# Obama calls for straight men to nurture friendships with gay men



Former U.S. President Barack Obama has used a widely listened-to episode of the ‘IMO’ podcast, co-hosted by his wife Michelle Obama and Craig Robinson, to talk about the importance of diverse role models in the emotional development of boys and young men. Obama highlighted the crucial role that friendships with gay people can play in teaching empathy and kindness—qualities he stresses are essential for raising emotionally intelligent children.

Reflecting on his own life, Obama shared how a college professor, who was openly gay, challenged his assumptions and helped him grow emotionally by confronting his ignorant views. He emphasised that boys need more than just their fathers as male role models, noting that a single figure, no matter how good, cannot fulfill all the developmental needs of a child. Having exposure to a variety of male influences, including those from the LGBTQ+ community, enriches boys’ emotional landscapes, allowing them to understand kindness and empathy on a deeper level.

Obama went further, arguing that these friendships also create essential support networks for children who may identify as gay, nonbinary, or otherwise outside traditional norms. 'You need that person in your circle of friends so that when you have a son who is gay or non-binary... there’s someone he can say, "OK, I’m not alone in this, right?"' he said during the conversation. This perspective underscores the importance of community-building and acceptance from an early age, counteracting the isolation many LGBTQ+ youth face.

While championing progressive values, Obama criticised progressives for inadvertently neglecting boys in their efforts to level the playing field for girls, pointing out that rhetoric has often focused on what is wrong with boys rather than recognising their positive qualities. 'That was a mistake,' he said, adding that there's measurable progress as society begins to acknowledge various ways for men to be strong, successful, and happy without abandoning all aspects of traditional masculinity. For instance, Obama lamented the loss of virtues such as chivalry, suggesting that some older masculine models still hold admirable qualities which can coexist with a more inclusive modern masculinity. Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://index.hu/kulfold/2025/07/20/barack-obama-lmbtq-egyesult-allamok-podcast-ferfiak-peldakep-velemeny/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.out.com/news/barack-obama-gay-friends> - In a recent episode of the 'IMO' podcast, former U.S. President Barack Obama discussed the importance of men having gay friends to foster empathy and kindness. He shared personal experiences, including a college professor who challenged his assumptions and helped him grow emotionally. Obama emphasized that such friendships are crucial for raising emotionally intelligent young men and creating supportive communities.
3. <https://www.them.us/obama-michelle-barack-gay-nonbinary-friends> - Former President Barack Obama appeared on the 'IMO' podcast, co-hosted by his wife Michelle Obama and Craig Robinson, to discuss raising emotionally intelligent young men. He highlighted the need for boys to have diverse male role models, including gay and nonbinary friends, to learn empathy and kindness. Obama shared personal anecdotes, such as a college professor who challenged his assumptions and helped him grow emotionally.
4. <https://www.pedestrian.tv/news/barack-obama-gay-friends/> - Former U.S. President Barack Obama encouraged young men to diversify their friend groups by befriending gay people to learn about empathy and kindness. Appearing on the 'IMO' podcast, he stressed the importance of having a wide range of role models to raise emotionally intelligent, competent men. Obama shared a personal experience with a gay college professor who challenged his assumptions and helped him grow emotionally.
5. <https://www.edgemedianetwork.com/story/155970> - In a candid discussion on the 'IMO' podcast, former President Barack Obama emphasized the importance of men having gay and nonbinary friends to develop empathy and kindness. He shared personal experiences, including a college professor who challenged his assumptions and helped him grow emotionally. Obama argued that such friendships are essential for raising emotionally intelligent young men and fostering supportive communities.
6. <https://www.instinctmagazine.com/barack-obama-gay-role-models-in-teaching-kindness/> - Former President Barack Obama discussed the significance of diverse role models in shaping emotionally intelligent men during an episode of the 'IMO' podcast. He highlighted the role of gay and nonbinary friends in teaching empathy and kindness, sharing personal experiences, including a college professor who challenged his assumptions and helped him grow emotionally. Obama emphasized that such friendships are crucial for raising well-rounded young men.