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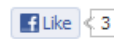
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SUN AUG 29, 2010 AT 06:59 PM PDT

Top Comments: Obama's roots--The Dunham House

by Dragon5616 ♥



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Many insightful and powerful diaries are written here at Daily Kos. Our diaries inform, inflame, impassion, and even entertain. We Kossacks have strong voices and an even stronger determination to be the change we need in this country.

One of the richest and most under-appreciated sources of Kossack wisdom comes in the form of comments attached to these diaries.

Top Comments strives to recognize and promote the talent of this community by highlighting outstanding comments found throughout the day by your humble diarist and through nominations made at **TopComments** at **gmail dot com** (before 9:30pm) by you and your fellow Kossacks.

These nominations are subjective and certainly not complete (as no one can read the complete site on a daily basis!). But we hope they will serve to shine a light where deserved and to give the reader a good starting point in finding conversation on the site.

Please come in and make yourself at home! Join us beneath the fold...





On August 4th, President Obama's 49th birthday, Mrs. Dragon and I participated in an OFA phone banking event to GOTV here in Indiana. What made the experience unique and unforgettable was that the event was held in the ancestral home of the President's mother, Ann Dunham.



In the tiny farming community of Kempton, Indiana, just 13 miles from

the southern edge of Kokomo where I live, stands the Dunham House. As it turns out, the house was the home of several generations of President Obama's great-grandparents on his mother's side.

Our host was the owner of the house, Shawn Clements, a gracious, intelligent, and knowledgeable young man, and he gave us a tour of the house and a history lesson before we started phone calling. A report of that day can be found [here](#) on the OFA website.

I will not relate all the history here, but I will instead link you to the [Dunham House website](#), which is excellent and has the entire history on it. The President visited the house on May 3, 2008, during his campaign.

One interesting story is that he may not have been the only President to be there. As Clements relates in my transcript from this [YouTube video](#), it is likely Grover Cleveland visited it years before. One day, while he was working on restoring the home,

A lady came to the door and introduced herself, and she said, "This is just a great old house. I used to come here when I was a little girl." She was probably in her mid-eighties or so, and she said, "I've spent the night here, and Dr. Dunham was my doctor and he delivered me" and all that kind of thing. And I said, "Well, I haven't heard about Dr. Dunham." And she said, "Oh, well there were two of them. There was Wilbur Dunham and Grover Dunham." And she said, "Now Grover Dunham, his name was Grover Cleveland Dunham." And I said, "That's interesting; he must have been named after the President." And she said, "Oh, absolutely, and he should have been because President Grover Cleveland spent the night in this house or visited this house, and knew Riley Dunham pretty well from what we understand. That's always been passed down."

I've talked to some family members and some secretaries and people who worked for Dr. Dunham and they said "Oh, that was very well known for years and years and years"--as if that was normal conversation. And somewhere--if anybody can ever find it that would be great--allegedly there's a picture of Grover Cleveland sitting on my front porch, and if anybody can find that, I'd love to have a copy of that.

So that is the local legend here--that there is already a president that has passed through here. With Riley Dunham being a Democrat in the [Indiana] General Assembly, maybe there was something with that because Cleveland was beaten by and then turned around and defeated [Benjamin] Harrison, President Harrison from Indiana, so maybe Riley had some work to do with that.

It was a fascinating lesson and a memorable day. But there's a downside. Mr. Clements has endured threats and vandalism because of the home's link to the President. Even more disgusting is the reaction of some to his marvelous project for feeding the hungry as outlined in this video clip of a news story that appeared on Channel 8, WISH-TV, in Indianapolis:



My reaction is to want to work even harder for Democrats in this fall's election. I hope it's yours, too.

Before I go on to tonight's Top Comments, I am going to use this space to say Ta Ta For Now. I haven't been pulling my weight on the Top Comments team or at DK. Now that school is in session, I am crazy busy. In addition to teaching all day, I officiate football during the week and fall baseball on the weekends, and I write sports as a stringer for the local paper on Friday nights. I am also trying to do some door knocking for OFA. Maybe later I can get back in the swing of things.

So, many thanks to the TC folks (they're the greatest in my book), and especially to **sardonyx**, who helped me with Top Mojo and much more. I'll miss you guys (although I will visit sometimes and pass out recs and mojo), and, as Ahnold said in *The Terminator*, "Ah'll be back."



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Obama's ancestral home subject of documentary

MEGHAN GRAHAM, Kokomo Tribune

Updated 8:53 a.m., Friday, September 14, 2012

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KEMPTON, Ind. (AP) — Indiana history buff Nelson Price relaxes in the sunny former master bedroom's sitting room of Obama's forefathers, looking out on the acres of land that once belonged to them.

The author of Indiana history books and the host of Indianapolis-based radio show Hoosier History Live!, Price has followed the story of this house closely since he first invited the owner, Shawn Christopher Clements, to speak on his show. Now, as he's being interviewed for "A Single Root," a documentary about the house, he's basking in generations of rich Indiana history. Price is certainly in his element.

"I think the Dunham House is an example of how doing a house history can change your life," he said during his interview with documentary director Steve Zukerman. "Look at what's happened: Shawn buys this older home without realizing it has connections to a rising political star and then the star becomes president of the United States. This becomes, in my opinion, a historic site."

Clements bought the home nearly 10 years ago, before Obama became a senator and a household name, the Kokomo Tribune reported (<http://bit.ly/O2m6uJ>). He started researching the home's history when an elderly woman knocked on his door and told him the history was an important one. As Obama gained popularity, the Chicago Sun-Times ran an article on the politician's family history, and Clements discovered the link between the former senator and the house he had purchased. The house, built by William Riley Dunham sometime in the 1880s, sits on the land purchased by Jacob and Catherine Dunham, Obama's fourth great-grandparents on his mother's side. William Riley Dunham had been a member of the Indiana General Assembly, and legend says his acquaintance Grover Cleveland spent a night in the Dunham home. President Obama visited the home while campaigning in 2008.

Clements is currently working to grant the home status of a [National Historic Landmark](#). After buying the home, he says he spent nearly half a year cleaning it out. Basic rewiring had to be done; he says it's "amazing" that the place hadn't burned down. Now, the owner is using his expertise to get the home in shape. Items, like [Cecil Dunham's](#) sitting chair, are slowly finding their way back home as family members help in the effort.

Clements has been working to restore the house, but the endeavor has been expensive and time-consuming — especially with the increasing popularity of the house.

"Nothing takes a toll on a house like a thousand people coming through it," he said.

The house will be the focal point of the documentary, with the extensive family history weaving through more than a century of time.

"It's a simple story," Zukerman said of his documentary. "It doesn't require us getting really fancy with it. The message itself is what sells it. It's a good story."

[John Kleiman](#), the film's executive producer, reconnected with Clements to do the project. He said he had read about Clements' latest endeavor and gave his old friend a call.

"I told him, 'I think we can make a movie out of what you've done,'" Kleiman said. "I could not believe that someone hadn't already done something on it. It is the ancestral home and lineage of the president's mother. You didn't have to hit me over the head to convince me that this could be a worthwhile project."

Though Clements said he'd been approached to do other film projects, there had never been the right person to do it. That is, until Kleiman connected him to Zukerman, who runs Soapbox Entertainment, a Los Angeles, Calif.,-based production company.

"This is who we were waiting for," Clements said.

Zukerman said he hopes to have the film finished by mid-October so it can be shown in screenings in time for November's election.

"I think a lot of Hoosiers are shocked when they find out that there's this connection to [Barack Obama](#) here in Tipton County, Indiana," Price said. "We associate him with exotic places like Hawaii or Indonesia or Chicago, not Tipton County, Indiana, right out in the middle of the prairie here."

Kleiman said the team hopes to wrap up filming in the next eight to 10 days. They'll interview everyone from the last Dunham child to grow up in the house to Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight, who is a distant ancestor of [Catherine Goodnight](#), Obama's great-great-great-great grandmother.

"I love history," Goodnight said. "I love the history of our country, and I think we should do what we can to preserve the historical knowledge of any and every president."

Kleiman believes the house will soon be even more of a point of pride and tourism for the community.

"I think that at some point in time, the Obama family will be back to visit the house again," he said. "I would also hope that we become an important part of the economy here."

Above all else, Clements said he wants the documentary to represent the house's rich history, and hopes that people will not disregard it because of their feelings about Obama's politics.

"Whether you voted for him or not, whether you like him or not, he's still the president of the United States," Clements said.

Information from: Kokomo Tribune, <http://www.ktonline.com>