



## OBAMA'S MOTHER

Obama's mother cared deeply about helping poor women, and she had two biracial children. But neither of them remembers her talking about sexism or racism. "She spoke mostly in positive terms: what we are trying to do and what we can do," says Soetoro-Ng, who is now a history teacher at a girls' high school in Honolulu. "She wasn't ideological," notes Obama. "I inherited that, I think, from her. She was suspicious of cant."

He remembers her joking that she wanted to get paid as much as a man, but it didn't mean she would stop shaving her legs. In his recent Philadelphia speech on race, in which he acknowledged the grievances of blacks and whites, Obama was consciously channeling his mother. "When I was writing that speech," he told nbc News, "her memory loomed over me. Is this something that she would trust?" When it came to race, Obama told me, "I don't think she was entirely comfortable with the more aggressive or militant approaches to African-American politics."

In the expat community of Asia in the 1980s, single mothers were rare, and Ann stood out. She was by then a rather large woman with frizzy black hair. But Indonesia was an uncommonly tolerant place. "For someone like Ann, who had a big personality and was a big presence," says Zurbuchen, "Indonesia was very accepting. It gave her a sense of fitting in." At home, Ann wore the traditional housecoat, the batik daster. She loved simple, traditional restaurants. Friends remember sharing bakso bola tenis, or noodles with tennis-ball-size meatballs, from a roadside stand.

Today Ann would not be so unusual in the U.S. A single mother of biracial children pursuing a career, she foreshadowed, in some ways, what more of America would look like. But she did so without comment, her friends say. "She wasn't stereotypical at all," says Nancy Peluso, a friend and an environmental sociologist. "But she didn't make a big deal out of it."

(Source : Amanda Ripley, Time, April 9, 2008)