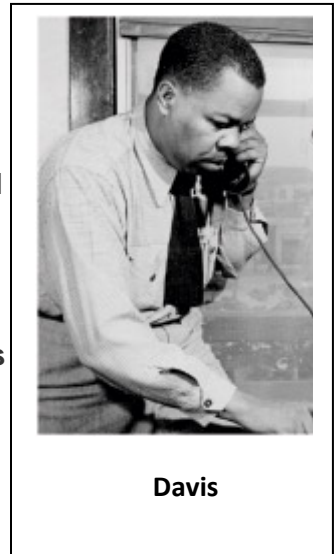


## Obama Mentor Frank Marshall Davis Took the Fifth Amendment When Asked About His Communist Party Membership

Senator Barack Obama's childhood mentor, Frank Marshall Davis, was a communist. But he took the Fifth Amendment when asked about it during Senate hearings into the "Scope of Soviet Activity in the United States." The transcript of his appearance is included in this report.

The record shows that Obama was in Hawaii from 1971-1979, where, at some point in time, he developed a close relationship, almost like a son, with Davis, listening to his "poetry" and getting advice on his career path. But Obama, in his book, *Dreams From My Father*, refers to him repeatedly as just "Frank." The 1951 report of the Commission on Subversive Activities to the Legislature of the Territory of Hawaii identified Davis as a member of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA).

In the summer/fall 2003 issue of *African American Review*, James A. Miller of George Washington University reviews a book by John Edgar Tidwell, a professor at the University of Kansas, about Davis's career, and notes, "In Davis's case, his political commitments led him to join the American Communist Party during the middle of World War II—even though he never publicly admitted his Party membership." Tidwell is an expert on the life and writings of Davis.



Is it possible that Obama did not know who Davis was when he wrote his book, *Dreams From My Father*, first published in 1995? That's not plausible since Obama refers to him as a contemporary of Richard Wright and Langston Hughes and says he saw a book of his black poetry.

In addition to Tidwell's book, *Black Moods: Collected Poems of Frank Marshall Davis*, confirming Davis's Communist Party membership, another book, *The New Red Negro: The Literary Left and African American Poetry, 1930-1946*, names Davis as one of several black poets who continued to publish in CPUSA-supported publications after the 1939 Hitler-Stalin non-aggression pact. While blacks such as Richard Wright left the CPUSA, it is not clear if or when Davis ever left the party.

Obama writes in *Dreams From My Father* that he saw "Frank" only a few days before he left Hawaii for college, and that Davis seemed just as radical as ever. Davis called college "An advanced degree in compromise" and warned Obama not to forget his "people" and not to "start believing what they tell you about equal opportunity and the American way and all that shit."

Published and distributed by America's Survival, Inc.  
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# SCOPE OF SOVIET ACTIVITY IN THE UNITED STATES

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## HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE  
ADMINISTRATION OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY  
ACT AND OTHER INTERNAL SECURITY LAWS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

UNITED STATES SENATE

EIGHTY-FOURTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

SCOPE OF SOVIET ACTIVITY IN THE  
UNITED STATES

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DECEMBER 5 AND 6, 1956

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**PART 41**

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Printed for the use of the Committee on the Judiciary



UNITED STATES  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON : 1957

TESTIMONY OF FRANK MARSHALL DAVIS

Mr. MORRIS. Give your name and address to the reporter, Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS. Frank Marshall Davis, 47-388 Kam Highway.

Mr. MORRIS. Mr. Davis, when did you come to Honolulu?

Mr. DAVIS. In 1948.

Mr. MORRIS. 1948. Where were you born?

Mr. DAVIS. Arkansas City, Kans.

Mr. MORRIS. What has been your education?

Mr. DAVIS. Let's see. Through high school and a year at Friends University.

Mr. MORRIS. Where is Friends University?

Mr. DAVIS. And at Kansas State College. That is at Manhattan, Kans.

Mr. MORRIS. You are a columnist, are you not, for the Honolulu Record?

(The witness consults with his attorney.)

Senator WATKINS. Just a minute, Counsel. Did he ask you anything before you started to talk?

Mrs. BOUSLOG. Yes; he did, Senator.

Senator WATKINS. I couldn't see his lips move.

Mrs. BOUSLOG. He had his back to me.

Senator WATKINS. I could see that side of his face.

Mrs. BOUSLOG. I tell you, Senator, he did ask me.

Senator WATKINS. I have noticed the tendency, however, for counsel, not only in this hearing here but in the hearings on other days, before the witness could even open his mouth, to start to advise him. That amounts to what we call coaching the witness, and it is not permitted in this committee.

You see, the witnesses are not parties. They come in as any ordinary citizen would come in to testify in a matter in which the Senate is interested, as an ordinary witness would come in to testify in court. Such witnesses are not entitled to have counsel or register objections, and all of that sort of thing. They may come before the court to testify, as you know, with nobody there except the judge to advise them as to their rights as witnesses. Now, to have an attorney present to advise a witness, in this hearing, is a privilege that is granted. It is not a right.

Mrs. BOUSLOG. I regard the fact that my client has the constitutional right to counsel—

Senator WATKINS. Oh, certainly, but not to be coached as to the testimony he shall give in the proceedings.

Mrs. BOUSLOG. He turned to me and asked me for my advice, and I gave it to him.

Senator WATKINS. I have been watching this very closely, ever since these hearings out here began, and obviously the witnesses have asked for advice in many instances, but obviously the witnesses never have had time to make their requests for legal advice before counsel has begun to give advice. I just warn you. That is all.

Mr. MORRIS. We have information, Mr. Davis—did you answer the last question or did you invoke the privilege of the—

Mr. DAVIS. No; I decline to answer that, on the basis of the fifth amendment.

Mr. MORRIS. We have information and evidence you were a member of the faculty of the Abraham Lincoln School in Chicago. Is that information accurate, Mr. Davis?

Mr. DAVIS. I decline to answer that, also on the same grounds.

Mr. MORRIS. Mr. Chairman, the Abraham Lincoln School was one of the Communist schools.

Are you a Communist now, Mr. Davis?

Mr. DAVIS. Same answer.

Mr. MORRIS. I have no further questions at this time, Senator. I ask that you order the witness to stand by.

Senator WATKINS. Stand by. That means you will report to the open hearing room.

【End of Davis testimony taken in executive session.】

Mr. MORRIS. That concludes the testimony of Mr. Davis. One other thing, Senator, I would like to point out, because I think it should be abundantly clear from our record, that the last two witnesses who appeared here today were not subpoenaed because they represented anybody.

At the very outset these were the first people we subpoenaed, and we told them, these particular witnesses, that they were scheduled to be the first witnesses, and they asked that they testify last. They acknowledged that on the public record, and I would like for the record at this point to show that fact.

Senator JOHNSTON. Thank you. Any other questions?

Mr. MORRIS. No, Senator.

Senator JOHNSTON. There are no questions. The witness will be excused at this particular time.

Mrs. BOUSLOG. Thank you, Senator.

Senator JOHNSTON. The committee will adjourn until 9:30 tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, at 12:30 p. m., the subcommittee adjourned.)