

Review Essay

The President's Mother the Anthropologist and the Anthropologist's Son: Anthropological Issues and US President Obama

The Manufacturing of a President: The CIA's Insertion of Barack H. Obama, Jr. into the White House. Wayne Madsen, Raleigh, North Carolina: Lulu Press, 2012, ISBN: 978-1478260646, xviii + 377 pp. Pb: \$20.00.

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ABSTRACT: Barack Obama was the first son of a PhD anthropologist to serve as President of the United States, and some popular press linked his political views and actions, which were allegedly in violation of international law, to failures in American anthropology to uphold international law as well as to personal failures by anthropologists to transmit the professional ethics of the discipline to their offspring. This essay examines those critiques and identifies deficiencies in anthropological presentations of 'multiculturalism' and in anthropology's adherence to international law. It also reviews the cultural self-identification of President Obama, drawing attention to the sub-cultures of 'expat' communities like those in which President Obama was raised and in which many practising anthropologists and their children live.

KEYWORDS: cultural rights, ethics, expatriate community, international law, multiculturalism, Obama family

Recent books from both outside and inside our discipline link anthropology directly to policies of the former US President Barack Obama¹, whose mother was an anthropologist, as well as his half-sister. This essay examines the allegations made in a recent book by journalist Wayne Madsen (which partly rely on those made in another recent book by Janny Scott in 2011 about Stanley Ann Dunham, the first Presidential mother who was a Ph.D. anthropologist) that directly implicate Dunham and American anthropologists in the policies of President Obama and of the United States. Madsen charges that the American anthropology community not only collaborated for decades with policies of the national security state apparatus of the United States that he views as genocidal and internationally criminal, but that the world is now bearing witness to a new acultural identity in

the socialisation of children resulting from this collusion, which is exemplified by the career and policies of Barack Obama, whom he identifies by his various names as Barack Hussein Obama/Soebarka/Soetoro. Rather than identify as 'African' or 'Indonesian' or 'hyphenated-American', Madsen claims that Obama has a new kind of identity that was 'manufactured' by Dunham and the national security state with no national attachments (i.e. national history, culture and land attachments, other than those to a specific governmental agency and its goals) or ethnic attachments. He sees this unsustainable 'culture' as one motivated by primitive drives of power, obedience and human control in service to a hidden elite bureaucracy.

Although many (perhaps most) of Madsen's claims are unfounded innuendo, lacking in credibility and

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irresponsible to the point of libel, the implications of the issues raised in this book, I would argue, strike so closely to the heart of anthropology and the role of anthropologists – as professionals, as citizens, and even as parents and simply as human beings – that this is not a book that can simply be dismissed and ignored by the profession. In my view, there are three related and important anthropological issues raised in Madsen's book that are important for discussion in our profession:

- (a) The first is on the relationship between the national security state and anthropology as a result of anthropologists failing to establish clear professional adherence to obligations of international law.
- (b) The second is on the implications of modern 'identities' and 'multicultural ethnicities' and what the implications may be for current and future generations who are being encouraged to 'invent' their identities and who may choose to fill the ethnic identity vacuum they face with hollow, institutional identities or drives of power, violence and control.
- (c) The third is on what books like this one tell us about contemporary political culture and views of political power in the administrative security state and in the era of globalisation. They highlight contemporary mythologies and ideologies of the weakness of the individual against the apparent omnipotence of agencies of control and suggest the existence of a 'dark' or 'shadow' politics.

This essay will briefly present and deconstruct Madsen's main argument. It will then scrutinise the arguments Madsen presents that are relevant to his critique of American anthropology, to Dunham as an applied anthropologist, and to the ethnic identity of Barack Obama, the anthropologist's son, weighing them for their veracity as if they were presented in a court of law. The essay will then discuss the three key issues for anthropology that Madsen raises indirectly.

Presenting and Deconstructing Madsen's Argument

Wayne Madsen tells us that he feels cheated. He claims that, in voting for Barack Obama for President in 2008, he and others believed, or had reason to believe, that they were voting for a candidate who took seriously his oath to the US constitution and to inter-

national laws and treaties that the US government had signed, respecting fundamental civil liberties, cultural and natural rights, and ideals of civilisation and humanity. What Madsen now believes that he received instead was a growing police state apparatus, global and planetary destabilisation, destruction of the American social compact, and a dismantling of rule of law. He is looking for someone or something to blame.

Rather than take personal responsibility for his political choices and offer potential solutions and mechanisms for changing US institutions and political culture, Madsen claims that he and others were deceived by an apparatus of a national security state and corporate power that 'manufactured' not just the deception but also the person who represented it – Barack Obama.

Apparently because Obama's mother was an anthropologist and because many anthropologists were originally vocal supporters of international laws and treaties for cultural rights, environmental protections, and sustainability that were also originally part of the professional ethic of anthropology and/or perhaps because of Obama's multiracial/multicultural/international background, Madsen expected Obama to present a different identity and ethic. Probably so did many others in the United States and globally.

Madsen does not appear to be surprised by the large number of other politicians who supported the same views as Barack Obama in the United States or overseas; among these were the former presidential candidates and Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry, Senator John McCain, and Governor Mitt Romney, and former Presidents George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush. Perhaps Madsen does not focus on them because they are of European descent and visibly a part of what C. Wright Mills (1956) called the 'power elite', with the national security state furthering their private financial and class/ethnic/institutional interests.

To explain his sense of being cheated, Madsen claims that 'the 44th President of the United States, the son and grandson of CIA operatives, was in essence a "Manchurian candidate" groomed from an early age to be inserted into the White House at the proper time' (xi). He states that 'President Obama serves not the interests of the American people but those of a small wealthy elite who have instructed him on how to carry out his major and even minor duties' (xii). He further alleges the 'distinct possibility that the president of the United States was raised within a household where mass murder of civilians was not considered a crime against humanity but a macabre blood sport' (100).

Once he comes up with this single explanation, Madsen looks for facts to fit the theory. He identifies activities of the CIA, finds possibilities of activities of the Obama family that could remotely be linked to those activities, and then draws the conclusion that they must be linked. The logic throughout the book follows a single, flawed pattern in multiple examples that can be paraphrased as follows: 'One third of anthropological funding through foundations for overseas research like Ford came from the CIA during the 1960s and 1970s. Obama's mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, was an anthropologist who received Ford Foundation funding during the 1970s. Therefore, Dunham worked for the CIA'. Or similarly, 'The CIA recruited students at Occidental College and at Columbia University. Obama went to school at Occidental and Columbia. Therefore, the CIA recruited Obama'. The possibilities and implications of anthropologists' relationships with the national security state (even if they are indirect) are interesting, but Madsen offers no alternate hypotheses and conclusions (some of which may be more valid and even more disturbing).

Madsen does not distinguish between the CIA and other national security state agencies that have grown at an explosive rate in the United States (and globally) over the past several years, apparently beyond any effective public control and with little transparency. Nor does he distinguish between actually working for the national (or international) security state as an employee (or contractor) and enabling or supporting it through shared ideology and interests. Madsen also does not clearly explain whether he opposes the national security state (that he calls the 'CIA') and the Obama Administration because he finds that they violated international law, because he finds that they were not under any effective citizen and legal control, or because he believes that they appear to have been captured by oligarchic interests and a self-aggrandising ideology. Nor does he explain the kind of relationship between government and universities and researchers for the collection of international information and for the international intervention of which he does approve, and why he supports it. He offers no vision and no solutions for problems he identifies in anthropology, in university funding, in international research, in international relations, in the selection of government officials and in the tasking and oversight of the national security state.

One might also reasonably ask whether it is even possible today for an anthropology student or professor to receive the breadth and quality of education

and to enjoy the free exchange of ideas and opportunity for choice of fieldwork, topics and approaches that was apparently available to the President's mother and to his half-sister, Maya Soetoro Ng, when they studied anthropology. Madsen creates the inference that President Obama's policies have restricted or distorted the field of anthropology, created a climate of fear and caused the field to regress, but he does not directly address how.

Scrutinising Madsen's 'Facts'

Madsen does not present a single shred of *direct evidence* that Obama's mother, father, grandparents or (before his Presidency) Obama himself worked for the national security state. Not a single person has come forward to offer testimony to such effect, and there is no written evidence proving these charges. Madsen asserts that evidence has been cleansed, that important records have been sealed or destroyed (including passport records, school records and government employment records) and that witnesses (particularly in Indonesia) have been threatened (introduction).

Some of Madsen's claims are clearly false and could be considered libellous (including statements about well-known anthropologist Clifford Geertz). He misrepresents the work of at least one anthropologist (David Price) in order to further his claims. At times, he bludgeons the reader with falsehoods. A responsible publisher, editor and lawyer vetting this book would have kept the book solely focused on the facts.

Nevertheless, Madsen does offer a number of claims that can be used to construct important theories and hypotheses that have a bearing on anthropology and on contemporary politics. Though Madsen's claims do not meet a legal standard of proof, I believe they are still significant for history and for anthropology.² Madsen's evidence to support the assertion that Obama's mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, worked under 'non-official cover' ('NOC') as a CIA agent within any one of the many organisations where she worked is not convincing. However, there likely would have been CIA agents in such status in the organisations where she worked (such as the US Agency for International Development [USAID] and its contractors). She lived and worked in the same communities and offices as people who were CIA officers, and there is no evidence anywhere that she sought to assure that they were accountable to international law or standards and that the law and various publics and peoples were being protected by

the government offices where she worked. Madsen's book raises questions about how Dunham could have studied Russian at the height of the Cold War at the University of Hawaii with her first husband (Barack's biological father), and why she would have married an Indonesian lieutenant colonel whom she also met there if she didn't already have some inclination towards supporting the institutional objectives of the US national security state and the interests it served. That is really as far as the evidence Madsen presents on Dunham goes.

The specific allegation that Madsen makes several times and then begins to state as proven fact, that Dunham went to survey the political leanings of Indonesian villagers and then provided names for government death squad targeting as part of the 'PROSYMS' project to target Chinese-Indonesians and other so-called 'Communists' (56), is irresponsible, inappropriate and not credible. Madsen misrepresents an article by anthropological historian David Price in describing anthropologist Clifford Geertz as 'one of the top witting U.S. assets in Java' and calling him Dunham's 'de facto "control officer"' (96). He also misuses Price's work to suggest that Price believes that Dunham was funded by the CIA and was responding to the CIA (120; see also Price 2003). The chronology of Dunham's employment and activities in Indonesia does not even put her in the field in Java until 1975.

There is also no evidence that Barack Obama, Sr., President Obama's biological father, worked for the CIA. He received scholarship money to study at Hawaii and Harvard. That made him a likely candidate for US government contacts of many forms. But this book proves nothing more than that. Madsen's case that Obama worked for the CIA before becoming President is also too weak to take seriously. Obama does fit a classic profile of someone whom the US intelligence services would recruit. He was highly mobile (geographically rootless), and from a broken family without any strong community ties and that had a history in military or government service. He also had a possible dual nationality and had foreign language skills. These qualities are almost tailor-made for the spy trade. Nevertheless, though Obama's first job, at 22, may have been for a CIA front organisation collecting financial information, Business International Company (BIC), there is not a shred of evidence presented in the book that he was actually recruited by the CIA or that he ever worked for the CIA prior to his presidency.

The idea that a cabal was standing in the shadows preparing Obama for a meteoric rise to the US

presidency for 30 years also sounds more like it is taken from the script of books and films (like Jerzy Kosinski's film *Being There* [1971] and Ira Levin's novel *The Boys from Brazil* [1976]) than from the realm of logical possibility, but Madsen hints at other ways of exerting influence. Obama almost certainly found benefactors in high places with ties to funds, since this is the reality of the US political system (perhaps what we might consider to be 'oligarchy'). The idea that such a benefactor facilitated the appearance of scandalous information in the press to clear away his rivals is consistent with this. Today, it is widely acknowledged that the national (or international) security state of governments throughout the world is collecting personal information all of the time without legal oversight. Though Madsen does not offer any proof, it is conceivable that the security state now uses such information (and suppresses other damaging information) so as to create indebtedness among political figures that it favours.

Implications for Anthropology

The implications of Madsen's book for anthropology are nonetheless disturbing, and it is worth looking at each of three issues in turn.

The Relationship between the National Security State and Anthropology

The question that Madsen, a non-anthropologist, asks about how the son and brother of an anthropologist can apparently grow up without any consciousness of the most fundamental ethical principles of anthropology, particularly when these principles are firmly embedded in international law, should rightly make every anthropologist squirm.

It would be partly comforting if Madsen's premise were true, and that some anthropologists had become corrupted and co-opted such that they no longer upheld the basic principles of law or human morality or the basic belief even of human or planetary survival, and that they passed this psychopathology on to their children in the way they taught and raised them. If a few anthropologists somehow went over to the 'dark side' for whatever reason, there would still be a way to identify them, hold them accountable and move on. But the picture that Madsen presents is not just of a few wayward anthropologists and their children. It is of a profession that has become detached from its own humanistic principles, from its standards and reason for being, and from international law (Lempert, 2012a).

What the argument in Madsen's book is really suggesting, quoting anthropologists like Ralph Beals (and his 1966 report, which was long suppressed) along with Margaret Mead's response in 1971, is that anthropology has so long been corrupted that it has now for decades done nothing to ensure that those whom it educates at any level, or who are members of anthropological organisations and who work as professionals, take any enforceable oath of any kind to international law and to the ethics of the profession when they work in practice.

Dunham only had a BA in anthropology (from the University of Hawaii) when she first went to Indonesia. It was only much later that she earned an MA and then a PhD there. But she received those higher degrees after working for those agencies that Madsen identifies as violating international laws, including the most basic laws that should be the basis for certification as an anthropologist – certification to ensure adherence to the discipline's ethical code for protecting the survival and sustainability of cultures and against seeking to transform them for any outside (colonial) purpose.

If the presentation in Madsen's book on this is accurate (it is possible that it is not), apparently at no time did Dunham stand firmly behind these principles or attempt to teach them to her son. While there is no evidence to suggest that Dunham directly participated in violations, Madsen suggests that the organisations that she associated herself with routinely did. He also asserts that others in the field, such as Clifford Geertz, anthropologists at her university, the University of Hawaii, and those in the American Anthropological Association, did nothing tangible that is on record to enforce these standards in any effective way. Instead, he suggests that they all worked to undermine international law and to open the door to financial and political manipulation of the discipline and its members in ways that favoured use of foreign cultures for foreign financial and political gain.

The area in which Dunham did work as an anthropologist on her dissertation research, that of small-credit community banking projects for women and traditional crafts that are scaled up for export of their products, I have argued, is one that distorts local cultural sustainability in violation of international law in promotion of a globalisation agenda (Lempert 2012b) while also exploiting women's and children's labour (Lempert 2011). Madsen's book, however, does not closely describe her work. Nearly 20 years ago, after finding myself routinely pressured to engage in acts that violated international law by some of the very same organisations in which Dunham worked, I

authored an ethics code for practising anthropologists and published it in one of our leading journals, *Practicing Anthropology* (Lempert 1997). Recently, I have also been designing accountability indicators to hold international interventions directly accountable to international law (Lempert 2011, 2012a). I have called for the unionisation of professionals and for licensing and enforcement schemes. This isn't just the 'right' thing to do or a question of self-interest for our profession, though it is also that. Upholding these principles and international laws are now prerequisites for human and planetary survival as well as stability. From my perspective as a lawyer who has taken oaths to the law, I find Madsen's wider critique of anthropologists to have merit.

It should be an embarrassment to all of us that issues like these are now being raised in ridicule on us by journalists like Madsen because we, as anthropologists, have not shown the competence and do not appear to care enough to practise what we preach (and perhaps no longer even preach it). The suggestion that the son and half-brother of two anthropologists, who is also a lawyer but has no concept of or concern for these most fundamental precepts that are not only embedded in international law, basic moral doctrine in Western culture, and oaths of professional associations (in anthropology as well as oaths of lawyers) but are also part of obligations to raising and teaching children (and one's students) is perhaps the most damning statement of our profession that one can make.

Modern 'Identities' and Multicultural Ethnicities

The political campaign and autobiographical narrative that Barack Obama (Soetoro) presented throughout his US political career and repeated in the international mass media is one of a 'Black' man of African descent identifying with US minorities and also with developing nations. Madsen, by contrast, says that Obama has no real national or ethnic identity at all as a result of his parents' and maternal grandparents' supposed national security state affiliations and institutional allegiances. In Madsen's view, children who are raised in such households and across borders are often empty vessels fulfilling needs for the national security state. He charges that Obama used his 'Black' identity to infiltrate minority groups (in Chicago) and the Democratic Party in order to subvert their agendas by following methods that the security state has used to undermine diverse political and community interests so that they conform with the goals of American (and global) elites.

With regard to ethnic identity, Madsen's book suggests that Obama was actually raised as a member of a privileged Indonesian globalist elite, and that Obama's real identity and surname should be that of his adoptive father (Soetoro) or the Indonesian name that his mother gave him as a child (Soebarka): he should have an Indonesian identity, not an African one. His nanny was Indonesian, his classmates were Indonesian and apparently he was fluent in Bahasa Indonesian. Though he left Indonesia after the fourth grade, he continued his schooling in Hawaii with upper class Asian-Americans, and his mother continued to live in Indonesia and then Pakistan. Apart from his skin colour, Madsen argues, there is nothing to suggest any identification in any way with Africa. Madsen (based on Scott's book [2011]) says that Obama's childhood dream was to become 'Prime Minister of Indonesia' when he grew up (82).

One can empathise with 10-year-old Barry, as he was called as a child. He had black skin in an Asian country, and he studied in a school with the children of Indonesian elites whose parents were either part of a brutal genocidal conflict or were in fear of being targeted. Certainly, his classmates must have been acting out nightmares. He lived with a mother with anger at his biological father for hiding the situation of his first wife and family in Kenya. He also lived in a household with emerging tension with his Indonesian stepfather for reasons that we do not know but maybe can guess, perhaps connected with Lolo Soetoro's military service and connected with the latter's holding a view of women that worked in Indonesian marriages but not with an independent American woman. Who would Obama have identified with, and who would he have trusted?

Madsen (and Scott) say that as a young man in the US mainland at 22 Obama suddenly, for the first time, decided to define himself the way Americans now see him and probably did then – that is, simply by his skin colour. Madsen says that this is evidence that Obama was a CIA 'infiltrator' in Chicago entering the Black community (281). It is more likely, as one of his ex-girlfriends commented (and that was explored in film, *Southside with You* [Richard Tanne, 2016]), that Obama simply had no idea who he was and was searching for some kind of identity. In that way, perhaps Madsen is right that Obama was vulnerable to being 'programmed' by a cult that would give him a sense of belonging, which is the argument that he repeats throughout the book. In the contemporary state, that cult is now often the security state or police state apparatus and its lure of power and violence.

Looking more closely at the arguments in Madsen's book, though, it is clear that Obama was raised with a specific cultural identity, and it is a disturbing one. Obama was raised in the contemporary 'expatriate community' that has its roots in former colonial communities of military, colonial administration functionaries, missionaries and business representatives. The identity of the elite expatriate subculture is an imagined, created identity that is not defined by geography. There is no identifiable 'expat town', but there may be streets where expatriates live together, in the same way that there are 'Black communities' of people who identify as being 'Black' and who may or may not live together. Anthropological terminology would describe this self-identified elite community as a 'subculture' consisting of 'neo-colonial' foreign implementing agents working not just for the national security state but for multinational corporations and a host of culture change agencies, teaching English, proselytising religion, changing local consumption and social structure patterns to serve their economic and political needs, and living 'separately' as an elite while exploiting in a variety of ways the natives with whom they come into contact. This particular elite community is not the 'expatriate community' of exiles, refugees and intellectuals that existed in early-twentieth-century Paris. It is a subculture of elites of shared interests and identity, which is often stronger than a group of people with shared national or ethnographic affiliations.

There seems to be little anthropological study of expatriate communities and how they work as subcultures of colonialism, though perhaps this author is unaware of them. There are, however, good examples in fiction like George Orwell's *Burmese Days* (1934), Rudyard Kipling's short story collections, and works by Graham Greene (*The Quiet American* [1955], *Our Man in Havana* [1958] and *The Heart of the Matter* [1948]) as well as some published diaries that I have listed elsewhere (Lempert 2014). (I kept one such diary in the Philippines when working for USAID in the 1980s that has been difficult to publish.)

Obama's family had the status of elites, but not that of landed or corporate elites or dynastic/aristocratic families in the United States. They were only elites due to their status as expatriates. His mother, father and stepfather may have never worked for the national security state, but they were entirely dependent on its mission and its largesse, and so was their overseas community. In Jakarta, he was raised into an elite, with a personal nanny living in his room and with maids, in much the way elite whites lived in the rural south. That was Obama's culture, identity and

means of livelihood. Serving those interests brought scholarships, contracts and work. Opposing it meant having no means of livelihood in those communities unless one was ready to be a maid or a nanny or a peasant farmer.⁴

The 'multicultural' identity that Obama learnt and 'chose' when he returned to the mainland United States is the one that is popularised today as part of the 'postmodernist' assimilative monoculture of globalisation. Anthropologists promote it as one that is 'diverse' and 'tolerant' because it promotes choice of identities within the monoculture and avoids any confrontation with processes of globalisation and neo-colonialism that are actually destroying the globe's remaining six thousand cultures. This view of culture is politically 'safe' because it promotes an elite agenda. It is also empty and detached from the very definition of culture on which international law is based and that many anthropologists once fought to protect; one based on true cultural diversity and survival. The basic definition of our field defined culture as a community of peoples in a specific environment and living within that environment and in a network of relationships rooted within it. In place of culture as defined by geography, language and practices, which were the founding concepts of the discipline, we now have political ideologies as cultures ('socialist' and 'post-socialist'), hobbies and technological choices as cultures ('Internet culture'), individual businesses as cultures ('corporate culture', 'organisational culture'), single aspects of human needs as cultures ('fast-food culture', 'slow-food culture') and sexual preferences as cultures ('gay culture') among every other individual choice, single variable, and permutation. One could also define one's subculture as that of global elites and as part of flexible networks of powerful technocratic overseers, as one anthropologist does in her study of 'shadow elites' (Wedel 2009).

In my view, what Obama's mother and anthropology failed to instil in Obama, and what is also one of the failures of our discipline as a 'discipline' and of applied social science, in my view, is the understanding of culture as strategies of peoples rooted in their environments for their long-term survival. Had Obama had that simple understanding, he would have recognized multiculturalism as tolerance for a variety of intellectual adaptations of human groups to promote human survival with their environments, and he would have acted to encourage, respect and protect it everywhere as well as to welcome it in himself.

Instead, the message he apparently got was a negative and hollow one. His culture was the expatriate subculture of mobile elites tied to shared interests

(defined in the slogans of the 2016 presidential election as 'Wall Street', the 'military-industrial complex', 'fossil-fuel companies', 'corporations', 'the 1%', 'neo-liberals', and 'the swamp' of Washington, DC and its bureaucracy) but to no specific country or culture. That subculture is one that is dependent on the exploitation of resources and peoples, converting minority peoples to a global ideology and enforcing its authority through military power. The cultural and identity vacuum that Obama's mother apparently gave him was one that he seems to have been taught only to fill with hollow, institutional identities or drives of power, violence and control rather than with any real appreciation for his ancestors, their interactions with nature, and their place in the long-term survival of humanity.

Though not an anthropologist, Madsen is telling us that we, as anthropologists today, are giving our children, our students and the world this lack of appreciation. There can be little more shocking or repulsive than this mirror image turned back on us of what we are creating and what we appear to have become.

Contemporary Political Culture

Finally, there is something disturbing in the underlying message that this book sends about the possibilities for setting things back right. Madsen's book plays on ideologies of fear and powerlessness, offering no solutions and suggesting that dark forces control and undermine our hopes. In one sense, promoting this sort of belief in hidden, unassailable forces that cannot be changed is the way that cultures perpetuate themselves and prevent change. But all cultures confront situations where their only choice is to learn, prepare to adapt and change, or to die. As applied anthropologists, our role is to understand the 'deep structures' of power and mechanisms of social change, as well as to recognise cultural constructs that grow beyond their usefulness to the point of threatening their cultures (or humanity). Our job is to try to recognise the principles and technologies of reversing these failures. This seems to now be such a time for this kind of anthropological understanding and action, not just for major urban cultures like the United States but also for the planet. Stressing the idea of 'dark' forces or 'shadow' politics will not lead to solutions for anthropology, for social science research, for the role of universities or for the changing of political institutions.

Madsen's book seeks to deny his own sense of personal responsibility to present facts carefully and to look beyond personalities and shadow forces and ideologies in order to focus on institutional and cultural

structures and how they can be changed. He similarly denies Obama's ability to accept personal responsibility, as he denies the specific responsibilities of those in the anthropology community to international law and to human welfare, and the professional responsibility of the discipline as a whole.

This essay attempts to challenge Madsen, his colleagues and others to face our responsibilities as professionals, as parents and as citizens to uphold and demand that others adhere to international law, to uphold and enforce our professional ethics codes so they are more than meaningless platitudes, to ensure that our profession is based on principles of science and discipline that work towards real technical solutions for long-term human survival and sustainability rather than just serve as dogmas that actually promote acceptance, passivity and inaction, and to assure that we are teaching and modelling active applications of skills and morality in practice rather than just preaching. It is a call on us to lead the path to cultural change and adaptation before it is too late.

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Note

1. This article was originally prepared for *Anthropology in Action* in 2014 during Obama's presidency.
2. There is reasonably good evidence in Madsen's book, including photographic, to support the claim that Obama's maternal grandfather, Stanley Armour Dunham, worked for the national security state, though maybe not for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). One could reasonably conclude that he worked for U.S. 'military intelligence' and possibly in Lebanon as one photograph infers. Similarly, the fact that Madelyn Dunham, Obama's maternal grandmother, managed escrow accounts for the Bank of Hawaii is insufficient evidence to implicate her in slush fund transfers for the CIA, though the book raises interesting questions about her career networks.
3. Madsen does hint at a second theory on the relationship between the CIA and Dunham and Obama that may be more likely. Madsen makes a pretty good case that Dunham changed her son's name when

she married the Indonesian Army Lieutenant Colonel Lolo Soetoro and then (for reasons not entirely clear) took Obama out of a private international school. Dunham enrolled Obama in the Menteng State Elementary School, for Indonesians only and requiring an Indonesian passport that she obtained for him under the name Barack Soetoro or Barack Soebarka (p. 69). Madsen suggests that, as a prerequisite to receiving this passport, Obama had to revoke his U.S. citizenship since Indonesian law did not allow dual citizenship and would have needed the help of the CIA to do so. Whatever happened suggests the knowledge of and perhaps indebtedness to the national security state.

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