



## Donald Trump Trumpets Birther Issue

The very next day, Trump [told](#) the Fox News Channel, "For the first time in my life, I'm actually thinking about [running for President]" — despite the fact that this is by no means the "first time" he's considered it. In, 2000, Trump offered himself as candidate for President on the [Reform Party ticket](#). In 2004 and then again in 2008 Trump "speculated" about running for President as a Republican, but never got any traction.



In the same Fox News interview, Trump observed: "I see what's going on with this country and it's never been worse. What's happening is a disgrace." Looking for a "hot-button" issue that would galvanize supporters to his cause, he began to talk about the "unfair" trade relationship that exists between America and China: "Let's face it, we are no long respected the way we used to be respected, and if we keep going like this, within 10 years China is going to overtake us."

When asked the inevitable question about running for office, Trump replied, "I'm a Republican, so if I did anything I'd do it, I guess, as a Republican." However, he neglected to mention that not long ago he was a Democrat. Trump had switched to the Democratic Party from the Republican Party in 2001, and then switched back to Republican in 2009.

His political ideology is equally flexible. Since 1990, Trump, a billionaire, has [contributed](#) to the campaigns of both Republicans and Democrats — including (among others) Republican candidates John McCain, Rudolph Giuliani, Newt Gingrich, and George W. Bush; and Democrat candidates Ted Kennedy, John Kerry, Tom Daschle, Joe Biden, Harry Reid, Rahm Emanuel, Hillary Clinton, Anthony Weiner, Charles Schumer, Kirsten Gillibrand, and Charles Rangel.

It appeared that Trump would be a serious contender for the White House [based on a poll](#) on February 22 by *Newsweek/The Daily Beast*. The poll showed Trump only 2 percentage points behind President Obama in a head-to-head contest between the two, and likely to perform as well as other seasoned Republican candidates such as Mitt Romney and Mike Huckabee.

The issue that is giving Trump's unofficial presidential campaign traction right now is not China but President Obama's birth certificate. Without actually claiming that the President was not born in the United States or that the President is engaged in a coverup, Trump nonetheless questioned what Obama's yet-to-be-produced birth certificate might show when [he was interviewed](#) on *The O'Reilly Factor* on Wednesday, March 30:

He [the President] may have one, but there is something on that birth certificate ... maybe



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religion. Maybe it says he's a Muslim. I don't know. Maybe he doesn't want that. Or he may not have one. I will tell you this: If he wasn't born in this country, it's one of the great scams of all time.

He made a similar point during a one-sided [interview](#) with Meredith Vieira on NBC's *Today Show* a week later, when he told her audience: "His [Obama's] grandmother in Kenya said he was born in Kenya and she was there and witnessed his birth." Trump also said that he had people investigating the matter in Hawaii, where Obama claims he was born, and that he "can't believe" what he's hearing from them. The non-plussed Vieira failed to ask for specifics, however.

On April 6, a *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll showed that among Republican voters, former Governor Mitt Romney was favored by 21 percent, with Trump just 4 points behind. The surprising conclusion of the poll, however, was the influence Trump is having among the voters. Without Trump, Romney shoots ahead with a 40 percent approval rating, leaving Newt Gingrich in a distant second place with only 20 percent. As the *Wall Street Journal* [noted](#), "Trump appears to be something of a game-changer in this early poll. Take him out of the picture, and Romney surges to a comfortable 20-point lead."

Just how much staying power is there to the birther issue? Ultimately, that question hinges not only on what additional information may come out — will the actual birth certificate be produced, for example? — but also on the media's handling of that information and the public's reaction to it.

The claim that Obama's grandmother said she witnessed Barack Obama's birth in Kenya is flawed, according to the [War Room](#) at Salon.com. The War Room says that when street preacher Ron McRae interviewed Sarah Obama (the second wife of President Obama's grandfather) through a translator, "Sarah Obama does in fact say at one point that she was there for her grandson's birth. But that was a mistake, a confusion in translation. As soon as a jubilant McRae began to press her for further details about her grandson being born in Kenya, the family realized the mistake and corrected him." The War Room article provided a link to a downloadable audio of the conversation as well as this written transcript:

McRae: Could I ask her about his actual birthplace? I would like to see his birthplace when I come to Kenya in December. Was she present when he was born in Kenya?

Ogombe: Yes. She says, yes, she was, she was present when Obama was born.

McRae: When I come in December, I would like to come by the place, the hospital, where he was born. Could you tell me where he was born? Was he born in Mombasa?

Ogombe: No, Obama was not born in Mombasa. He was born in America.

McRae: Whereabouts was he born? I thought he was born in Kenya.

Ogombe: No, he was born in America, not in Mombasa.

McRae: Do you know where he was born? I thought he was born in Kenya. I was going to go by and see where he was born.

Obombe: Hawaii. Hawaii. Sir, she says he was born in Hawaii. In the state of Hawaii, where his father was also learning there. The state of Hawaii.

Rush Limbaugh [was challenged](#) on the matter on Thursday on his radio show, and responded: "I gotta remind you that there is no evidence whatsoever [that] Obama was not born in Hawaii. There's something he doesn't want us to see about the birth certificate, but there's nothing to glom onto here



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other than his reticence in having the [original, long-form] birth certificate seen. ”

Karl Rove, deputy Chief of Staff in the Bush administration, sees the birther issue as "[Barack Obama's trap.](#)" If Trump continues to trumpet the issue, "It will marginalize him ... he's falling into Barack Obama's trap. Barack Obama wants Republicans to fall into this trap because he knows that it discredits us with the vast majority of the American people."

*Photo: Donald Trump*



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