



# Fear, Fathers and Family: In Search of the American Dream

*Jon J. Masters*

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**Fear, Fathers and Family: In Search of the American Dream** Jon J. Masters  
WHEN A FAMILY REACHES FOR THE AMERICAN DREAM

When Jon Masters was 10, his parents, seeking access to the American upper class, cut off their families, became Episcopalians, and made him promise not to tell anyone they had ever been Jews - not any woman he might marry, and not his brother who was in the crib in the next room. For more than 30 years, he lived parallel lives: in one he was constrained by his parents' fears of exposure; in the other he acted as if his family's past did not exist and he could be whoever he wanted to be.

Within the family his father was in charge, threatening to die if the secret was revealed. In his public life, Jon believed he was immune to the consequences of denial. He went to top schools, was mentored by high ranking superiors, and as a young naval officer was marked for success among a circle of seasoned Washington policy-makers.

By the time he was 40, it all started to come apart. He didn't know who he was. By then, he was a father and a husband. He had no confidantes and held his wife at arm's length for fear of exposing the secret and terrified of the consequences of doing so.

This is the story of what brought him to that point and what he did to protect his children, save his marriage, maintain his career, and nourish his soul. Family took precedence over power and healing the family trauma became his priority. Helping his children become independent, caring, and accomplished in ways of their own choosing was his goal.

"Though fashioned as a memoir, Jon Masters has actually written a compelling guide in the vein of Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. What haunted (and inspired) Masters may seem specific, but the themes are universal-ethnic self-consciousness, dark family secrets, difficult parent-child relationships- and how one moves beyond them into that elusive American Dream. Masters' no-nonsense life-lessons and evolving priorities are conveyed at a page turning pace. He is a riveting storyteller, a mentor for everyone who wants to make it or has children they hope will reach for the sky." -Dr. Ron Taffel, internationally recognized therapist, author and educator on family-life issues

"Jon Masters' memoir, *Fear, Fathers and Family*, aligns one man's life along the crooked paths of history and family, anti-Semitism and secrets. Charged with preserving the secret of his Jewishness as a child, and learning to embrace the power of truth as a man, Masters models how to navigate the complexities of love and identity to become the father, and the man, he can proudly show the world." -Gail Mellow, President of LaGuardia Community College

"Jon Masters' *Fear, Fathers and Family* is a vivid and candid portrait of a classic father-son conflict. The dominating father in Mr. Masters' engaging memoir challenges his son's as well as his family's identity by demanding assimilation as a secret and unchallenged commitment. As Mr. Masters narrates his passage from repressed Jew to enrolled Episcopalian, he treats his readers to an insightful evaluation of the social as well as spiritual values that plagued so many families of immigrants in mid-twentieth century U.S.A. *Fear, Fathers and Family* achieves that rarity among intimate memoirs-a painful personal confession that dramatizes an aspect of our social history." -Sidney Offit, author of novels and two memoirs, conducts writing workshops at The New School and Hunter College

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