

Report: Obama's kin owned slaves

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image: [GatewayPundit](#)

Barack Obama is pictured here with his mother, sister and step-father.

A genealogical report finds two slave owners among the candidate's U.S. ancestors

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WASHINGTON

Many people know that Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's father was from Kenya and his mother from Kansas.

But an intriguing sliver of his family history has received almost no attention until now: It appears that forebears of his white mother owned slaves, according to genealogical research and census records.

The records, which had never been addressed publicly by the Illinois senator or his relatives, were first noted in an ancestry report compiled by William Addams Reitwiesner, who works at the Library of Congress and practices genealogy in his spare time. The report, on [Reitwiesner's Web site](#), carries a disclaimer that it is a "first draft" --one likely to be examined more closely if Obama is nominated.

According to the research, one of Obama's great-great-great-great grandfathers, George Washington Overall, owned two slaves who were recorded in the 1850 census in Nelson County, Ky. The same records show that one of Obama's great-great-great-great-great-grandmothers, Mary Duvall, also owned two slaves.

The Baltimore Sun retraced much of Reitwiesner's work, using census information available on the Web site ancestry.com and documents retrieved by the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives, among other sources. The records show that Overall, then 30, owned a 15-year-old black female and a 25-year-old black male, while Mary Duvall, his mother-in-law, owned a 60-year-old black man and a 58-year-old black woman.

An Obama spokesman did not dispute the information and said Obama's ancestors "are representative of America."

"While a relative owned slaves, another fought for the Union in the Civil War," campaign spokesman Bill Burton said Thursday night. "And it is a true measure of progress that the descendant of a slave owner would come to marry a student from Kenya and produce a son who would grow up to be a candidate for president."

The records could add a new dimension to questions by some who have asked whether Obama--who was raised in East Asia and Hawaii and educated at Columbia and Harvard--is attuned to the struggles of American blacks descended from West African slaves.

Gary Boyd Roberts, a senior research scholar at the New England Historic Genealogical Society, said he did not think the slave-holding history was "particularly unusual."

"If you have a white Southern mother, or a mother from the middle states who has ancestry in the South, it doesn't strike me that that should be very surprising," he said. While most such families did not own slaves, many did, Roberts said.

Reitwiesner's research identifies two other presidential candidates, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and former Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.), as descendants of slave owners. Three of McCain's great-great-grandfathers in Mississippi owned slaves, including one who owned 52 in 1860. Two ancestors of Edwards owned one slave each in Georgia in 1860.

It was unclear Thursday night whether Obama was aware of any slave-holding ancestors, but he makes no mention of them in his 1995 memoir, "Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance."

Genealogical experts who reviewed the Obama family tree at the request of the Sun would not vouch for its findings.

"You just can't casually throw some documents together and make a sophisticated analysis," said Tony Burroughs, author of "Black Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing the African American Family Tree" and a consultant on a New York Daily News project that found that relatives of former Sen. Strom Thurmond appear to have owned the ancestors of civil rights activist Rev. Al Sharpton.

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