

## Being an Only Child and Biracial: Effects on Barack Obama

The early lives of presidents have always been topic of discussion. 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, Barack Hussein Obama, has a different background from the previous presidents. He is the first president of the US to be an African-American. He also has different characteristics which he received from the social group that he grew up in. In this case, being the only child and coming from a biracial family affected Obama's characteristics.

First of all, Obama was the only children in his family, and this taught him to be a self-sufficient person. Moreover, he became able to solve the problems on his own. Later, this problem solving ability, among other things, led him to be a good leader. For example, Obama's undeniable work in establishing the world peace by arranging meetings with countries that are in a critical situation shows his effort to solve the problems not only in his country, but in the rest of the world too; however, it is too early to talk about his success because the results of his efforts will become perceptible in a few years. Additionally, his inauguration speech showed his ability against problems such as economics and racism; the results of his efforts, will prove or disprove his success. He felt the responsibility coming with the problems by picturing an image of a strong-willed president and said, "Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real, they are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this America: They will be met." (Obama, "Inaugural Address")

Furthermore, only children tend to be more sophisticated in individual work. Individual working skills are one of the most important qualities needed in a president; besides, Barack Obama has lots of these individual skills. For instance, his individual work

in Democrat Party led him to be selected as a candidate among the others defying the fact that he was an African-American without a high profile. Of course he had to succeed in a group to be the leader, but leaders are mostly better in individual work.

Additionally, only children tend to be introverted due to their loneliness or extraverted due to their boredom. In this case, Obama was introverted due to his loneliness when he was a teenager; besides, he didn't conceal the truth that he used alcohol, marijuana and cocaine during his teenage years. (Obama 93-94; Romano A01)

In addition, a theory of the psychologist named Alfred Adler claims that only children tend to be spoiled. This remark cannot be clearly applied to Obama because his family had financial problems, and he had to struggle with life alone. For instance, he got into Ivy League universities such as Columbia and Harvard with his own efforts. His father left him when he was 2 years old and died when he was at age 21. ("Encyclopædia Britannica") For the rest of his childhood, Obama lived with his mother and grandparents who didn't have any financial resources. Therefore, during the struggle with life without the financial support of his family, Obama learned to stand on his own legs. Also, Adler's theory claims that only children may face interpersonal difficulties if they are not admired by everybody. In contrast, Obama is elected as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of United States; consequently, he is admired by everybody. However this theory cannot be directly applied to Obama, maybe he is satisfied by everyone's admiration, and this protects him from facing with interpersonal difficulties.

Secondly, Obama was raised in a biracial family, and being biracial affects children in many ways. Normally, biracial children learn both of the cultures and languages of their parents. Because Obama was raised by his mother, he mostly learned

his mother's language and culture, which was American. The truth is that Obama can speak a little Bahasa Indonesia which he learned during his childhood in Jakarta.

(Zimmer) Moreover, being biracial led Obama to have relationships with many people and relatives who were surprisingly different. He said, "It's like a little mini-United Nations. I've got relatives who look like Bernie Mac, and I've got relatives who look like Margaret Thatcher." (Obama, "Keeping Hope Alive") Bernie Mac was a black American actor, and Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister of the UK who was white. So, this statement of Obama proves that he experienced the variety of biracial families which had people from different cultures and ethnic groups.

In addition, biracial children are more mature than others in some ways. For instance, they know how to behave to others who are different from them because they have experienced different people. In this respect, Obama's ability to address different people which he learned from his biracial family helped make him a leader. As a biracial person, Obama knew how to behave to the others who were different than him and who had different thoughts than him. Addressing different varieties of people is a typical property of a unifying leader; besides, Obama had this ability by being biracial.

Another characteristic of biracial children is that they are aware of social problems such as racism. As an example, Obama grew up in a country which saw the struggles between different races of people for many years, especially the struggle between black and white. Growing up in a different race increased Obama's awareness of racism. Although Obama had some difficulties thinking about his race when he was a teenager, he didn't even compare both races when he was an adult. Instead of trying to emulate a race, Obama discovered his own identity. Obama said "...I never emulate, white men

and brown men whose fate didn't speak to my own. It was into my father's image, the black man, son of Africa, that I'd packed as the attributes I sought in myself..." (Obama, "Dreams from my father" 220) This statement of Obama shows that he never tried to look like any of the races; he just wanted to look like his father who he took as his mentor, as every child does.

In conclusion, Barack Obama had most of the characteristics of an only child and biracial child. The social group that he belonged to earned him these qualities which helped him to be a good leader and a communicator; therefore, the effects of Obama's social development can be seen in every decision that he makes. Even though Barack Obama is admired by everybody in the world, results of his efforts earned from his unique social background will only be clarified in the coming years of his presidency.