Barack Obama: Speaking Out by JESSICA GARCIA

Barack Obama didn’t grow up with one big happy family. When his parents divorced, he moved with his mother to Jakarta, Indonesia. When he was ten, he moved back to Hawaii, where he was born, to live with his grandparents. He later moved to New York City where he graduated from Columbia University in 1983. Obama started at the bottom and worked his way to the top. He put very hard work into his goals, being true to the value of empathy which his mother had instilled in him.

Barack put law school on hold to go to Chicago where he became a community organizer with a church-based group helping to improve living conditions for the impoverished lower class. He wanted to make changes to improve lives for people who live in impoverished neighborhoods and struggle to make ends meet. After a while, he realized that in order to truly make greater change, he needed to study law and politics. In 1991, Obama married in 1992. His family support his plans for a better world by addressing things that aren’t being seen or taken care of, such as those who struggle in poverty barely making ends meet day to day. He also wants to address global warming and improve our environment for a healthier future for our children and their descendants.

On February 08, 2008, Obama came to the Seattle Key Arena to speak about these issues and to explain why people should vote for him. I was there and I understand why he say he is a good speaker and has an effect on people. He said that he could change what Bush did not in areas such as global warming, poverty and bringing the troops back from Iraq. Obama didn’t let us feel left out. He had a sense of humor and said that we need to unite as one because he cannot do this alone because one person cannot bring about the change. Obama wants to make better changes for our future, he needs our support.

There were over 3,000 people at the Key Arena to hear Obama and it was so packed that people had to go outside. It was a great feeling to hear people cheer him on and appreciate what he had to say about change for the better within our country. I was delighted to go because I felt very confident that Barack Obama is the real deal and means what he says. I believe he is sincere and willing to listen to what we Americans have to say to change the U.S. for the better. I was also excited to see this wonderful person speak and act very confident and concerned with America’s needs, and refer to us as one, not just him. I believe that Barack Obama is going to make it. He has dealt with racism in this country and has felt this way a lot of us mixed race people, I feel: mistreated, disrespected, and treated differently because of our skin color.

I hope he becomes president because I believe he will change a lot of things for the better, for example, seeing that people of color are treated with dignity and not forced by poverty to live in what Americans call ghetto neighborhoods. He won’t change these neighborhoods to communities where people are treated with respect. He does not want people to live in poverty, particularly not because of color. People of color are humans, too.

I left the Key Arena with a smile and a good sense of belonging and being more knowledgeable from Obama’s speech. His words were uplifting, I felt like I was actually being heard, even though I didn’t speak, and I truly felt his emotion when he felt mistreated. Obama’s words were so intriguing with his speech and his appearance that I heard a lot of good things about him. It’s nice to know that people accept him even though he’s African American. It wasn’t his skin color but the knowledge and sincerity from his heart that made me look beyond most what people in this world see. Some people believe that people of color aren’t meant to run this world, that it should be left to white men to control. But Obama is
Letter From the Editor BY JIM THEOFELIS

Happy Spring! Although these are some difficult times in so many ways, it is reassuring to be surrounded by the magic and beauty of the spring season. There is something so profound about coming from a period of darkness and cold, to waking up to singing birds, feeling the warmth of the afternoon sun and, of course, having the added hours of light.

As a therapist, this is also the time of year that I receive multiple referrals regarding youth who are in trouble at school. Quite often, what I learn during the assessment process is very interesting. The issues and behaviors that are a focus of concern are often many of the same issues and behaviors that have been occurring the entire school year. What is different is the level of fatigue and often exhaustion of the teachers, (foster) parents and others who are dealing with these issues and behaviors. It is often true that the youngest is also experiencing fatigue and exhaustion from the expectations of school. I have found this to be a great opportunity to talk with kids about the critical skill of “finishing strong.”

This is a real life theme that effects all of us, not just youth in foster care, which is exactly why it is such a powerful learning opportunity. The examples are endless—less; sporting events where the outcome changed late in the game due the winning team “picking it up,” changing the brakes in the car or simply drawing a picture all demand that the energy and focus remain strong to the end. Talk about the times you let down near the end of a project and what you learned from that. This is a great opportunity for us as adults to validate, “how proud I am of you for continuing to work hard to the end even when you want to give up.” I would encourage the adults to increase the positive reinforcements for kids (remember your attention is the reward—the ice cream is the prop for you and the youngster to be together) to “keep working hard to the end.”

Finally, it’s often very helpful to the teacher to hear from the parent and the youngster that a goal has been established to “finish strong” and that the teacher is appreciated for hanging in there and also “finishing strong.” Letting kids know we value their efforts beyond the outcomes is a wonderful way to show them how much we value our relationship with them and to keep them engaged. Happy spring!

Letter To the Editor

Dear Editor,

I would appreciate your sending me the evaluation of Youth Legislative Advocacy Day so I can pass it out to the Youth ‘N Action youth for their use.

It was truly a great day. Our youth really enjoyed themselves and felt very empowered by the experience. I thought that the open (“not”) mike was a great innovation. Thanks to you and all of the Mockingbird staff and youth for organizing this.

Dr. Charles Huffman

Thank You!

Virginia Blayney; Kathryn Brooks; Stephanie Cohen; Carol Collins; Karen Congell; Claire Ghan; Louise McRae; OneFamily Foundation; Jere Reid and Stephanie Garlis; Suzanne Shawger

Meet the Staff: Janisha Wright

My name is Janisha Wright and I am 14, almost 15. I live in Seattle and go to The Center School. In my spare time I read (a lot), play solitaire on the computer, listen to music, and text on my phone to all my friends. I also like talking to friends and surfing the Internet. One of the most important things to me in the world are my friends and I will do just about anything for my best friends since when I move they are always there for me. When I “grow up” I’m not that sure what I really want to be, but my top 3 choices are being a lawyer, a teacher or a therapist. I also know that college is in my future. I want to do these things because I really like helping people get high quality education in their lives. Another important thing to me is trust and honesty. I’ve been lied to so I am working on not lying myself. I’ve been in foster care since I was one and a half and have lived in about 17 different foster homes, almost all of them along Interstate 5. I think the hardest move was the one from a foster home in Buckley to a foster home in Sumner. There is something so profound about moving from a place to a new place that you don’t know anything about. The reason I wanted to become part of the Youth LEAD program is I want to learn more about the foster care system and make a difference in it.

Letter From the Editor

Executive Director Jim Theofelis
Operations Manager Ros Ghan
Director of Mockingbird Family Programs Dr. Wanda Hackett
Youth LEAD Director Tiffany Washington
Executive Assistant Lauren Frederick
Public Relations/Fund Development Darce Gay
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Mockingbird Family Model Coordinator Marie Goines
Administrative Assistant Juan Ramirez
Senior Youth Representative Samuel Martin
Youth Representatives
Leona Bils, Jessica Garcia, Kenneth Larson-Redlinger, Rhonda Smith, Janisha Wright
Contributing Writers Tamra Akersohn, Joy Jukch, John Hemmensday
Volunteers Christa Jackson
Layout Kelly Hawkins

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We welcome you to join us in making a difference in the lives of our nation’s most vulnerable children, youth, and families. As a supporter, you’ll receive a monthly edition of the Mockingbird Times. Thank you for your contribution.

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About Us: The Mockingbird Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation developing innovative models for improving the outcomes of foster care, while advocating with decision makers for system reform. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Please consult your tax advisor regarding your specific tax situation. The Mockingbird Times is a monthly newspaper produced and distributed by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employment of The Mockingbird Society is paid between $9.50 and $12 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, and poetry and are compensated up to $25 per published piece. The Mockingbird Times has a monthly circulation of 50,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the USA, through a private distribution list and as an insert in Real Change, a Seattle-based community newspaper. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of The Mockingbird Society and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to The Mockingbird Society may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the Mockingbird Times may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright ©2001, The Mockingbird Society.
Well, it has been a few months since the last time I updated you on how my senior year is going. First off, I would like to say Rest in Peace to my best friend, Allen Joplin. He passed away January 3rd. I had the opportunity to talk to you about it and you had made a statement to say that because I have known him since I was two years old and at the beginning of this year he got shot. One of the hardest things in the world to experience is the death of your best friend. As a result, I had a very rough time in the beginning of this year. On top of that, I began to see college admissions pass the deadline. Everything seemed to just hit me by storm. I began to shut down when it came to college early on. Many things did go well for me in the beginning of January. I began a new quarter and I had hoped to start it off very strong. Fortunately, it went just that way. At the same time, I ran into something that I had not accounted for that is inevitable. Fortunately, it went just that way. It can be one of the hardest things to deal with if you let it take control.

By the beginning of February, things had really begun to fall apart. I hadn’t turned in most of the college applications that I had planned to. School began to get weak, I just stopped trying. It was almost a domino affect because once I fell apart in applying to colleges, I fell apart in all aspects: work, school, and athletics. All the while, I made the mistake of not telling you. I know that anyone would be hurt because once I fell apart in applying to colleges, I fell apart in all aspects: work, school, and athletics. All the while, I made the mistake of not telling you. I know that anyone would be hurt. What do I do? I just don’t want you to feel bad. What do I do? I just don’t want you to feel bad. I had a very rough time in the beginning of this year. On top of that, I began to see college admissions pass the deadline. Everything seemed to just hit me by storm. I began to shut down when it came to college early on. Many things did go well for me in the beginning of January. I began a new quarter and I had hoped to start it off very strong. Fortunately, it went just that way. At the same time, I ran into something that I had not accounted for that is inevitable. Fortunately, it went just that way. It can be one of the hardest things to deal with if you let it take control.

In March, it was too late, but I let out a distress call. I sent out an e-mail for any help I could get. It really turned out to be quite beneficial to me. I got lots of help from the people in my support network. It turned out a lot of the issues were easily solvable. I also talked to a lot of different universities that have rolling admissions. I am just extremely grateful to be able to turn to a very supportive team. Even though it was running away and getting in trouble.

To my relief, I got a hold of you in December 2007! I was going through the same thing... I called and I heard the bad news. I’m sad and wish I could have seen you one last time to let you see how grown up I am and to see you as I remember you, to smell the scent of your sweet perfume. I know you’re in a better place, I just wish I had gotten to hug and kiss you one last time. It hurts to know you’re gone because it’s hard to believe that a person like you would end up with cancer. It’s not fair. You were the only person I could call and know that you would be there for me no matter what. I’ve thought about you a lot in the last three years although I didn’t speak to you. It hurts my heart that I didn’t get to see you before you left. I love you a lot and I’m going to pay my respect to your grave and talk to you! Until we meet again.

CONGRATULATIONS, SAM!

Our own Samuel Martin has been accepted to and will be attending the University of Washington in Autumn, 2008. All his hard work paid off. Congratulations, Sam, on this great accomplishment!

The Mockingbird Society’s Youth LEAD Program Presents

LIFE ADVOCACY 101

Learn how to be your OWN best advocate in all areas of your life.

Participate in activities that will give you the skills you need to “make things happen” for your personal success!

Receive your own personal Life Advocacy 101 TOOL!

Contact us to today to schedule your FREE Life Advocacy 101 Training for your group or organization! Open to all young and adults ages 14 to 23.

Contact Sam at sam@mockingbirdbirdsociety@yahoo.com or Najja at najja@mockingbirbirdociety.org for more information and details.

Good-bye Pam by Jessica Garcia

Dear Pam,

It’s hard to believe that you have passed on, just I spoke with you about coming to see you, but when I called you gave me some bad news about you having pancreatic cancer. I didn’t know what to say but I had tears. You didn’t break down, you were calm and collected. You were the same person who always dealt with a situation and worked it out; whatever the outcome result was, you did your best to be positive.

I hurt inside because you meant a lot to me. I thought of you like my real mother and your family was my family. I hadn’t seen you since I was twelve years old. I stayed with you for two years and the first eight months were rough for the both of us because I was such a broken child, with a lot of anger and hurt, yet you helped me get through it.

I won’t forget the time we went for ice cream and you asked me what was going on with me and why did I lie about doing my homework when I had straight F’s in school. You said, “I know you’re smart so why the low grades?” You laid rules down for me when I came home after school. We got to talk more and you told me that I was a kid and you were the adult. I didn’t need to worry about anything accept school and being a kid. I thought to myself, “Wow! I’m free!” You also said that it was ok to let my feelings out and cry. After you said that, I broke down. I cried really hard and you comforted me.

With time, my grades went up and I had better self-esteem and smiled a lot more. I gloried. I still think the glow you gave me is here once in a while. I enjoyed when we all joked at dinner time or on outings. I remember I laughed most the times when there was a positive vibe in the house. We had our moments but we had a bond.

I have also been dealing with an issue of what my legal status is as far as foster care is concerned. I am in kinship care and my grandmother had custody of me but care is concerned. I am in kinship care and this was the first time MESA had even called me.

AMERICA’S FIRST ROBOTIC YOUTH CONTEST

A group of students from the MESA Robotics Team at the University of Washington in Seattle did some very cool stuff before it falls behind. I would like to thank you once again for going along with me on this journey. I know that this has been somewhat of a roller coaster. I hope that you truly feel that you have gone on this journey with me.

The Mockingbird Times, April 2008
Because I turned towards my faith, a railroad I've already crossed!
A land of no tomorrow, a land without care
Wow, I heard there was land out there

Land of the Lost
that dark beginning so may years ago.
the life I have dreamed of living since
Maybe with time I can come to an
Who knows except for myself.
Waiting my life in obedience of the
For what am I doing in this dark
down any.
want so I would never have to leave the
is going to get me everything I need and
not know them. So, when he asks me that,
I'm the one that's going to turn his old life
I am glad he is in my life. I just wish he
I'm tripping, too, because I wasn't expect

When I first met my dad I was shocked to see
how much we looked alike.
My mom always used to tell
me how much I looked like him. I always
used to think to myself, “Yeah, I don’t look
like neither of my parents.” But sure enough,
when I saw my dad I saw we look almost
alike. The only difference is that he has
grey hair and I am a female. He is dark
skinned and short like me. When I first
talked to him in person, I felt kind of shy
and then I had this feeling like I had al
ready known him. It was a weird feeling
but, then again, not a bad feeling.

My dad is a great guy! Sometimes I
think he is trying too hard though. He is
stuck on the thought that I am a kid still.
I love him because he is my dad and
if it wasn’t for him, I wouldn’t be here
today. He is always talking to me about
moving in with him. I really do not like
hurting people’s feelings especially if I do
not know them. So, when he asks me that,
I always just say, “I don’t know.” Then he
replies, “Just think about it.” He says he
is going to get me everything I need and
want so I would never have to leave the
house. That comment kind of scares me
because I am young and I like to hang out
with my friends and party and go to the
club. One of these days it's going to hit
him that I missed 19 years of my life.
Just because he wasn’t there doesn’t slow
time down any.

I need to step up and let him into my
life. I am just scared. I hate being judged. It
happens from day to day but when family
does it, it hurts a lot. I don’t like getting
hurt. It has happened so many times, I don’t
even think about it anymore. I think it’s like
the more people I let in, the more they
hurt me and the mor e it hurts me inside. I don’t want my dad to have to
suffer from all the other people’s mistakes.
He shouldn’t have to. I should let the past
go and let him in. That’s way easier said
done, though.

I guess I’m not used to all this parent
stuff. I mean, I’ve had many foster parents
but it’s not the same. I don’t want to say
they didn’t care; they just had a differ-
ent way of caring then I thought natural
parents would have for their kids. Maybe
I’m tripping, too, because I wasn’t expect
ing him to care for me and stuff. My mom has never been
involved with my life the way my dad is try-
ing to be. I feel lucky because I’m my dad’s
only child and he’s always telling me that
I’m the one that’s going to turn his old life
style around. He says he’s glad he has
had the opportunity to see the worst of me.
I can honestly say that is the most
magical place in the world. The lines were
ridiculously long but the rides were worth
the wait. There is no way you could be mad
or upset in Disney World. There was noth-
ing but sparkles and singing and children
playing. It really made me feel like a kid
again. I had an absolute blast. I am saying
this because there is nothing wrong with
letting out the inner-child in you. Sometimes
I see my peers are too afraid to let the kid
out in them.

Opening session was on Wednesday
night, but, unfortunately, I was unable to
attend because one of my dress shoes got
lost. The next day was when the conference
really began, a series of workshops that we
took part in together. Everyone helped me
in different areas. I tried to do
workshops that others didn’t really want to
do. I wanted to learn as much as get a re
ally different experience. For example,
I took a workshop on how to give a presen-
tation. It helped to give tips in an area I am
interested in as well as being something
different. Also I took a high school
resume workshop which helped me beef up my
own resume.

The next day was the career fair, which
went a lot better than last year. I froze up
a bit last year and got nervous. This year
I really took control and went all out. I even
had a few conversations with people and
tell me they would keep in touch. I think
that having this opportunity is great. I have
been to a few career fairs but having actual
people who are the same type of person
really critique you is the type of oppor-
tunity that comes few and far between. I am
glad that NSBE gave high school youth the
opportunity to hand out their re-
sumes and talk to employers. The day
after that was the college fair, which also was
something that benefited me enormously.
Because of issues with the trouble I am
having in school, I asked just about every
college if they had a rolling admissions or
a possibility for me to come in the spring.
Overall, this conference was great. I had
a wonderful time and it was just as much
fun as last year. There is nothing better
than being around over 10,000 motivated
black people who want something better
for themselves. I also went with a really
great group of people and I couldn’t have
asked for a better group to go with than
that one. This year’s conference really mo-
tivated me to go into computer science as a
career path. I always wanted to but I didn’t
think that I had the type of thing as I did at the NSBE conference. There
is the Society of Hispanic Professional
Engineers (SHPE). They have conferences
yearly as well. I talked to people who have
gone to SHPE and they absolutely
loved it. There is also the American Indian
Science and Engineering Society (AISES).
These are opportunities offered to all stu-
dents, it is not just limited to black people,
Hispans, or Native Americans. I saw
Asian Americans at NSBE, so do not think
it is limited. Take advantage of the oppor-
tunities at hand. I know I will because this
is the start of something good and I plan to
be at plenty more NSBE conferences from
here on out.