



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“What My Bat Mitzvah Means to Me”

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When I first heard about what TCC Bat Mitzvah entailed, I thought, this is going to require a lot more work and thinking on my part than a traditional bat mitzvah! A little later, I realized that a humanistic bat mitzvah might be cool because it would be more modern and interesting to me. I also thought that I'd be really proud of myself when I was finished, I'd feel more Jewish, and writing all the required essays would make me a better writer. I also loved the idea of having a big party at the end to celebrate what I'd accomplished.

My Humanistic Bat Mitzvah is the end result of a compromise my parents made when I was 3 years old. My dad was raised as a Conservative Jew, and wanted me to attend Hebrew school, as he had. He wanted me to have a Bat Mitzvah because he thought it was an important rite of passage for Jews.

My mom is secular, and was opposed to enrolling me in Hebrew school, but she understood the value of belonging to an organized community. Fortunately, they found The City Congregation, which embraced a perspective they both respected.

My Bat Mitzvah has been the most demanding project I've ever worked on- with tons of research, essays, interviews and mentor meetings. I've learned a lot about my family history and values, Jane Goodall, issues involving Kosher laws, the unequal distribution of resources in NYC schools and about myself. I've learned that when I have to complete a very challenging project, I need to be pushed. Whoever's doing the pushing shouldn't listen to me when I say, "Stop pushing me," because I'll be so happy when it's done.

Being Bat Mitzvahed makes me feel more Jewish. This is because I now share something in common with many other Jews. It feels like I've been formally inducted into the Jewish community. That's pretty cool!

So many people helped me with my Bat Mitzvah.... First, and most importantly, thank you Sandy, for helping me with my research and developing ideas, editing the umpteen editions of my essays, and putting up with me forgetting about phone meetings and complaining. I'd also like to thank Rabbi Peter and Isabel for their guidance through the many steps of the Bat Mitzvah process.

Of course, thank you, mom and dad, for pushing me, planning everything, supporting me and for throwing me a great party that I'm going to have in a few hours. I am grateful to my grandparents for answering countless questions about our ancestors – I think they really enjoyed being interviewed about their family histories because it gave them an opportunity to reminisce about their ancestors and tell me lots of interesting stories.

I am grateful to Jonathan Safran Foer for squeezing in an interview with me in the midst of his hectic schedule; to Liore from Hazon, and the people who keep kosher who participated in my interviews. I'm grateful to Joan Radigan and my friends who helped me shlep hundreds of books from the Project Cicero book drive from my school to my mother's basement and to working at the book distribution. Lastly, thank you, Rachel and Louise, for contributing your musical talent to my service.