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The destruction of Barack Obama

By Robert J. Burrowes

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Some people have been surprised or disappointed by certain decisions of President Barack Obama. His war-making, his use of illegal drone strikes, his failure to close Guantanamo, his failure to genuinely help those ordinary Americans who voted him into office, and even his pursuit of whistleblowers like Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden have all raised concerns among those with the audacity to hope that he would be different.

But there is no reason for surprise. Obama told us all about himself in his autobiography 'Dreams From My Father'. Most of us just chose not to listen and to then analyse the significance of what he told us.

It takes someone with a particular psychological profile to kill and exploit people. See 'Why Violence?' Most of us cannot kill: we respond to our conscience or feelings such as empathy, sympathy, compassion or even the fear of our guilt or shame if we know our actions will cause harm to others. What happened to Barack Obama that makes him so violent? Let us analyse what he told us now.

In his book Obama describes his childhood. This includes, for example, explicit reference to his violent maternal grandfather as well as key behavioural descriptions of himself in contexts that reveal his emotional state, even if this was, and still is, suppressed below his own conscious awareness. In essence, the book contains a largely delusional account of his early life, reflecting his effort to leave his past behind without dealing with the effects of the violence he suffered.

One incident he describes clearly reveals his justified but unexpressed fury at his father for abandoning him. Because this fury was suppressed, it left young Barack with a gaping hole in his sense of self-worth: he wasn't worthy of his father's time, attention and love. Moreover, because he was unable either to prevent his abandonment by his father (because his love, as a baby, for his father was insufficient to bond his father to him) or to express his feelings (which would usually include fear, pain and sadness in addition to his obvious anger) about this abandonment, he acquired a deep sense of powerlessness and a large measure of self-hatred too. However, given the extraordinary unpleasantness of these feelings and without support and preferably encouragement to feel them, he unconsciously suppressed his awareness of these as well. But they live in him still.

His book makes it clear that it was his mother who was primarily responsible for 'teaching' young Barack to suppress his awareness of his feelings. She didn't comprehend her child's need to feel the fear raised by his father's abandonment, to cry about it and to get angry about it (perhaps by having a series of 'tantrums') because listening to his feelings frightened her: listening might trigger equivalent feelings in herself (and, as a child, she had been scared into suppressing her awareness of her feelings too). So she scared the young Barack into not having these feelings by, for example, contradicting his perceptions of his father and offering justifications for his father's behaviour.

His mother didn't understand the enormous healing power of crying when you feel sad, of consciously feeling scared when something frightening happens to you and of expressing one's legitimate anger when one has been 'done over'. Barack had been abandoned! How would you feel? She didn't understand that evolution intended us to have feelings partly to guide us and partly as a 'safety release valve' so that we can move on from trauma to lead a productive and fulfilling life. Unfortunately, by suppressing his awareness of his feelings (even though the feelings themselves cannot be suppressed out of existence) throughout his childhood and in adult life, they became deeply embedded in his unconscious and play the major role in generating his now-warped behaviours without him even knowing it.

Another incident his book describes occurred after an older boy threw a rock at the young Barack; he powerlessly complained to his stepfather 'It wasn't fair'. This incident confirms that the boy had been terrorised into suppressing his awareness of his anger: the anger that evolution

intended would tell him that this behaviour by his assailant was not just unfair - it was an unprovoked, outrageous and violent assault; the anger that would enable him to defend himself powerfully (primarily by showing his anger) against such assaults, thus reducing the likelihood of their repetition; and the anger that would also tell him how to change his behaviour in future so that such assaults were less likely. Why is this important?

Because the young Barack had already learned to suppress his justified fear of, and anger at, the abuse of people who were supposed to love him (particularly his father and mother) and of whom he was (unconsciously) terrified (such as his maternal grandfather), he learned to project his own terror, self-hatred and anger onto other people and groups of whom he is not actually afraid ('terrorists' in foreign countries, prisoners at Guantanamo, US citizens), and to use violence to control their behaviour instead. This enables him to regain his desired, but delusory, sense of 'having control'.

Equally instructive is Obama's stepfather's response to this incident. Rather than listen to the young Barack's feelings about the attack, including its obvious injustice, so that he could rebuild his sense of self-esteem, develop his sense of personal power, and learn skills and develop capacities for dealing with conflict nonviolently, his stepfather explicitly taught him to use violence, by giving him boxing lessons, in 'self-defense'. As a result of this and other experience, Obama has a delusory belief in the effectiveness and morality of violence (perceived as 'self-defense') whenever it is used by the United States while believing hypocritically that it 'wasn't fair' when used by 'terrorists': he has no capacity to perceive the dysfunctional and immoral outcomes of using violence in any context.

Moreover, because the young Barack's suppressed anger was also warped by the fear and pain he experienced as a result of the violence he suffered as a child, he now acts vindictively towards people who have the courage to tell the truth, such as Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden. Because he lacks the courage to act on the truth himself, and people such as Manning and Snowden expose the contradiction between how he wants to be perceived (both by himself and others), and how he actually is, he now inflicts unnecessary and/or excessive violence on those who have the courage to do what his own fear prevents him from doing. For Obama, the truth of Manning and Snowden is, literally, terrifying and he will go to great lengths to silence it.

In another incident during his life in Indonesia, Obama mentions his mother's generosity in giving money to beggars: a generosity which the young Barack copied despite 'the few coins' in his possession. However, his stepfather regarded this behaviour as 'endearing but silly': he encouraged the boy to ignore beggars and 'make sure you don't end up on the street yourself'. Given Obama's later work as a community organiser, in which he apparently displayed concern for those who were 'less fortunate', his subsequent behaviour as president, in which he has

overseen the continuing impoverishment of working and middle class Americans, appears inconsistent. How can we account for this?

The adult Obama lacks integrity: his mind is not integrated in such a way that memories, thoughts, feelings and conscience function seamlessly to drive his behaviour in a consistent direction. And this is why he is such a useful tool of those corporate elites who selected him to govern the United States. Like most people who (unconsciously) feel unloved (an outcome of the fact that loving his father didn't gain him love in return), he now has the unconscious desire to please and to gain approval. And Obama wants this approval from his corporate masters (not merely American voters); it's not love but it's better than nothing. In turn, he has the pleasant face and oratory which they can use to both mask and 'sell' their ruthless exploitation of the people of America and elsewhere around the world, including when he must lie outright to do so (as he did when he denied that the NSA spies on US citizens).

Obama makes it clear that his mother wanted him to have 'values'. What his mother, like most parents, did not realize is that socially positive values are deeply anchored in certain emotions and that these emotions and the values they generate can only emerge as a result of childhood experience (not including lectures and admonishments from adults). The reason that the adult Obama has no conscience and feels little or no love, compassion, empathy and/or sympathy for the victims of his government's violence is simply the logical outcome of his own childhood which was largely devoid of genuine love, compassion, empathy and sympathy.

This is another reason why the adult Obama is so violent, both internationally and even domestically. As Obama oversees the increasing militarization of US society and the systematic dismantling of the social contract - the removal of centuries-old constitutional protections and the ongoing encroachments on human rights and civil liberties (including those which protected American citizens from arbitrary detention or execution by their own government), the dramatic expansion of poverty and homelessness, the spying on fellow Americans, the ongoing consolidation of predatory corporate governance - we are simply witnessing the logical outcome of the violence he suffered as a child.

At a personal level, we must understand why Barack Obama is violent and support him to find the courage to travel the journey of emotional healing because, like all perpetrators of violence, he was terrorised and brutalised as a child. At a political level, those of us committed to ending human violence must nonviolently resist his killing and his exploitation. There is a better world for all of us but violence by anyone, for any purpose - even when referred to as 'punishment' - cannot bring it forth.