



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

**“Heroes and Role Models:
Jorge Posada, Abe Lebenwohl, and Andy Warhol”
by Jonah Garnick
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After going through the process of finding and extracting my family values and exploring my family background, I then had to find my heroes and role models in life. Along with my values, my heroes and role models might change over time but I tried to find the ones that I think would stick with me for the longest time.

What is a hero? A hero in my opinion is someone who puts their own needs aside to help others. They do amazing things for other people and are very devoted to it. In other words they would always be putting their life, reputation, or well being on the line to save or help someone else. They are very selfless. They don't do their good deeds just for money or fame. I don't think I have a hero, at least in the traditional sense, I think I just have a role model, actually three of them.

I have come to the conclusion that I don't have a hero for a lot of reasons. One could be my expectations are too high. Another could be that we are just human and no one is that perfect.

Also, maybe heroes could only exist in books, and movies. And maybe I just don't feel that way for a particular person.

This brings me to my next point. A role model is a person who you want to be like when you are grown. Not exactly the same, but just share similar values. A role model can have flaws and doesn't have to be perfect, good or pure.

It was very hard but I was able to come up with three role models. For this paper I wanted to choose people who shared some of my main values, and I also admire them for what they do or who they are. My three role models are Jorge Posada, Abe Lebenwohl and Andy Warhol.

Most people who know who Jorge Posada is and know I'm a huge Yankees fan would probably assume I chose him just because he's my favorite Yankee. But there's more. Jorge is an all-star catcher for the Yankees. To be a catcher it takes leadership qualities because one has to make constant and important decisions that strongly affect the outcome of the game. But being a leader is only part of the reason I have chosen Jorge as my role model.

Jorge is a silent leader. He's not ego crazed, he's not rude, and doesn't make a big deal out of it. I would even call him modest. He also has a hidden value, and that value is compassion for others.

Unfortunately, his first son Jorge Jr. was born with a rare skull disease called craniosynostosis. Jorge Jr. is okay after many operations. But it gave Jorge and his wife Laura quite a scare as parents. Jorge started a charity for kids with this disease. This illustrates his deep concern for others. For his charitable actions he has also been nominated for the 2007 Roberto Clemente award.

But besides that, we have a lot in common. He grew up loving and playing baseball - just like me. And he also got his love for baseball from his family. Another thing we have in common is we're both catchers. I'm a catcher on my school team and I love it. I bet Jorge loves his job too. I'd love to play as well as he does.

My next role model is Abe Lebenwohl, the late owner of the Second Avenue Deli. I learned about him while researching my major project. He wasn't just a man who wanted you to eat and be happy. To Abe, eating was happiness and he is most known for his humor, generosity and random acts of kindness. He not only invited the blind to free luncheons, he invited comedians to entertain them and even printed up menus in Braille. He welcomed and loved everybody who ate at his deli whether it was a baseball star, a former mayor of New York, the head of a mob family or just an average Joe Shmoe. He also did extraordinary charitable acts. One time he offered to give out food to the homeless, so he loaded up a truck and went to Thomson Square Park in the East Village. He kept giving and giving, and more and more of his trucks came. He didn't leave the park until every homeless person there was fed. Another time, a woman called him up telling him she had the flu. Within a half hour he personally delivered chicken soup to her dorm room at NYU, no charge. Everybody loved him from the famous to myself.

Both he and the Second Avenue Deli were cornerstones of life in New York City. Tragically, on March 4, 1996 he was shot and killed in his delivery truck while making a deposit at a near by bank. His death remains an unsolved crime to this day.

My final and main role model is Andy Warhol. He was born in 1928. He came from a poor family that lived in a dirty ghetto of Pittsburgh. He was the third and youngest son of his family. His family was religious Byzantine Catholics, and were very involved with the church. Andy was actually influenced by the church's simple art.

His mother and father worked hard to support the family. Andy's mother worked multiple small jobs. This was fairly rare at the time for women. His father was a construction worker and died from drinking contaminated water on a construction sight.

Andy was sickly as a child and because of his illness kids made fun of him. Since he didn't have a lot of friends at that time, he developed a very close relationship with his mother.

Andy's father died when he was only 14. It was in college where Andy started to get into his art. At first his teachers didn't like his work, and didn't think he would make it. He nearly failed his first year of college because he had a job at a department store and was working long hours. But that summer he spent extra time practicing his art and later won an award on one of his drawings.

Andy Warhol was the man who made pop art famous. He painted the world through his interpretation of common, everyday objects. Andy once said about finding his inspiration, "I'd asked around 10 or 15 people for suggestions. Finally one lady friend asked the right question, 'Well, what do you love most?' That's how I started painting money," he said. He also painted other things he and the American culture loved: celebrities like Marylyn Monroe, Liza Minnelli as well as popular icons such as Coke-Cola Bottles and Campbell's Soup. Warhol's focus on the everyday or the ordinary made him an individual in the world of art. No other artist was doing this at the time.

I think you can be a part of society and still lead with your own voice. You are a part of the greater whole, while still being an individual. This expression of individuality is one of Warhol's qualities that appealed to me and that I identify with.

He was odd and had a taste for odd things. He lined his studio, The Factory, with tin foil! I like doing quirky things like that and I think that's just me. Warhol also looked odd. He sometimes dyed his hair a weird blond color and he had a skin pigment disease, so he was very pale. He went bald at a fairly early age. So he had to wear a toupee. It is thought that his physical insecurities made him shy and withdrawn, but he used his creativity to overcome these challenges, another element of his personality to admire.

Warhol was a human being and of course he wasn't perfect. At Andy's Factory a lot of people did drugs, which he condoned. He even did some drugs himself, but fortunately his experimentation didn't lead to dependency or worse. This is but one of his many flaws.

But he did still have plenty of good qualities. He was accepting of almost everybody.

He loved people and being in the action. He had a humorous way of looking at himself and the world. He's quoted as saying, "I have Social Disease. I have to go out every night. If I stay home one night, I start spreading rumors to my dogs." From drag queens to different racial groups he accepted them all and let almost everybody into his factory.

In exploring his values I learned that, Warhol put his creativity into everything he did. He came up with some of the simplest, yet most creative and artistic ideas I've ever seen. Warhol was not only creative but he was an entrepreneur. Here's another insightful quote from Warhol: "Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art." With the help of a friend, he started his own magazine *Interview*, and his studio, the Factory, was a hugely successful business.

Andy Warhol was an introvert, and also an exhibitionist. This was because he was a complex individual who had many contradictions. Parts of his life were very open and party like and some were very solemn and distanced. He was also a narcissist, yet at the same time insecure about his looks. He was a homosexual, a very good son, a compassionate helper of others and still at the same time, he could be selfish. While you might wonder about my choice of him as a role model, I clearly see the virtue of his values, and how most people have many contradictions, but his goodness and talent far outweighed the bad.

From learning about Warhol I've discovered many of his values happen to be mine too. Like every successful entrepreneur he took risks like many of my family members did. He was creative by coming up with new and unique ideas that no one had thought of before.

My family is a creative bunch; artists, musicians, writers, and entrepreneurs. He had a great sense of humor, and saw that the world could be a place of many contradictions. I think humor is very important, because it enables us to get through much of the trouble, trials and pain that we all encounter. My family and I are always finding laughter in the absurdity that life is always showing us.