



Second Decade of Odyssey Begins

Odyssey Class of 2014

As 30 adult students gather in the Goodman South Madison Library on Wednesday evenings from September to May to discuss William Blake, Socrates, Shakespeare, Martin Luther King, and many other writers and historical figures, they begin to feel a sense of transformation. The UW Madison Odyssey Project has begun its eleventh year of offering a two-semester jumpstart course in the humanities for adults facing adversity. In addition, the program helps its alumni continue on their journey to college degrees and empowered lives. They will earn six UW Madison credits through the Odyssey Project. Graduates of the Odyssey Project have journeyed from homelessness to graduate school, from incarceration to meaningful work in the community.

"I never thought that it would be possible to have a UW student ID!" commented new student

Charlienne Cotto. "Having one may not be a big deal to some, but to me it is a triumph, something accomplished in my life and someone counting me in when all others counted me out." New students traveled to campus on September 18 to receive photo ID cards and tour the Chazen Museum of Art.

"The Odyssey Class of 2014 is already inspiring us: they are motivated, engaged, and ready to make the most of their Odyssey experience," notes Odyssey Assistant Director Laurie Greenberg. Through a new program funded by Great Lakes Community Investments in partnership with the UW's Division of Continuing Studies and Madison College, the eleventh year class will receive not only an immersion into literature, philosophy, art history, and American history but also more intensive help with writing,

reading comprehension, and study skills.

"It's like I have a future again," writes Alisha Taylor "This is going to push me to further my education," adds Amber McCarley.

Many students speak of having a second chance and finally feeling as if they are college material. "I felt smart after all," writes Jackieta Fairley. Others view the program as a chance for their whole family. "This program will help me and my daughter in the long run and in our future," remarks new father Christopher Bester, whose own mother graduated from Odyssey and went on to graduate from UW-Madison. Robert James concludes, "This class is the Alpha of my efforts to pull my entire family up from generations of poverty."

Caption for Photo: Students: Zeynab Ahmed, Isis Bernard, Christopher Bester, LaPrice Black, Mallory Carter, Lucia Chikovero, Kunga Chokten, Charlienne Cotto, Nafisa Davis, Tracker Dunn, Jackieta Fairley, Jacquan Fleming, Kelli Green, Jamie Hanson, La'Trease Hibbler, Nyagooa Hotb, Robert James, Milli Lau, Simone Lawrence, Vanessa Lopes Maia, Michael Martin, Amber McCarley, Derrick McCray, Starr Miles, Janet Shelton, Jeannine Shoemaker, Toshiana Northington, Alisha Taylor, Shiquille Ward, Latrice White

For information about how to donate to the program or how to apply for next year's class, contact Odyssey Project Director Emily Auerbach at 608-262-3733 or euauerbach@dcs.wisc.edu or visit www.odyssey.wisc.edu. The website includes a link to a 24-minute documentary about the program that aired on national TV.