job in the government relations office of a U.S. oil firm. Ann was hired to teach English at the U.S. Embassy. They moved to the affluent Menteng neighborhood in Jakarta. Obama transferred to SDN Menteng 1, an elite secular public elementary school that served primarily middle- and upper-class children, including several grandchildren of President Suharto. He was the only foreigner.

For administrative purposes, Obama was registered as a Muslim at this school, as at the Catholic institution, because that was the religion of his stepfather. He learned about Islam for two hours each week. His mother did not belong to any denomination. Nonetheless, Obama wrote, "My mother was in many ways the most spiritually awakened person I have ever known. . . . She possessed an abiding sense of wonder, a reverence for life and its precious, transitory nature." When he was a child, she would wake him to see a spectacular moon, or tell him to close his eyes to listen to the rustle of leaves as they walked together at twilight. "But she had a healthy skepticism of religion as an institution. And as a consequence, so did I." His step-father enjoyed alcohol and was not devout. Obama has never been a practicing Muslim.



The harshness of life was never distant in Jakarta. Later, Obama remembered, "[T]he face of the man who had come to our door one day with a gaping hole where his nose should have been: the whistling sound he made as he asked my mother for food. . . . [and] the time that one of my friends told me in the middle of recess that his baby brother had died the night before of an evil spirit brought in by the wind."

His mother understood. “She had learned . . . the chasm that separated the life chances of an American from those of an Indonesian. She knew which side of the divide she wanted her child to be on. I was an American, she decided, and my true life lay elsewhere,” Obama remembered.



The means she chose to achieve this end was education. The family did not have enough money for Obama to attend a private international school, so his mother subscribed to a series of elementary school correspondence courses. Each weekday, starting at 4:00 a.m., Dunham taught Obama his English lessons for three hours before he went to school and she left for work.

She also taught him values. “‘If you want to grow into a human being,’ she would say to me, ‘you’re going to need some values.’ Honesty . . . Fairness . . . Straight talk . . . and independent judgment,” Obama wrote. “In a land where fatalism remained a necessary tool for enduring hardship, where ultimate truths were kept separate from day-to-day realities, she was a lonely witness for secular humanism, a soldier for New Deal, Peace Corps, position-paper liberalism,” he added.

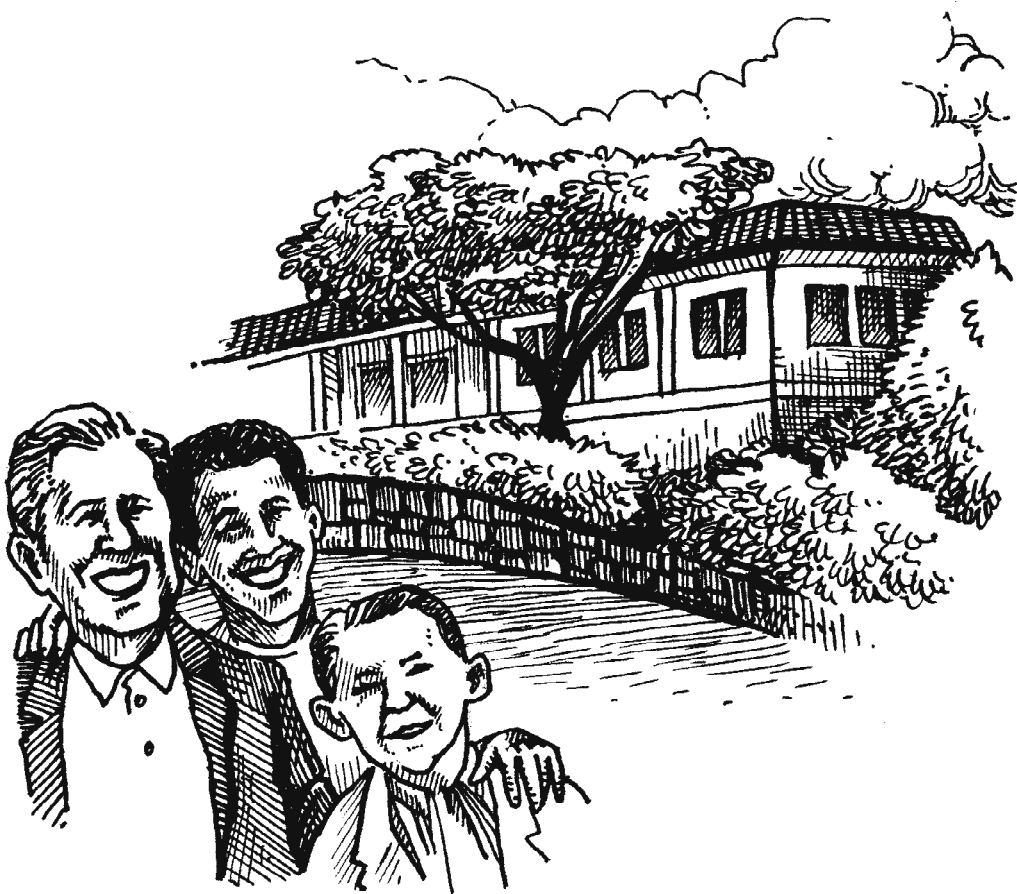
His stepfather taught him how to fight, and about the nature of power. One afternoon he laced boxing gloves onto the boy's hands. "My hands dangled at my sides like bulbs at the ends of thin stalks. . . . He adjusted my elbows, then crouched into a stance and started to bob. 'You want to keep moving, but always stay low—don't give them a target. How does that feel?'" Obama wrote. Later he offered advice. "'The strong man takes the weak man's land. He makes the weak man work in his fields. If the weak man's woman is pretty, the strong man will take her.' He paused to take another sip of water, then asked, 'Which would you rather be?' . . . 'Better to be strong . . . If you can't be strong, be clever and make peace with someone who's strong. But always better to be strong yourself. Always.'"

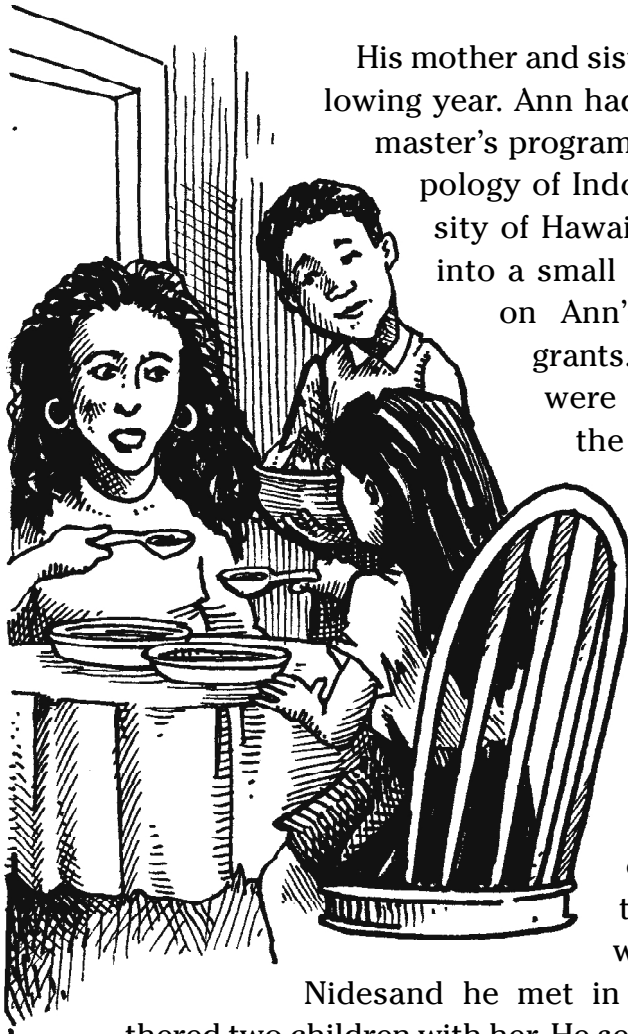
Obama's half-sister, Auma Soetoro, was born in 1970.



By 1971, the correspondence courses were complete. His mother's father, who had abandoned the furniture business for insurance sales, enlisted the help of his boss, an alumnus, to gain admission for Obama to Punahou Academy, founded in 1841, the most prestigious private school in Hawaii. Current tuition for the school is \$15,725. Obama won a scholarship. "My first experience with affirmative action, it seems, had little to do with race," Obama wrote later. He returned to Hawaii in the summer, moved back in with his grandparents, who now lived in a modest two bedroom apartment, and started fifth grade.

The new school was a shock: socially, culturally, and racially. Many of the other fifth graders had been together since kindergarten; Obama's Indonesian sandals were dowdy and his clothes out of style; and he was one of just two black children in the class.





His mother and sister joined him the following year. Ann had been admitted to a master's program to study the anthropology of Indonesia at the University of Hawaii. The family moved into a small apartment and lived on Ann's graduate student grants. Their circumstances were a sharp contrast to the affluence of some of Obama's classmates.

Then suddenly, surprisingly, two weeks after Ann's return, Obama's father decided to visit. He had received an M.A. from Harvard, taken a job with a U.S. oil company, returned to Kenya, married a woman named Ruth

Nidesand he met in Cambridge, and fathered two children with her. He served as an economist for the Kenyan Ministry of Transportation and a senior economist in the Kenyan Ministry of Finance before falling out with President Kenyatta, losing his position, and beginning a decline into poverty and drinking from which he never recovered. Obama Sr. had been in a car accident and decided to spend a month in Hawaii to recuperate. Obama's time with his father was brief, but poignant. "For brief spells in the day I will lie beside him, the two of us alone in the apartment sublet from a retired old woman whose name I forget . . . and I read my book while he reads his. He remains opaque to me . . . But I grow accustomed to his company," he wrote. "Two weeks later he was gone," Obama added. Forever.