



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

**“Heroes and Role Models:
Barack Obama”**

**by Alicia Blum
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A hero is a person who is admired for courage, outstanding achievements or noble qualities. A role model is a person looked to by others as an example to be imitated. Barack Obama is both a hero and a role model to me.

Selecting Barack Obama as my hero and role model was 100% my choice. I wanted someone who was very relevant to *my* world. I picked Obama because he started out as a “regular person” and became a “celebrity” through his own energy and talent. But most importantly, I wanted to talk about the first African-American President of the United States!

Although I am not an African American, being a Jew is similar in some ways to being an African American. Jews and African Americans have many things in common. We were both badly treated in history, persecuted and enslaved. Both of our groups were for a long time treated as “outsiders”. Both Jews and African Americans have had to figure out how to be a part of their countries without losing their identities as Jews or African Americans. Barack Obama’s life is very relevant to my life.

Barack Obama is a hero to me because he showed great courage by challenging the Democratic Party and running against Hilary Clinton, who was favored to win. He showed a lot of courage by running for president although he was black. He also showed courage after the election by reaching out to the Muslim communities. Barack Obama is clearly a hero to the black community and to many other Americans as well.

Before Obama became President he said, “I want to help everyone”. By everyone, he meant that he wanted to help all people of the United States: Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists - they all matter to him.

Barack Obama is more than a hero to me; he is also a role model. First and foremost, he is a great parent. He is willing to buy his children a dog. (Hint to Mom!) He never seems to forget about his family, although he has many other things to worry about. This shows to me that he is a caring individual.

But there are many other characteristics of Barack Obama that I admire. He is an energetic person, a man who is willing to take risks. When he first came into office, the economy was horrible. People all over America were losing their jobs and their homes. It was hard to figure out what to do first in this situation. He assembled a team of people and they tried doing things that people had never done before - reorganizing companies and propping up the banks.

Barack Obama is a man who tries to keep his promises. In addition to buying his children a dog, he is trying to make good on some promises he has made to the American people. He truly believes in affordable medical care for all Americans. I am not sure how he is going to do it, but I know he will try to do something about it. He does not believe in torture and that Americans should not torture others. He also promised to end torture and he did. He promised to end the war in Iraq. I am hoping that he will keep this promise as well.

One of my values is personal responsibility. This is something that Barack Obama believes in as well. When mistakes have happened Barack Obama has told us that as president he takes full responsibility. Barack Obama believes that he personally must make this country a better place. This is a value that I admire. As a thirteen year old I feel a personal responsibility to become a good person. Unlike Barack Obama, however, I do not plan on smoking cigarettes! (No role model is perfect.) Barack Obama had to overcome a lot of hurdles in his life. And like Barack Obama, I know what it is like to go to a very challenging school.

The thing that I admire most about Barack Obama is that he takes pride in his African American background. He is not ashamed that he is a black person. In fact he is proud to be a black person. He never actually had a father to help and guide him. His father returned to Kenya when Obama was young and his mother raised him with the help of her parents. He had to find out what it means to be an African American man in a white society all by himself.

I can relate to Barack Obama's search for his identity. He wanted to find out about his heritage - as a member of the black, white, and Christian communities. I am trying to find my Jewish heritage. That is why I go to the City Congregation KidSchool. I want to know why I am Jewish and what it means to be a Jew. I am a little luckier than President Obama. I have my parents, mentor, teachers, Rabbi and KidSchool friends to help me figure this out.