

Addressing the Rumors

A few people have brought to our attention some rumors regarding Barack Obama that we, personally, thought had been put to rest a long time ago or had never been taken seriously in the first place. So, with that in mind, Sean found a website that thoroughly and precisely checks facts on this sort of thing. We will address some of these rumors below using this website and other sources, which we will list after each topic. The "Rumors" are listed in **red**, if you want to just pick out the one's you're interested in. We've stated our personal opinions about these "Rumors" in *green italics* after listing the facts. For those of you who feel the same way we did about these rumors, you may find pages 6-8 the most helpful.

Rezko Real Estate Problem

Here's what happened: In 2005, Barack Obama and his wife, Michelle, bid \$1.65 million for a house on the south side of Chicago. According to newspaper reports, the owner was also trying to sell an undeveloped parcel of land adjacent to the property Obama was buying, and he wanted the sales of the two to close on the same day. Obama has said that he mentioned he was buying the house to a longtime political patron, Antoin (Tony) Rezko, a developer. Rezko's wife wound up buying the lot adjacent to Obama's. At the request of the Obamas, who were seeking a bit more space for their yard, she later sold them a 10-foot wide strip of her land for about one-sixth the cost of what she had paid for the entire property.

Obama doesn't appear to have reaped any financial advantages from the transactions. The reason the deal has received a good bit of attention is that Tony Rezko – whose political contributions to Illinois' former governor, Obama and others totaled in the hundreds of thousands of dollars – was known to be under federal investigation for fraud at the time the Obamas were purchasing their home.

Obama has a relationship with Rezko that dates back many years, but there's no indication Obama did anything improper. Shortly after finishing law school, Obama, who had turned down a job offer from the developer, went to work at a law firm where he represented some community groups that partnered with Rezko to apply for housing rehabilitation loans. As a state legislator, he wrote letters to city and state officials in support of Rezko's efforts to build apartments for the elderly with government money; the senator asserts that this was a project the community wanted.

Obama has donated campaign contributions from Rezko and his associates to charity, and he said in 2006. . .that he made a "boneheaded" mistake by participating in the deal when it was known that Rezko was being investigated. "I regret it," Obama said. "I'm going to make sure from this point on I don't even come close to the line."

Our opinion – Lesson learned. No harm done. Let's move on shall we?

Rezko Sources:
www.factcheck.org

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Sweet, Lynn. "Obama's sticky switch from media darling to media-hounded." Chicago Sun Times, 7 November 2006.

Jackson, David and Ray Gibson. "Obama intern had ties to Rezko: Senator's spokesman denies any favoritism." Chicago Tribune, 24 December 2006.

Robinson, Mike. "Obama tries to distance himself from real estate developer facing federal charges." The Associated Press, 11 June 2007.

Fitzgerald, Patrick J. "Businessman and political fundraiser Antoin Rezko indicted in two fraud cases, including scheme to extort millions of dollars from firms seeking teachers' pension fund investments." Press Release, U.S. Department of Justice, United States Attorney, Northern District of Illinois, 11 October 2006.

Fitzgerald, Patrick J. "Former Illinois Finance Authority director charged in pending loan fraud indictment against businessman Antoin Rezko." Press Release, U.S. Department of Justice, United States Attorney, Northern District of Illinois, 31 May 2007.

Drew, Christopher, and Mike McIntire. "An Obama patron and friend until an indictment," The New York Times, 14 June 2007.

Obama's "Racist" Church

It is true that Trinity describes itself as "a congregation which is Unashamedly Black and Unapologetically Christian" and which "does not apologize for its African roots." The church's Web site specifies a commitment to Africa and to "historical education of African people in diaspora." The congregation is overwhelmingly black; few if any whites can be seen in the photographs and videos of the congregation posted on the church's Web site. But none of that makes the church "racist" or anti-American. And in fact, a professor of theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Martin E. Marty, wrote this in April 2007, rebutting Rush's claims on Fox News:

Prof. Marty: "To those in range of Chicago TV I'd recommend a watching of Trinity's Sunday services, and challenge you to find anything "cultic" or "sectarian" about them. More important, for Trinity, being "unashamedly black" does not mean being "anti-white." My wife and I on occasion attend, and, like all other non-blacks, are enthusiastically welcomed."

Regarding this renewed attack on Trinity, Prof. Marty told FactCheck, ". . . Many civic officials, public school teachers, etc. are members at Trinity; Wright has been on TV with his services for years, and no one found them racist."

Trinity would not comment to us for this article. Rev. Wright, however, appeared on Fox's "Hannity and Colmes" on March 2, 2007, and responded at length to the claim made by Rush. He said in part:

Alan Colmes: "I want the public to understand where your church is coming from, because you're being accused of being a black separatist church, and thus Obama is being accused by default of being a black separatist. Can you straighten that out for us, please?"

Wright: "OK. The African-centered point of view does not assume superiority, nor does it assume separatism. It assumes Africans speaking for themselves as subjects in history, not objects in history."

There's no question that Wright has been a controversial figure, a passionate advocate for black self-help and to some, a radical. Jason Byassee, in a lengthy article on the church published in Christian Century magazine, said, "There is no denying ... that a strand of radical black political theology influences Trinity." But he praised the church's success in growing to more than 8,000 members, making this black congregation the largest single church in a predominately white United Church of Christ denomination, saying "the black church continues to makes converts in unlikely places, reflecting a God who makes a way where there is no way."

Wherever we looked we found ample evidence that Obama's church is pro-black, but we found none to support a claim that it is anti-white. Calling it "racist" is, in our judgment, a falsehood.

Our opinion – We have paid enough attention to Black American History to know that the way Blacks were treated when they came to this country, and for hundreds of years following, played a direct role in many of the issues they face today. The way their churches have prevailed through these hard times and have provided comfort is not only understandable, but a testament to the strength of their faith. And, we will not condemn the things about them that we don't understand simply because it makes us uncomfortable.

Church Sources:

www.factcheck.org

"Obama's Pastor: Rev. Jeremiah Wright." FoxNews.com interview archive, 2 Mar. 2007.

Byassee, Jason. "Africentric church: a visit to Chicago's Trinity UCC." Christian Century, 29 May 2007.

Fiore, Faye. "He's the Hill's King for a Day, but Senate Has Other Plans." The Los Angeles Times, 5 Jan. 2005.

Part of an Islamic Plot

These claims (that Obama is a Muslim and suggesting that he is part of an Islamic plot to take over the U.S.), originated with a Jan 2007 *Insight Magazine* article – a publication owned by News World Communications, which also owns the conservative *Washington Times* newspaper.

Insight Magazine: "Are the American people ready for an elected president who was educated in a Madrassa as a young boy and has not been forthcoming about his Muslim heritage?"

This article, citing anonymous sources, claimed that "Mr. Obama, spent at least four years in a so-called madrassa, or Muslim seminary, in Indonesia." But this allegation was quickly shown to be false. Days after the article appeared, CNN sent reporter John Vause to Jakarta, Indonesia, to visit the school. He reported:

CNN: "I came here to Barack Obama's elementary school in Jakarta looking for what some are calling an Islamic madrassa ... like the ones that teach hate and violence in Pakistan and Afghanistan. ... I've been to those madrassas in Pakistan ... this school is nothing like that."

CNN interviewed the school's deputy headmaster, Hardi Priyono, who said: "This is a public school. We don't focus on religion."

Swore on Koran? The e-mail says "when he was sworn into office he DID NOT use the Holy Bible, but instead the Koran" – bunk yet again. Obama did not place his hand on the Koran when he was sworn into the U.S. Senate. This claim confuses Obama with the first and only Muslim member of Congress, Democratic House member Keith Ellison of Minnesota. Obama was sworn in using his own Bible, as widely reported in newspaper accounts. His wife (is) holding the Bible with Vice President Dick Cheney swearing him in. (Under the Constitution, the vice president serves as president of the Senate.)

Pledge of Allegiance? The e-mail also claims Obama "will NOT recite the Pledge of Allegiance nor will he show any reverence for our flag" and that "while others place their hands over their hearts, Obama turns his back to the flag and slouches." These e-mails usually come with a photo, (from) Time.com's Web site.

This photograph was taken during a "steak-fry" for Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa on Sept. 16, 2007. What is pictured is the *singing* of the national anthem, not a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. For proof, see this video (<http://abcnews.go.com/Video/playerIndex?id=3759803>) taken by ABC News during the event.

And for proof that Obama has no problem reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, check this video:

(http://www.cspanarchives.org/library/index.php?main_page=product_video_info&Path=6_12&products_id=199257-1) of C-SPAN's recording of the Senate's morning business, with Obama presiding, on June 21, 2007.

Or this one:

(http://www.cspanarchives.org/library/index.php?main_page=product_video_info&Path=6_12&products_id=196497-1&highlight=) from Feb. 1, 2007.

Our opinion – Seriously? Don't you have better things to do with your time than write false, incendiary articles? How about checking your facts next time! Obama has said himself, on many occasions, that he "loves this country" and even if he were Islamic there are plenty of Islamic citizens in America who love this country just as much as the Christian, Jewish, Hindu etc or non-religious ones.

Islamic Plot Sources:

www.factcheck.org

Adair, Bill. "E-Mail Assailing Obama's Patriotism Misses Mark." St. Petersburg Times, 9 Nov. 2007.

Coleman, Francis. "Stop the mass e-mails before it's too late." Mobile Register, 11 Nov. 2007.

Kurtz, Howard. "Campaign Allegation A Source of Vexation." The Washington Post, 22 Jan. 2007.

Drobnic Holan, Angie. "Obama attended an Indonesian public school." PolitiFact.com, 10 Jan. 2008.

Beacon Jr., Perry. "Foes Use Obama's Muslim Ties to Fuel Rumors About Him." The Washington Post, 29 Nov. 2007.

Associations with Weather Underground Member

(This rumor began when) Clinton exaggerated the violence committed by an Obama acquaintance (William Ayers) who had been part of a radical group (Weather Underground) in the 1960s and 1970s and who refused to apologize for setting bombs.

In fact, nobody died as a result of bombings in which Ayers said he participated as part of the Weather Underground, at the New York City Police Headquarters in 1970, in a men's lavatory in the Capitol building in 1971 and in a women's restroom in the Pentagon in 1972. The deaths to which Clinton referred were of three Weather Underground members who died when their own "bomb factory" exploded in a Greenwich Village. Ayers was not present. (In 1980) Ayers turned himself in all charges against him were dropped.

Ayers is now a professor of education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Obama and Ayers served together for a time on the board of an antipoverty charity, the Woods Fund of Chicago, from 1999 to 2002. Ayers also contributed \$200 to Obama's campaign for the Illinois state Senate on March 2, 2001.

When moderator George Stephanopoulos asked Obama about Ayers, the senator said he is "a guy who lives in my neighborhood ... who I know and who I have not received some official endorsement from. He's not somebody who I exchange ideas from on a regular basis." He continued:

Obama: "And the notion that somehow as a consequence of me knowing somebody who engaged in detestable acts 40 years ago when I was 8 years old, somehow reflects on me and my values, doesn't make much sense, George."

Obama visited Ayer's home in 1995 at the invitation of an Illinois state senator, according to a Feb. 22 story in Politico.com. But Politico concluded, "There's no evidence their relationship is more than the casual friendship of two men who occupy overlapping Chicago political circles and who served together on the board of a Chicago foundation."

Our opinion – We agree with Obama's above comment. This occurred when he was eight years old and doesn't reflect his personal values as an adult, today. Ayers is simply a man who worked on the same anti-poverty charity (which is a worthy cause by the way) as Obama. Would you choose not to support something you believed in simply because a guy with "a past" supported the same thing? How would the world ever accomplish anything if we held this mindset?

Weather Underground Sources:

www.factcheck.org

Prial, Frank J. "Bomb at Police Headquarters Injures 7 and Damages Offices." The New York Times, 10 June 1970.

Finney, John W. "Bomb in Capitol Causes Wide Damage." The New York Times, 2 Mar. 1971.

Caldwell, Earl. "Black Panther Leader Eulogizes Jackson as Hero." The New York Times, 29 Aug. 1971.

New York Times. "Albany Building Jolted by Blast," 18 Sept. 1971.

Vasquez, Juan M. "Security Tight in Capitol after Blast in Pentagon." The New York Times, 20 May 1972.

Montgomery, Paul L. "I.T.T. Office Here Damaged by Bomb." The New York Times, 29 Sept. 1973.

New York Times. "'Explosion Damages Gulf Headquarters After Phone Threat," 14 June 1974.

McQuiston, John T. "State Department Bombed in Protest." The New York Times, 29 Jan. 1975.

Raab, Selwyn. "Midtown Puerto Rican Bank Bombed; 'Weather' Group Takes Responsibility." The New York Times, 17 June 1975.

New York Times. "None Hurt as Blast in Utah Damages Kennecott Offices," 6 Sept. 1975.

Smith, Dinitia. "No Regrets for a Love Of Explosives; In a Memoir of Sorts, a War Protester Talks of Life With the Weathermen" The New York Times, 11 Sept. 2001.

Does Obama Support Infanticide?

Anti-abortion activists accuse Obama of "supporting infanticide," and the National Right to Life Committee says he's conducted a "four-year effort to cover up his full role in killing legislation to protect born-alive survivors of abortions."

At issue is Obama's opposition to Illinois legislation in 2001, 2002 and 2003 that would have defined any aborted fetus that showed signs of life as a "born alive infant" entitled to legal protection, even if doctors believe it could not survive. Obama opposed the 2001 and 2002 "born alive" bills as backdoor attacks on a woman's legal right to abortion, but he says he would have been "fully in support" of a similar federal bill that President Bush had signed in 2002, because it contained protections for *Roe v. Wade*.

Obama has said several times that he would have supported the federal version of the bill, which passed by unanimous consent and which President Bush signed into law Aug. 5, 2002, because it could not be used to challenge the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision granting a legal right to abortion.

There are already laws in Illinois, which Obama has said he supports, that protect these children even when they are born as the result of an abortion. Illinois compiled statute 720 ILCS 510/6 states that physicians performing abortions when the fetus is viable must use the procedure most likely to preserve the fetus' life; must be attended by another physician who can care for a born-alive infant; and must "exercise the same degree of professional skill, care and diligence to preserve the life and health of the child as would be required of a physician providing immediate medical care to a child born alive in the course of a pregnancy termination which was not an abortion." Failure to do any of the above is considered a felony.

Obama: "... I am pro-choice. I believe in Roe v. Wade, and I come to that conclusion not because I'm pro-abortion, but because, ultimately, I don't think women make these decisions casually. . . And so, for me, the goal right now should be . . . And by the way, I've now inserted this into the Democratic Party platform, is how do we reduce the number of abortions?"
(Saddleback Interview, Aug 2008)

Obama: "The issue of abortion, I don't think, has gone away. . . I think that the American people struggle with two principles: There's the principle that a fetus is not just an appendage, it's potential life. I think people recognize that there's a moral element to that. They also believe that women should have some control over their bodies and themselves and there is a privacy element to making those decisions."
(The New York Times, Oct 2007)

Obama: "There is a moral dimension to abortion, which I think that all too often those of us who are pro-choice have not talked about or tried to tamp down. I think that's a mistake because I think all of us understand that it is a wrenching choice for anybody to think about.

People of good will can exist on both sides. . . And if we can acknowledge that much, then we can certainly agree on the fact that we should be doing everything we can to avoid unwanted pregnancies that might even lead somebody to consider having an abortion."
(2008 Democratic Compassion Forum at Messiah College, Apr 13, 2008)

The American people hold a variety of opinions on the issue of abortion, be it because of their personal, scientific or religious beliefs. We will never all agree, and because our country is a free one, we cannot force others to conform with or practices our particular set of beliefs and should focus on changing what we can agree on. We believe our energies and efforts would be better spent on seeking other avenues for reducing abortion rather than trying to overturn a law that has held up for several decades? We all agree on the problem, we just have different solutions.

In our opinion, this is why a candidate being "pro-life" in a broader sense than just relating to abortion is so important. Respecting human life on the whole is a much better gauge of a candidate's values, especially given the freedoms and rights of others, which cannot be disregarded. We feel that, in this sense, Obama respects ALL human life and that is why we support him.

Infanticide Sources:

www.ontheissues.org/Social/Barack_Obama_Abortion.htm

www.factcheck.org

Johnson, Douglas. "Obama Cover-up on Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Continues to Unravel After Sen. Obama Says NRLC is 'Lying,'" 18 Aug. 2008.

Illinois Senate Republicans. "Staff Analysis, Senate Bill 1082," 13 Mar. 2003.

Illinois General Assembly Committee on Health and Human Services. "Senate Committee Action

Report," 12 Mar. 2003.

Obama for America. "Fact Check on CNN and Bennet's [sic] Inaccurate Claim That IL 'Born Alive' Legislation Obama Opposed Was the Same as Federal Legislation He Supported," 30 Jun. 2008.

Obama's Personal Faith

Since there are so many opinions out there about Obama's personal faith and what it entails, lets hear his own words on the matter:

Last month, at the Saddleback Civil Forum with Rick Warren, when asked about his Christian faith, Obama replied as follows. . .

OBAMA: "As a starting point, it means I believe in — that Jesus Christ died for my sins, and that I am redeemed through him. That is a source of strength and sustenance on a daily basis. Yes, I know that I don't walk alone. And I know that if I can get myself out of the way, that I can maybe carry out in some small way what he intends. And it means that those sins that I have on a fairly regular basis, hopefully will be washed away.

But what it also means, I think, is a sense of obligation to embrace not just words, but through deeds, the expectations, I think, that god has for us. And that means thinking about the least of these. It means acting — well, acting justly, and loving mercy, and walking humbly with our god. And that — I think trying to apply those lessons on a daily basis, knowing that you're going to fall a little bit short each day, and then being able to kind of take note and saying, well, that didn't quite work out the way I think it should have, but maybe I can get a little bit better. It gives me the confidence to try things, including things like running for president, where you're going to screw up once in a while."

Also at the Saddleback Forum, Obama discussed what he feels his and our role should be in regards to evil. . .

OBAMA: "Evil does exist. I mean, I think we see evil all the time. We see evil in Darfur. We see evil, sadly, on the streets of our cities. We see evil in parents who viciously abuse their children. I think it has to be confronted. It has to be confronted squarely, and one of the things that I strongly believe is that, now, we are not going to, as individuals, be able to erase evil from the world. That is God's task, but we can be soldiers in that process, and we can confront it when we see it. Now, the one thing that I think is very important is for to us have some humility in how we approach the issue of confronting evil, because a lot of evil's been perpetrated based on the claim that we were trying to confront evil."

Our opinion - We agree with everything stated here, and that is why we support him.

Faith Sources:

Saddleback Civil Forum, Aub 2008 - Transcript obtained at www.transcripts.cnn.com