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**“Heroes and Role Models:
Billy Crystal and Amy Goodman”
by Daniel Segan
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The line that separates a hero from a role model is thin. Both represent superior behavior and judgment. Heroes like Martin Luther King Jr. and Ghandi are 2 tremendous people who've made a huge difference in the world. They dedicated themselves to the belief that one can make the world a better place to live in. Some of the words I associate with the idea of a Hero are selflessness, inspirational, and significant change. On the other hand, my idea of a Role Model is someone who lives life to the fullest, and practices a majority of the values that I hope to live by when I'm an adult.

Initially, I examined Bob Dylan and Adam Sandler as possible role models. However, the more I listened, watched, and read, I realized they didn't fit my standards. They are very accomplished people with great talent but were not inspirational to me. So, I continued my search for a worthy hero and role model. I was looking for people who believed in community, humor, independent thinking, hard work, and voice. It wasn't until my dad recommended Amy Goodman and my mom suggested Billy Crystal that it became clear that I had two candidates for my paper.

Billy grew up in Long Beach, New York. He described his family as “large and loving..” Sadly, at the young age of 15 Billy Crystal had to cope with the death of his father. One way to cope was to use his great sense of humor which his family encouraged. In Billy's words, “If it wasn't for the laughs and loves of my relatives and friends when I was a little younger I don't think I would have ended up being a comedian.”

At such a young age it must have been hard to grow up without out a father. The strength it must have taken for him and his family to handle such a tragic event is admirable.

Besides comedy, Billy's love, is baseball. He inherited the love of baseball from his dad who was a pitcher for St. John's University. Billy was offered a baseball scholarship to Marshal University. But the University decided to scrap the baseball program before he was able to play his first game.

In 1970 he married Janice Goldfinger with whom he had 2 daughters, Janice and Lindsay. The impressive part about his marriage is how the couple was able to sustain a long and healthy relationship. My middle-school relationships, LIKE Hollywood relationships don't last very long. Their love for each other is so strong, that even Hollywood couldn't pull them apart. Billy Crystal is not defined by his fame or money. If anything, he tried to stay private and away from Hollywood's seduction.

Billy Crystal's success was the result of a long road of hard work, a value that I've come to appreciate as a member of my family. He had to raise a family while working hard as a young struggling actor. He studied film and television at NYU under Martin Scorsese. Crystal's big opportunity came when he was offered the role of Jodie Dallas on Soap, the first gay character portrayed on American television. His choice to play this role was a groundbreaking decision. I admire his risk taking at such an early stage of his career.

Who could forget when in 1984, on Saturday Night Live we were introduced to Fernando Lamas- whose catch phrase is “You look...Mahvelous!” His imitations are amazing and I admire his ability to do them. For those people who know me well, you know that I’m horrible at imitations. His voice is heard through his impersonations.

Billy Crystal used his talent and fame to raise money for Comic Relief, which does fundraising for disasters like Hurricane Katrina, tsunamis, and global issues like poverty and disease. I admire that he was able to find the time to do charitable work. His efforts to heal the world align with the values my parents have modeled.

Later in Billy Crystal’s career, he turned his attention to producing films, and of course the topic he chose was *baseball*. It was a film titled ‘61,’ - a tribute to Roger Maris and the struggles he endured as the underdog, on his way to surpassing Babe Ruth’s home run record.. A few years ago, Billy was given the opportunity to play on the Yankees for one day. He didn’t do so well, but that’s okay since he was in his mid sixties. I love the idea that even at his age, his love for baseball hasn’t faded.

On the other hand Amy Goodman, my hero is a brilliant journalist who works tirelessly to uncover the truth. Her brother David says that Amy “Gives a voice to those who’ve been forgotten and beaten down by the powerful.”

She is the host of *Democracy Now*, a daily, independent, award-winning news program that addresses worldwide topics and human struggles. On one show she spoke about riots in Bolivia and worker’s rights protests in Zimbabwe. These countries are too often ignored by mainstream media channels like CNN, ABC, CBS, and NBC.

She is a unique journalist, taking on topics in a way that other journalists shy away from. Amy makes it clear that her ideology shapes her brand of journalism. Sometimes she appears less concerned with trying to maintain balance and fairness than shedding light on her version of the truth. This was illustrated on another show when she tackled issues like the recent election, women’s rights, the mortgage crisis, and our occupation of Iraq.

Amy Goodman is a journalist who advocates for those who are silenced, which sometimes gets her in trouble. When she interviewed Bill Clinton, she was accused of being disrespectful. In fact Amy was fired from NPR because as the editorial director of National Public Radio, John Dinges said, “she was too opinionated and outspoken. He went on to say that at “some point she became more of an advocate than we were comfortable with.” NPR is a very leftwing radio station, so you can imagine how radical she must be to get fired from NPR.

One important story that captures Amy well is what happened in 1990 and 1991, when she was reporting on the US-backed Indonesian occupation of East Timor. There, she and her colleague Allan Nairn witnessed Indonesian soldiers gunning down 270 East Timorese. Indonesian soldiers beat Amy and Allan, fracturing Allan’s skull. Amy said that “To be there as these Indonesian soldiers opened fire on innocent people and gunned them down, and ultimately understanding that there was nothing we could do to stop it, that it was only getting word out that can make a difference.” Their documentary, “Massacre: The Story of East Timor” won numerous awards. Ever since, Amy could not retreat when something was going wrong, in fact she goes towards it to find out more. Amy Goodman says, “It’s not Journalism’s role to pass on opinions. It’s Journalism’s role to pass on the truth.”

The way she puts herself out there is incredibly brave. She risks her life to do the right thing. I hope I find the passion to do something as noble.

It's important to recognize the role Amy's family played in her life. Both parents were peace activists. Her father was involved in community service and worked to integrate the New York City schools. Amy watched her father negotiate for a compromise when people were polarized. Her grandfather was a rabbi and her 107-year-old Grandmother inspires her to just keep going. It is clear that her family taught her to believe that one can heal the world of injustice. In Amy's words, "Journalism is the avenue I chose to pursue that belief."

I admire her commitment and love for what she does. Money is not what motivates her instead it's the belief that she's doing something to help better the world. To enjoy being at work, doing something you love, while making a difference in the world is incredibly important for me when I get a job. As important as money is in our world, it's not the key reason to enter a profession.

Recently, at the Republican Convention Amy Goodman was arrested. In an interview Amy said, she was "manhandled and handcuffed" by the Secret Service. She claimed to have had her Democracy Now ID clearly displayed. Her arrest provided evidence that the police overstepped their role. The conspiracy charges were false and were dropped. She was so committed to doing her job as a journalist that if she had to get arrested to prove a point, so be it. Her courage illustrates both her commitment to her profession and her loyalty to her colleague. This was heroic.

Her dedication to journalism demands sacrifices. As some of you might know, I got the privilege to meet with and interview Amy Goodman which aired on Japanese TV. Before I met Amy Goodman I thought that she was a workaholic but after talking to her I realized that she wasn't. Workaholic, in my mind, sounds negative in that they try to escape life by going to work all the time, but that is not the case with Amy. Amy is just so dedicated to her work that she has very little spare time.

This work ethic may be the most significant difference between Amy and me. Then again this is why she is my hero, not my role model. Her courage and commitment are impressive. She is a hard worker, an attribute I admire, but I wonder, Does it consume too much of her time? To my 14 year old mind, Amy may be too defined by her job. When I get older, I want to love my job as much as she does but I'm not comfortable with it consuming so much of my time. While I admire her conviction and determination, I can't see myself in her shoes as much as I can with Billy Crystal. Billy Crystal seems to possess a more comfortable balance between work, family, and public image. Plus he always leaves time to play baseball with the Yankees.

Let me be clear, I don't plan on being Amy or Billy. I am an individual who shares some of the values that they can live by. Billy Crystal's life is filled with humor and family, while Amy's life includes hard work and advocacy. He reflects on the more light hearted and comical side of me and Amy expresses the more thoughtful and analytical side of me. The person I hope to become will be a combination of both Amy and Billy. Even though I am changing everyday, these are the values that I want to hold on to.