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THIS DAY IN **HISTORY** (/THIS-DAY-IN-HISTORY)

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1995

Barack Obama's "Dreams from My Father" is published

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On this day in 1995, "Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance," a memoir by a little-known law professor named Barack Obama, is published. Obama wrote the book before entering politics; 13 years after it was published, he was elected America's 44th president.

"Dreams from My Father" tells the story of Obama's family—he was born in Hawaii in 1961 to a white mother from Kansas and a black father from Kenya. The book is also, as Obama writes in the introduction, "a boy's search for his father, and through that a search for a workable meaning for his life as a black American." Obama describes his adolescence in Hawaii, where he was raised by his white grandparents; his post-college years as a community organizer in Chicago; and a visit he made to Kenya as a young man to meet his African relatives following the

1982 death of his father, who he had seen only once after his parent's divorce when he was 2.

After being elected the first black president of the influential Harvard Law Review in 1990 while in his second year of law school, Obama was contacted by a literary agent who eventually got him a reported \$40,000 advance to write what became "Dreams from My Father." When the book was published in 1995, Obama was a law professor at the University of Chicago and had not yet stepped into the national spotlight. The book received favorable reviews; however, it sold a modest 8,000 to 9,000 hardcover copies and went out of print within several years.

The year after the book's publication, Obama was elected to the Illinois State Senate, his first foray into politics. In March 2004, he shot to national prominence by winning the U.S. Senate Democratic primary in Illinois. The publicity generated by his victory prompted a publisher to reissue "Dreams from My Father" in the summer of 2004. Boosted by his well-received keynote address at the Democratic National Convention that July, and his landslide election to the U.S. Senate in November of the same year, "Dreams of My Father" became a best-seller. Reviewers praised the book for its eloquence and candor.

In October 2006, Obama, then a U.S. senator, published his second book, "The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming America." Like his first book, "The Audacity of Hope" became a best-seller, and Obama drew crowds at book signings as speculation mounted over whether he would seek the presidency. In February 2007, Obama announced he would run for the White House. When asked about "Dreams from My Father" while on the campaign trail in 2008, he told The New York Times "he was not even thinking about political consequences when he wrote the memoir. In fact, he said, one editor warned him back then that his references to drug use could come back to haunt him—if he were ever nominated for the Supreme Court."

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Lead Story

1940

FDR nominated for unprecedented third term (/this-day-in-history/fdr-nominated-for-unprecedented-third-term)

On this day in 1940, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who first took office in 1933 as America's 32nd president, is nominated for an unprecedented third term. Roosevelt, a

Democrat, would eventually be elected to a record four terms in office, the only U.S. president to serve more than two terms. Roosevelt was born...

American Revolution

1792

Naval hero John Paul Jones dies in Paris (/this-day-in-history/naval-hero-john-paul-jones-dies-in-paris)

On this day in 1792, the Revolutionary War naval hero John Paul Jones dies in his Paris apartment, where he was still awaiting a commission as the United States consul to Algiers. Commander Jones, remembered as one of the most daring and successful naval commanders of the American Revolution,...

Automotive

1948

Juan Manuel Fangio

makes Formula One debut (/this-day-in-history/juan-manuel-fangio-makes-formula-one-debut)

Juan Manuel Fangio—the Argentine race car driver dubbed “the Maestro”—makes his European racing debut at the Grand Prix de l'Automobile Club de France in Reims, France on this day in 1948. Born in San Jose de Balcarce, Argentina, in 1911, Fangio left school at the age of 11 and began working...

Civil War

1863

Assault of Battery Wagner and death of Robert Gould Shaw (/this-day-in-history/assault-of-battery-wagner-and-death-of-robert-gould-shaw)

On this day, Union Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and 272 of his troops are killed in an assault

on Fort Wagner, near Charleston, South Carolina. Shaw was commander of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, perhaps the most famous regiment of African-American troops during the war. Fort Wagner stood on Morris Island, guarding...

Cold War

1945

Charges of communists in the U.S. Army raised (/this-day-in-history/charges-of-communists-in-the-u-s-army-raised)

In testimony before the House Military Affairs subcommittee, the subcommittee's chief counsel, H. Ralph Burton, charges that 16 officers and non-commissioned officers in the U.S. Army have pasts that "reflect communism." The charges, issued nearly 10 years before Senator Joseph McCarthy would make similar accusations, were hotly denied by the...

Crime

1984

Twenty-one people are shot to death at McDonald's (/this-day-in-history/twenty-one-people-are-shot-to-death-at-mcdonalds)

James Oliver Huberty opens fire in a crowded McDonald's restaurant in San Ysidro, California, killing 21 people and wounding 19 others with several automatic weapons. Minutes earlier, Huberty had left home, telling his wife, "I'm going hunting... hunting for humans." Huberty, who had a history of mental problems, lost his job...

Disaster

64

Nero's Rome burns (/this-day-in-history/neros-rome-burns)

The great fire of Rome breaks out and destroys much of the city on this day in the year 64. Despite the well-known stories, there is no evidence that the Roman emperor, Nero, either started the fire or played the fiddle while it burned. Still, he did use...

General Interest

1925

Hitler publishes Mein Kampf (/this-day-in-history/hitler-publishes-mein-kampf)

Seven months after being released from Landsberg jail, Nazi leader Adolf Hitler publishes the first volume of his personal manifesto, Mein Kampf. Dictated by Hitler during his nine-month stay in prison, Mein

Kampf, or "My Struggle," was a bitter and turgid narrative filled with anti-Semitic outpourings, disdain for morality, worship...

1936

Spanish Civil War breaks out (/this-day-in-history/spanish-civil-war-breaks-out)

On July 18, 1936, the Spanish Civil War begins as a revolt by right-wing Spanish military officers in Spanish Morocco and spreads to mainland Spain. From the Canary Islands, General Francisco Franco broadcasts a message calling for all army officers to join the uprising and overthrow Spain's leftist Republican government....

1969

Incident on Chappaquiddick Island (/this-day-in-history/incident-on-chappaquiddick-island)

Shortly after leaving a party on Chappaquiddick Island, Senator Edward "Ted" Kennedy of Massachusetts drives an Oldsmobile off a wooden bridge into a tide-swept pond. Kennedy escaped the submerged car, but his passenger, 28-year-old Mary Jo Kopechne, did not. The senator did not report the fatal car accident for 10...

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1986
Video of Titanic
wreckage released
(/this-day-in-
history/video-of-
titanic-wreckage-
released)

On this day in 1986, new close-up videotapes of the sunken ocean liner Titanic are released to the public. Taken on the first manned expedition to the wreck, the videotapes are stunning in their clarity and detail, showing one of the ship's majestic grand staircases and a coral-covered chandelier swinging...

64

Fire of Rome (/this-day-in-history/fire-of-rome)

A fire erupts in Rome, spreading rapidly throughout the market area in the center of the city. When the flames finally died out more than a week later, nearly two-thirds of Rome had been destroyed. Emperor Nero used the fire as an opportunity to rebuild Rome in a more orderly Greek...

Hollywood

2008

The Dark Knight opens with highest-grossing weekend (/this-day-in-history/the-dark-

knight-opens-with-highest-grossing-weekend)

On this day in 2008, *The Dark Knight*, the fifth film in the big-screen Batman series, opens in theaters around the United States, six months after the death of one of its stars, Heath Ledger, who played the Joker. *The Dark Knight* beat out the previous record-holder, 2007's *Spider-Man 3*,...

Literary

1929

Hunter S. Thompson is born (/this-day-in-history/hunter-s-thompson-is-born)

Pioneer of "gonzo" journalism, Hunter S. Thompson is born in Louisville, Ky., on this day. By age 10, Thompson was publishing his own two-page newspaper, which he sold for four cents. By his early teens, he had already launched on the life of drinking, vandalism, and pyromania that would turn him...

Music

1960

Fifteen-year-old
Brenda Lee earns a #1
hit with "I'm Sorry"
(/this-day-in-
history/fifteen-year-
old-brenda-lee-earns-
a-1-hit-with-im-sorry)

She was several inches short of five feet tall, even in socks and saddle shoes, and she weighed no more than 90 pounds, but her voice was that of a heavyweight. Just 15 years old but already five years into a professional recording career, "Little Miss Dynamite" Brenda Lee earned...

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Old West

1914

Singing Wobbly Joe Hill sentenced to death (/this-day-in-history/singing-wobbly-joe-hill-sentenced-to-death)

Convicted of murder on meager evidence, the singing Wobbly Joe Hill is sentenced to be executed in Utah. A native of Sweden who immigrated to the U.S. in 1879, Joe Hill joined the International Workers of the World (IWW) in 1910. The IWW was an industrial union that rejected the capitalist...

Presidential

1947

Truman signs second Presidential Succession Act (/this-day-in-history/truman-signs-second-presidential-

succession-act)

On this day in 1947, President Harry S. Truman signs the Presidential Succession Act. This act revised an older succession act that was passed in 1792 during George Washington's first term. The original succession act designated the Senate president pro tempore as the first in line to succeed the president should...

1962

Congress preserves birthplace and property of Theodore Roosevelt (/this-day-in-history/congress-preserves-birthplace-and-property-of-theodore-roosevelt)

On this day in 1962, Congress votes in favor of a bill that preserves former President Teddy Roosevelt's birthplace and former home in Manhattan, as well as an estate called Sagamore Hill where he lived from 1885 until his death. These were not the first sites preserved in honor of the...

Sports

1999

David Cone pitches perfect game (/this-day-in-history/david-cone-pitches-perfect-game)

On July 18, 1999, New York Yankee David Cone pitches the 16th perfect game in major league history and 14th in the modern era with a no-hit, no-walk victory over the Montreal Expos. David Cone had made his name as a pitcher with the New York Mets from 1987 to 1992....

Vietnam War

1955

Soviet Union agrees to grant Hanoi economic aid (/this-day-in-history/soviet-union-agrees-to-grant-hanoi-economic-aid)

Following a visit from Ho Chi Minh and his ministers, the Soviet Union announces that it will grant Hanoi 400 million rubles (about \$100 million) in economic aid. On July 7, China had announced that Beijing would extend Hanoi economic aid of 800 million yuan (about \$200 million). The July...

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1968

Johnson meets Thieu in Honolulu (/this-day-in-history/johnson-meets-thieu-in-honolulu)

President Lyndon B. Johnson meets South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu in Honolulu to discuss relations between

Washington and Saigon. Johnson reaffirmed his administration's commitment "to defend South Vietnam." Thieu stated that he had "no apprehensions at all" concerning the U.S. commitment. In a joint communique, Thieu further asserted that...

World War I

1918

Allies begin major counter-offensive in Second Battle of the Marne (/this-day-in-history/allies-begin-major-counter-offensive-in-second-battle-of-the-marne)

Three days after a German offensive near the Marne River in the Champagne region of France meets with failure, Allied forces launch a major counterattack on July 18, 1918, ending the Second Battle of the Marne and decisively turning the tide of the war toward an Allied victory. After forces commanded...

World War II

1925

Mein Kampf is published (/this-day-in-history/mein-kampf-is-published)

On this day in 1925, Volume One of Adolf Hitler's philosophical autobiography, Mein Kampf, is published. It was a blueprint of his agenda for a Third...

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