

Interview With The First Sister of the United States: Dr. Maya Soetoro-Ng Ph.D

Written by Kam Williams
Saturday, 21 May 2011 04:40



Born in Jakarta, Indonesia on August 15, 1970, Dr. Maya Soetoro-Ng is a lecturer at the University of Hawaii's College of Education but is perhaps better known as the sister of Barack Obama. Named after the poet Maya Angelou, Maya has just published "Ladder to the Moon," a picture book inspired by her young daughter Suhaila's questions about the grandmother she never knew, Grandma Annie.

Here, the First Sister talks about both her best-seller and about her family, including what it was like growing up with a big brother who would one day become the 44th President of the United States.

Kam Williams: Hi Maya, I'm honored to have this opportunity to speak with you.

Maya Soetoro-Ng: Aloha, Kam. Thank you! How're you doing?

KW: Very well, thanks. How's the weather in Hawaii?

MSN: It pretty much is always good, other than the occasional hurricane. The baseline here is really pretty terrific. It is very sane. It allows you to spend time outside and to devote a minimal

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amount of attention to getting dressed in the morning. The sun kisses your face everyday. It's very healthy!

KW: First of all, I wanted to share with you how much I was moved by your book. It actually left me in tears.

MSN: Thank you so much for saying that.

KW: Have you been getting a lot of feedback like that?

MSN: Yes, particularly from people who have lost loved ones, elders. The book seems to conjure up memories and a certain melancholy, the bittersweet recognition of the gift that we might have once had and don't necessarily want to lose but that we can't access anymore. So, the personal themes seem to resonate very powerfully with readers.

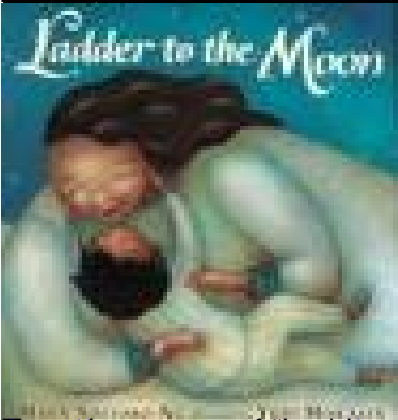
KW: I lost my mother a couple of years ago. I told my readers I'd be interviewing you, so I have more questions for you than we could ever get to. Yale grad Tommy Russell asks: What do you think the chances are that the Obama administration will cut off financial assistance to Palestine now that Hamas and Fatah officially reconciled their differences? Do you think we'll see a Palestinian State in our lifetime?"

MSN: Since I'm not a part of the administration, I try to avoid questions about policy. Generally, speaking, those are the only questions that I won't answer. But I don't mind talking about my brother in terms of our childhood and our mother.

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kwilliams@megadiversities.com