



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

**“Family Values”
by Sabrina Frank
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As I talk about my family values, I am referring to about 20 interviews I had with members from both sides of my family. I am also referring to my analysis of the behaviors of those in my family that I did not get to interview. People in my family value aspects of education, cultural appreciation, compassion, family, honesty and respect.

First, I will talk about education, **cheenuk**. Most of my great grandparents were immigrants. When they got to America, they needed to learn English and be properly educated to attain jobs and live successfully. My maternal great grandfather, Leo, came over to America from Austria in 1905 when he was sixteen. He learned English without an accent and took pride in reading three different English newspapers a day, and he made sure his son, my grandpa “RoRo,” remembered these accomplishments. Leo’s value of being informed has been passed down to RoRo. RoRo reads the newspaper everyday, and if you didn’t read ANY article he brings up, he will ask you accusingly, “What? You didn’t read the paper today?”

A second example I have of the value of education, involves “Mama,” my maternal great grandmother. “Mama” graduated from Yale’s sister school, Vassar College in 1925. She then went on to nursing school. She was the first woman in our family as well as one of the very few in her generation to achieve either of these educational feats. And, even with a male physician as their first child, her family encouraged her to follow her dreams of becoming an educated woman- they paid for her college tuition as well as the nursing school fees.

The next value is cultural appreciation, **ha-ah-rah-chat tar-boot**. Something that really shows how my family values cultural appreciation and diversity, is the fact that I have family and friends who are Daughters of the American Revolution, Columbian, Japanese, Hungarian, Chinese, Austrian, Spanish, Albanian, Israeli, Greek, Russian, Puerto Rican, Peruvian, Mexican, Italian, Caribbean, African American, (and apologies to anyone I missed).

Most of my family enjoys traveling to different countries all around the world. All of my grandparents have traveled to more places in their lives than I have ever heard of. Personally, I love to travel, and to learn to speak foreign languages.

My family and I believe that everybody is special and contributes to the beauty of this world. I have friends of many cultures, and people in my family have married people of other backgrounds than their own because variation and difference is what makes the world go around. We do not need to be isolated within our cultural communities.

An example of my family not letting culture stand in their way is a story about my paternal great grandma, “Nanny Anne.” Because Nanny Anne was not accepted as a Russian, because she was Jewish, she immigrated to America. The move prevented her from seeing her father for many years, and gave her a terrible experience with travel, as she came to America in steerage. For those of you who don’t know, steerage was a way of travel on the bottom compartment of a boat for those without much money.

In steerage, people were so tightly packed, sometimes they literally could not move. There were no bathrooms, and many people died or got very sick along the way to their destination. But, Nanny Anne got to America and started her new life despite where she was from or her poverty. When Nanny Anne got older, she showed her respect towards all cultures in small bits of community service she performed in helping her neighbors. Whenever she had a recent immigrant as a new neighbor, she would learn enough of their language to chat with them. I think that this is a portrayal of how my great grandmother valued cultural appreciation and compassion because she was understanding, kind and generous to all of her foreign neighbors. This leads me to the next value that a lot of my family has in common-compassion, **rachameem**.

My family cares about animals, donating to charity, and many other values related to being kind and considerate of all living creatures and our environment. One example is the fact that my parents are psychologists; they spend their days working to help people cope with their problems.

Also, my maternal grandma, “Emmy” leaves big bags of refundable bottles in front of a local soup kitchen for homeless people. To preserve their dignity, she does not give these bottles directly to the poor. My great aunt Nancy and Uncle Bob who live in Florida show compassion for animals. They have ten cats, two of which were adopted from an unwanted litter, eight of which were strays. My great aunt Nancy and Uncle Bob also run a foundation for the care and protection of animals. They want less euthanasia and more adoptions.

Another value my family stresses is the importance of family, **mishpacha**. You should hear the amount of stories told by my dad’s side of the family. Every time I see them, I learn at least five new things about my family’s history. Even though my mom’s side does not constantly tell stories of their family’s history, they, like my dad’s side, try to see each other often and keep in touch with one another.

One story that has been told to me by my dad’s side of the family that represents how my family values family is one about my grandma.

In 1970, “Grammy” was close to getting her PhD in physics. Although this was a lifelong goal of hers, she gave it up for her family, when her first husband Elliott died. She decided to work in the family business because she knew it would provide her with more money than if she became a physics teacher. She needed to make sure she earned this extra money, because if she didn’t, her three sons, my dad and my uncles, would have had to move schools and homes for financial reasons.

The other family values I will talk about are honesty, **emet** and respect, **kavod**. My family values telling the truth in important situations whether or not they are asked to do so. They also do not believe in “finders keepers...”

As Grandpa was on one of his two daily walks in Great Neck, he found a wallet in the street. Knowing that he wanted to return it, he brought it home where he discovered that it contained two hundred dollars in cash, as well as various identification papers of the owner.

Grandpa went to the post office with plans of returning the wallet anonymously because he did not want many thank you's, or a reward for doing what he knew was the right thing. He wanted it to be a quick, simple procedure that would be over with as soon as he mailed the wallet back to the owner. However, when he got to the post office he learned that in order to send a package, a return address was required. So, sticking to his original plan of hiding his identity from the owner, he made up a name and address and sent the package.

My family's values are important for me to know about because I can and have learned from them. Their actions and beliefs have served as a foundation for my own way of life. As I grow older I continue to learn from their values and I create my own. MY personal values include loyalty, creative expression, humor, respect, and memory.

I find loyalty, **nehemanoot**, very important because everyone deserves someone they can rely on, to be there for them and to respect them. Being loyal is not only being nice when you are being noticed, but to stand up for someone or an idea when they are not around or not popular. When you trust someone, it is because they are loyal to you, it means you believe what they tell you, even when others say something different.

I think that being loyal to yourself is very important. This involves making the right choices for yourself, instead of ones that you will regret. Some people have a bat or bar mitzvah because they are obligated to, or because everyone else has one. I am having a bat mitzvah because I think it is the right choice for me. Being loyal to yourself means trusting your instincts and only doing something when you are sure YOU are the one who wants to- not anyone else.

Creative Expression, **yitz-eer-ah-tee-yoot**, is a part of my life. As many of you know, I like to laugh, create visual art, work with computers and technology, play the trumpet, dance, play basketball and other sports. I also enjoy other people's creative expression. I think this value is important because if we were all to express ourselves in simple ways, life would not be as fun, diverse, or interesting. I think that with creativity, we can bring out the best in all of us.

Humor, **hu-mor** in Hebrew, is very important in my life. Because so much is serious, I believe it is very important to laugh and have fun no matter how hard things may be. Even though times may become difficult, a negative attitude will not make anything better. Laughing comes out of appreciating the good in life. I wonder, what is the point of living if you are only living with a negative attitude?

I value respect because everyone deserves to have their dignity preserved. I model respect by thinking about others' feelings before I laugh or talk. No matter how much we may dislike someone, we all should be treated in a fair way.

My final value is memory, **zikaron**. I value memory because no matter how important the present is- the past can teach us lessons. Learning about the past helps us make the right choices for the future. Being loyal and respectful to those who died is of great importance as well.

Through the work I have done to complete this paper, I have gained a greater understanding of who I am and who my family is. It has been a truly rewarding experience.