

ODYSSEY ORACLE

I LOVE...



I love to learn! There is not enough time in one life span to acquire a true mastery of any subject. The joy must lie in the attempt. Odyssey becomes a living metaphor which reminds us all that knowledge is humbling and a powerful ally. I love syllogisms. I love to hear my classmates' logic, which sometimes reawakens parts of my humanity that I've buried. **(Robert James)**



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Photos in this issue by Laurie Greenberg, Dick Baker, Keith Meyer, Emily Auerbach, and others.

I love reading. I love books and the way the words jump off the page. I love the way it's like a movie in my head, and I can watch as I read. I love how the book feels as I flip through the pages. The touch or action of doing so feels like I've always known it. I like reading online, but nothing beats the old-fashioned book. **(Jaquan Fleming)**

I love that there is a program like the Odyssey Project out there. I am a 29-year-old single mother of three children that never thought it would be possible for me to go back to school. But thanks to the Odyssey Project, I have been able to do so. I am glad that it is possible for not only me but all other women in my situation to do. I also love that the Odyssey Project is able to jumpstart the college careers of so many individuals that did not have the proper chance in life. **(Nyagoa Hoth)**



I love life and want to live it to the fullest. I love the knowledge that has been bestowed upon me. I love being given a second chance to do something I should have done a long time ago. **(Derick McCray)**



Marias and Sarai, my two oldest. I love Gary, my boyfriend, coming around the corner asking where the car keys are so that he can warm the car up. I love that we as a family move as a unit to be so productive and make our future. I love that my family is becoming the best-oiled machine I know. **(Jackieta Fairley)**

I love my children, and I love my classmates. I love my children because they each are different levels of me. Tomas is my wild side, Nayhaly is my smart, wise, entrepreneurial side, Neves is my leader who talks me out of thinking negatively, and Jadiel is my shiny side, always happy and joyous. I love my classmates. They are the glue that keeps me moving forward. **(Charllienne Cotto)**

I love the career goals I have planned for myself. Actually, I am very excited about it and hope to God I will be able to accomplish my career goals. My mentor always tells me that I am an old soul. That is because I am a very goal-oriented person. I procrastinate a lot, but I actually know what I want in life. **(Zeynab Ahmed)**

I love the sound of my home at six in the morning. It sounds like production: sausage or bacon frying, bathroom water running, Jakai (my two year old) running back and forth calling



I love the moment. The moment is absolutely vivid and loving. I love change and agreements to not agree. I love the courage that I move with these days. . . . (**LaTrease Hibbler**)

I love my children, and they love me back. The love we share is like no other, and what we share is so rare. Every day when I wake up, I talk to my children at least ten minutes and tell them how much I love them. Nowadays people really don't use the "I love you" phrase, as if there's something wrong with it. I use it as much as I can because life is too short not to tell people how much you care about them. So tell as many people as you can that you love them, and make them smile. (**Latrice White**)



I love my children, Levi and Talan. They are such wonderful (and challenging) characters. They give me unconditional love, affection, and positive affirmations when I need them. Just like me, they have moments of selfishness that teach me patience and acceptance. Most of all, they always forgive me when I feel like I'm losing control of my emotions. They surprise me with the sweet and sassy sides of their

personalities. (**Jamie Hanson**)

I love my kids! I'm sure all the moms are saying the same thing, but I can't think of anything I love more. My life isn't worth a penny without them. I hate to say it, but I don't think I'd be here if they didn't depend on me so much. I know it's probably not healthy, but they keep my heart beating. But who knows what I would be doing if I were a single woman? I guess that's why mothers say their kids are the air they breathe. I love my kids. (**Simone Lawrence**)

I love my beautiful daughter, D'Aja Nevaeh Champagne. She is everything and so much more to me. She brightens my day every day! Hearing her voice is what I look forward to all the time. Seeing her face is what I open my eyes to every morning. D'Aja is my life, and I love my life. Where would I be without her? I just don't know. (**Amber McCarley**)

I love being a mom. As I got older, I always wanted and knew I was going to be one, and a great one at that. I have always wanted to give my daughter the things I never had (even though I had everything as a child), such as both parents around. I have always had a loving family around me who could be there for me. Everything I had as a child I couldn't wait until I could pass it on and give everything I had emotionally and spiritually to my daughter. She is my joy, my smile, my laugh, and my strength. Just writing about her now, I miss her. (**Kelli Green**)

I love my family with all my heart, but above all I love God. I love my fiancé who works two jobs to provide for us and shows each and every day how much he loves and cares about our family. My kids are the sunshine that brightens my days. I give all the love that I have for them and

try to show them each and every day how much they mean to me. I want the best for their future and their education.

Also when I say family, I also mean my family that is in Brazil: my mom, dad, sisters, brother, etc. I miss them dearly, each and every day. I wish we could share so many moments and that my children could meet them. I grew up in an environment full of such love and care that whenever I think of love, my mind and heart take me directly to family. I know some day I will be able to hug my loved family, each and every one. Someday there will be no barriers so that we can be united again. God can make anything possible, and I believe He will make this miracle happen.

(Vanessa Lopes Maia)

I love my daughter, Yasmine T. Bester, as well as the mother of my child, Dulce Bacallao. We have come a long way and have gone through ups and downs. But at the end of the day, we are a family. I pray my daughter will be molded into a wonderful person who will find a great interest in life and run with it. I want her to get a good education. I'm going to be a good father to my child and teach her she can do anything.

(Christopher Bester)

I love my kids, school, and self-change. The enjoyment of watching my kids while they look up to me is the best feeling ever. As I continue with my education and moving forward, my self-change will never change, and this I love. **(Janet Shelton)**



I love the courage and focus I have to make a better future for my kids and me. The long lonely nights and rough mornings will all be worth it in the end. Being a single parent is like walking on nails with no shoes. All I have to turn to is that lovely white wall in my room when I need and want to vent. I love every moment, though, because I love my kids.

(Mallory Carter)

I love being a grandma. I can give my grandchildren special attention, gifts, etc. At the end of the day, I can return them to their parents without a fuss, except with my grandbabies. **(LaPrice Black)**

I love the bright shining stars, nicely spaced and in a magnificent pattern. I love the clear blue skies and the big round moon smiling down on me. I love the still cool breeze on my face giving me soothing kisses on my cheeks. I love Mother Nature.

(Lucia Chikowero)

I love traveling. I like to travel to different countries and meet with different people. Through various trips, I can know more about different cultures, including practices, living styles, religions, systems, thoughts, arts, etc.

Through meeting with people in other countries, I learn how to respect, accept, and understand people who are different from me. I learn how to communicate with other people effectively. I also can get more ideas to tackle different situations through the stories I hear on the trips. I hope in the future I can travel to more countries all over the world.

(Milli Lau)

I love decorating the home. It utilizes my artistic and creative side when I look around from Goodwill to Home Depot, from Penney's or Kohl's to the Dig and Save Store. I love imagining where I would hang something on a person's wall. I have given advice to relatives and friends, and I love their feedback about my home décor design suggestions. **(Starr Miles)**

I love music. Something about it has always spoken to me, even as an infant. Whatever was playing, I would just jump around laughing and dancing. Since my parents always loved music, there was always something playing.

As I got older, I started branching out, listening to other genres and really getting an understanding of the actual music, not just hearing the words. Music is so universal and can bring people together, no matter how different or alike they may or may not be. I've always related to a lot of rap music. Everyone has a story, and I just feel music is one of the best ways to express yourself if you really want people to listen.

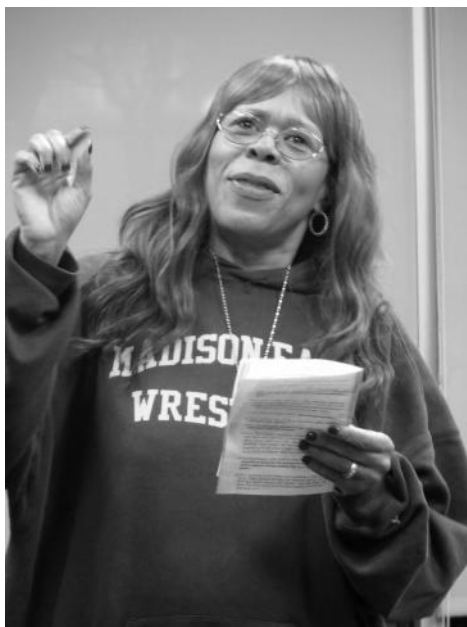
I cannot get enough of music—the technique, the word play, and the entendres. It's all there.

Writing a song is very similar to writing a paper, only these sheets have rhythm.

(Shiquille Ward)

I love discovering the real me, to reach into my soul and swim in the waves of light and harmony. I love to give kindness and care to those who find emptiness and dark places. I love to bless others, for I know my God will bless me. I am charity; that is love.

(Nafisa Davis)



I love me more than anyone! There is a brand new respect and love that I have found for myself. The best thing is determination. With this new piece of me, I shall never fail. I shall never accept no for an answer or give way to anything outside of my life's wonderful plan. There are many hurdles to jump, but I am ready to keep moving forward.

(Isis Bernard)

I love myself more these days. I have Emily and the Odyssey team partly to thank for this. I was giving up on myself. I could not handle the obstacles that life was throwing at me. It was Emily's calls and calls from Susan that woke me up and shocked me awake, to see the true person that I am and can be. I had forgotten how to laugh and find joy in my life. I had allowed all the drama and pain that my 30-year-old daughter had taken me through to steal my joy and love of life. It was also the health of my mom and dad that kept me in tears.

It was the support of Emily and the Odyssey team that brought me back when I was ready to walk away from the pains of life. They showed me that I'm worth being here and that I have something to offer this world. **(Jeannine Shoemaker)**

I love being loved. Love is knowing that you're loved. I love the sound of your voice. The love we share is not by choice. I love the way you look at me. The love I have stretches across the longest sea. I love the time spent with you over the years. I love the joy and the tears. I love what the future holds. I love the fact the future can't be told. I love being with you. Most of all, I love the fact that you love me, too. **(Michael Martin)**

MUSIC REVIEWS

The Magic of Christmas Carols

By Jamie Hanson

The trees were blanketed in fresh snow that still sparkles in my memory of the night we saw the Mt. Zion Gospel Choir perform an exquisite arrangement of gospel carols. It was an extraordinary evening, a winter wonderland outside and a passionate expression of love and faith inside High Point Church in Madison, Wisconsin. The experience provoked a deep spiritual connection to God and an attitude within me that everything would be okay, as long as I believe.

My feet were planted firmly on the ground and my fists clenched at the idea that I was doing it all on my own, no glory to God, until I heard Deborah Biddle sing "I Believe." As she sang, my sons began to draw sunshine pouring light onto the silhouette of the cross with an angel above with her wings spread wide. When the choir sang "The First Noel," it was an upbeat spirited version bringing us out of our seats. "O Come All Ye Faithful" and "Little Drummer Boy" were next. The drumming was spectacular!

Leotha Stanley, who has been directing the choir for thirty years, took a moment to introduce the next singer. He said her name was René Robinson. My heart leapt as I said, "I think that's René from Odyssey." He said she had recently had a surgery and complications causing an infection in her hip that would keep her from singing. He went on to say that no one could sing "Go Tell It on a Mountain" quite like René. I was at the edge of my seat in suspenseful wondering, hoping René would sing and that it would be the same René from the first semester of Odyssey who gave voice to Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" speech. Mr. Stanley proudly announced that despite her health, René was in the audience and would in fact be singing. It was an emotional moment as she rose from her seat and made her way to the stage. She sat on a stool near the stage and I could not see her face, yet her voice was unmistakable as the René Robinson from Odyssey. I had a divine intuition that my presence was meant to be in attendance. Mr. Stanley was right when he said it wouldn't be the same without her, and the audience agreed by giving René a standing ovation.

My children's eyes were filled with delight when we heard "Do you hear what I hear?" The choir continued, "A song, a song, high above the trees, with a voice as big as the sea." Then Nathan Addison played a beautiful jazz rendition of "Silent Night" on the saxophone. When the concert was over, we were thanked for coming. My son responded in a cheerful shout, "Thank you for coming!" and everyone giggled. We had a warm glow of a faithful flame in our hearts. We said hello to René on our way out. In the car we talked about our experience and how we hoped to attend Mt. Zion Church from time to time. Finally, I will end with lines written by the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson: "O' well the fortunate soul which music's wings enfold. / Stealing away the memory of sorrows new and old."



A Madison Symphony Christmas By Mallory Carter

This was the weekend I worked both my jobs and usually am exhausted. I was determined to make it to the Overture Center, no matter what. There were so many obstacles that came up, but I was determined. My grandmother was originally supposed to go, but she's 75 and just wasn't feeling up to it. Now I had no one to go with. I asked my five-year-old daughter if she wanted to go, and she told me, "Mommy, yes, I want to go." I called Emily, but she told me the Madison Symphony Orchestra would not allow in children under six.



All the way to the Overture Center, I was hoping and praying they didn't ask me how old my daughter was. I haven't been at the Overture Center in years. Once I walked in, I was shocked and amazed, like it was my first time. My daughter was happy to see all the carolers in the lobby singing. We made it in, thank God! I went straight to our seats because I didn't want to miss a thing.

As we were waiting for the show to start, I explained to my daughter what the program said and what kind of music we were going to be hearing. She was so excited that she got to come and not her brother that I don't even think she was listening to me.

As the choir started walking in, I was just amazed at the kids' choir. There were so many young girls, little girls that looked like they just loved being in the choir. It's always good to see kids enjoy what they are doing because half of the time they don't like it and are just doing it because their parents said so.

I just loved Ms. Moore when she was performing "O magnum mysterium." I also enjoyed Mr. Lavine. He did a very good job playing the cello. It was just a different kind of music we don't hear that often. I enjoyed all the performers and the music they shared with us. My daughter was trying to sing along even though she didn't know the words.



Everyone complimented me on how well my daughter was sitting and interacting. It was cute seeing her trying to participate. Being at the symphony made me miss being in choir in high school. Even though I used to be nervous to perform in front of people, I loved the feedback we got and how our performance made someone else feel.

There's just something about music that gets me going and puts me in a positive mood. I definitely needed that extra touch from being at the symphony because for some reason this year I was just not really feeling Christmas. I went home that night and put my Christmas tree up with my kids. Thank you to the sponsors [Carroll Heideman; Robert Auerbach] for tickets for Odyssey students to attend the Madison Symphony Orchestra Christmas concert!

Additional Note from Vanessa Lopes Maia:

We really enjoyed the Madison Symphony Christmas Concert! I think my daughter liked the second part of it better because she recognized the Christmas songs, and she seemed excited to be able to sing along. But she was dazzled over all.

We sat by Jamie and her children and also by Janet and her daughter. I took pictures, including a picture of Janet and her daughter (see p. 7).

Hearing Drake Live By Shiquille Ward



Over winter break, I had the pleasure of attending a concert back home in Chicago. My girlfriend and I got third row seats to see Drake at the United Center as a joint Christmas gift from her parents.

We started our journey early setting out around 11 to beat traffic weather. The drive down never seems to fail when it comes to being a bore. For entertainment we listened to her prepared Drake playlist. After several rounds of "Show Me a Good Time" and "All Me," I was just about ready to tell her "Just hold on, I'm going home," but before I could introduce the Chicago expressway pavement to her iPhone, we had arrived. . . .

We found a decent deal for parking right across from the stadium for \$25, so we decided to just settle in so we could hurry and make it before the opening acts. After we were rudely instructed on where to park, we noticed we had lost our cash for parking. We both searched frantically for as long as the eager "parking attendant" would let us. After three short minutes, we just cut our losses and headed for an ATM, figuring why waste more time? We took a stroll into one of the less forgiving Chicago neighborhoods to the local CITGO and got our parking cash. We returned only to learn that the lot across from the stadium was full and our spot was gone. At this point we just wanted to get inside, so we found another lot nearby and settled down. As were getting ready to depart the car that had become a closet, home, and restaurant over the course of the trip, we realized we were missing the biggest part of the whole shebang: the tickets.



After we located them in her wallet, we adjourned to the concert, where we were greeted by the soulful singing of Miguel's "Kaleidoscope Dream." We ended up getting to see Future, Drake, Miguel, and Jhenae Aiko all in one night. Drake performed all of his latest hits, and my girlfriend was elated. I must admit I myself was impressed and thought he put on a fantastic show for everyone in the United Center. To say the least, it made up for all the times I heard the songs on the way down to actually hear and see them performed live. For the next week and a half, it was nothing but Drake. But "I guess that's just the motion."

MOVIE AND TV REVIEWS

“A Raisin in the Sun”

By Mallory Carter

I read the book *A Raisin in the Sun*. As I was reading the play, parts of the movie that Sean Coombs was in started popping back in my head. A few people recommended that I watch the movie with Sidney Poitier. After reading the book, I called around to a few libraries to locate the movie. I must say



it was a good movie, even if it was black and white. I felt the story line behind it and got to see all the emotions of it. I learned a lot from the movie and book.

The one thing that really stuck out to me was a man needing to feel like a man and to have his manhood. As Walter was going through his hard times, somewhere in there he lost his manhood and wasn't sure how to get it back. He was lost and unhappy without it. I see this happening

every day to young men. Walter got his manhood back after he lost all the money his family had and realized he was not the man his mother and father raised. He lost his sense of reality for a while, but when it came back he stood up and took his manhood. He was ready to be the head of his household. Sometimes we go through hell and back to realize our purpose in life and what we should be doing. “A Raisin in the Sun” is a very inspiring movie.

“The Battle in Seattle”

By Starr Miles

What I found of interest that I thought was both entertaining and educational was a movie that I picked up at Walgreen's on a whim. It was on sale, so I thought I would check it out. I based my choice mostly on the title. “The Battle in Seattle”: what was this about? I learned a lot more from this film about international politics, economics, and ecology rather than just being entertained with the drama and action.

André 3000, a favorite actor/artist, was one of the main characters in the movie, but the subject matter was what interested me most. This movie was about the World Trade Organization (WTO). The movie gave you the basic history on how the WTO began as a worldwide organization with its original purpose and intent of benefiting people all around the world with equal trade



opportunities. Now it is run predominately by large corporations who pollute, recruit at the lowest wages, and poison the environment of both large and small bartering countries. This movie attempts to explain how the exportation of American jobs by corporations came about and continues to happen today. From Seattle, Washington, it gives intimate details of how a relatively small group of individuals who protested by marching and chaining themselves together were beaten and jailed by the Seattle police, who were unprepared, poorly supervised, and conflicted about how to handle the protestors. These protestors were still able to prevent the WTO from having its conference in Seattle with leaders from all over the world.

This film exposed how the African delegates' microphones were turned off during the meeting and their translators were denied, so they all walked out of the meeting because they were disrespected and not heard. The mayor of Seattle was the man in the middle trying to keep the violence hidden from the national news, protect the protestors, and please all his political foes. A new reporter changed her position against the protestors and joined them. She went to jail after filming live the attacks on the unarmed women, men, and children in the crowd. The movie exposes how the reality of what really happened to people was hidden from the national news media.

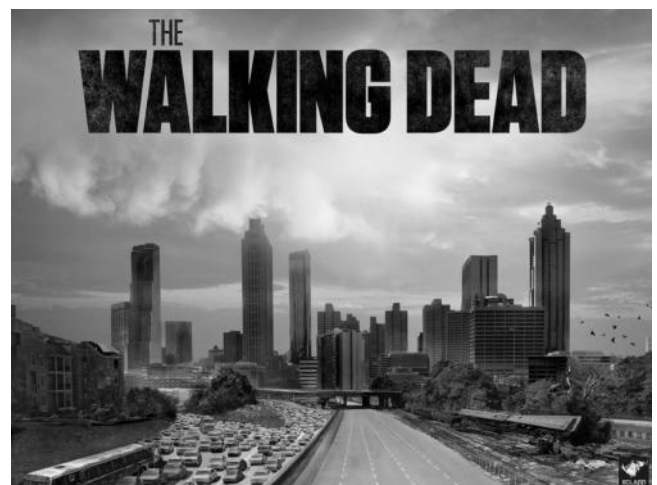
The WTO still exists today, and very little change has been made. However, protests continue. Now the police barricade the public more than two miles away from the WTO meeting centers, and planning is more secretive and secured. I plan to write in more detail about this organization. It changes daily and is quite interesting and controversial. The movie made me think more globally than locally and wonder what I can do as an individual to influence changes.

"The Walking Dead"

By Zeynab Ahmed

Over the break, all I did was sleep, watch TV, and procrastinate about my UW-Madison application. I watched almost all the TV shows and movies on Netflix, except one. I heard my friends talk about it a lot, but it never really appealed to me. With nothing else to do and tired of sleeping, I decided to watch "The Walking Dead." After the first episode, I could not stop watching it. It is right when they say never judge a book by its cover; in this case, however, never judge a zombie show before you watch it.

"The Walking Dead" has had a lot of buzz around it lately. The show is based on a graphic novel. It's the zombie apocalypse. The show follows a group of survivors through their ordeal and what they are doing to try to recover from it. It is supposed to be a horror show, but it also combines action and a little bit of romance. It has a lot of cliff hangers throughout that keep the viewer hooked to the show. It introduces new characters every season, which makes it interesting and not the same old predictable apocalypse. In general, it's a really good and interesting show, and now I know how to survive the apocalypse.



“Catching Fire”**By Nyagoa Hoth**

I have been waiting for over a year to see the movie “Catching Fire,” so you can imagine how excited I was when I actually did see it over the break. I had read all the Hunger Games books on which this is based, and I have also seen the very first Hunger Games movie. Despite that, I have to admit that neither movie was as good as the book.

I remember reading all three books with such excitement, such anticipation. I even remember staying up late every night until the current book I was reading was completed. My imagination was racing; I imagined each book as if I were going through the post-apocalyptic life of Katniss. So when I saw the first movie, I thought that it did the first book justice. The way they interpreted what it was like to be a child having to go up against another child in battle, all without having any choice, showed that there is no easy way to do such a thing. But when I saw the second movie, “Catching Fire,” I found it to be half done. In the book there was



so much detail, so much thought process. Just as I have spent countless hours to get a paper just right, so the author of the book has done the same. So it really was sad to see that not all the time-consuming detail was displayed in the movie.

This movie has really made me appreciate not only literature but also my own imagination.

“Tyler Perry’s A Madea Christmas”**By Lucia Chikowero**

Christmas holiday of 2013 I went to watch “A Madea Christmas” with my husband. . . . The movie started off with Madea working in a department store as a lady Santa. With all honesty, that was a job she wasn’t suited for at all. She misled customers and was outright mean to some of them, which led to her getting fired. Meanwhile, the person who had helped her get the job, her cousin Anna Marie, had an only daughter (Lacey) who was not coming home for Christmas. Lacey had told her mother that she had bought a piece of land that needed a lot of work, so she would not make it home for Christmas.

Anna Marie, Madea, and Oliver (a guy Lacey’s mother wanted to marry Lacey) decided to make a surprise visit so they could have Christmas together. Meanwhile Lacey was working at a very small local school that was struggling to stay afloat due to financial hardships. She was the only black teacher. . . . Lacey had not told her mother that she was now married to a white guy named Connor. . . . When they got to where Lacey and Connor lived, Anna Marie assumed Connor was the help and was just dismissing him as such. All of a sudden Connor’s parents



arrived, too. They knew about Lacey and were happy and welcoming. . . .

Anna Marie was heavily prejudiced against white people and guarded her cooking. . . . When Anna Maria learned about the marriage to Connor, the old woman almost fainted, her worst fears confirmed. She hated white people with a passion. She had even lied to her daughter that she had a weak heart and that if Lacey married out of her race she would die. . . .

Seeing this movie brought to my mind the class we had on prejudice. When one is prejudiced about something, there is a likelihood of seeing things that are not real. Prejudices surpass race.

A Different View of “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button”

By Milli Lau

“The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” is a story of a man who is born 80 years old and ages backwards over time. Benjamin’s father, Thomas Button, is an owner of a button factory in New Orleans. He abandons his newborn son since his son is odd, and he cannot accept his wife’s death. Queenie, an African-American woman who works in a nursing home, finds the abandoned baby on the steps outside her door. She insists on keeping the baby although the doctor tells her that the baby may not be able to survive too long. She treats him as her own son and raises him. Later, Benjamin meets little Daisy, the granddaughter of a new tenant at the nursing home. They develop their friendship soon after they meet. . . .

After the war, Benjamin returns to Queenie’s nursing home. His father invites him out to dinner. He reveals to Benjamin that he is his father and is going to die soon. He will leave his house, button factory and everything to him. At first, Benjamin rejects the reconciliation with him. However, he finally forgives his father and accompanies him until he dies. Along the way, Benjamin and Daisy meet again when they are in the middle of life. They feel they love each other, so they stay together in their own duplex. After their daughter, Caroline, is born, Benjamin realizes that he is not able to care for his wife and daughter, as he grows younger and younger. He decides to leave in order to give Daisy and Caroline a real life. After his daughter’s first birthday, Benjamin sells all the assets which his father left to him and leaves all money in an account for Daisy and Caroline. Later, Daisy remarries in order to give a family to her daughter. After her husband dies, she receives a phone call from Child Protective Services and knows that Benjamin has returned to Queenie’s nursing home. He is about twelve years old and suffering from the beginning of dementia. Daisy starts to care for him until he regresses to an infant and then dies in her arms.

Obviously, this movie is talking about life, aging, sickness, and death . . . and is trying to tell us that no matter how the beginning and ends of our lives are, the most important thing is how we live the moments in between. . . . Kinship may not be the only reason that bonds people together; love does.

First, family is not always the shelter for its members. People usually think that family is a place where they can get help, support and comfort whenever they need it. However, Benjamin's shelter is always the nursing home of his adoptive mother, Queenie, instead of the big house of his biological father, Thomas Button. Benjamin's father treats him as a monster and abandons him because of his bizarre appearance and the death of his wife. In contrast, Queenie considers Benjamin as a miracle and treats him as her own child. She cares if he will fall downstairs when his wheelchair is too close to the edge. She fears if he will encounter any danger when he comes home late. She worries if he will lose his life when he participates in the war. What makes a father desert his own child? What makes a strange woman accept an odd infant and consider him as her own child?



Second, adoptive parents outweigh the biological parents. . . . When Benjamin hears that his father plans to leave all his money and property to him, he scorns the offer and turns toward the door to leave. He affirmatively tells his father that he has to go "home." At the funeral when Queenie says that his father will be buried right next to his mother, Benjamin tells her without hesitation that she is his mother. For Benjamin, the only thing that binds him and his father together is kinship. He never experiences love from his father. He never feels attachment to his father. Therefore, Queenie's nursing home is his "genuine" home, and Queenie is his "authentic" mother.

Third, forgive your family members even if they mistreated you. . . . Benjamin suddenly realizes that he has already lost lots of time to enjoy his life with his father. If he does not seize the last chance to stay with his father, he will repent in the future as much as his father regretted deserting him in the past. Although Benjamin has no close affectionate connection with his father, he chooses to go back, accompany him, and give him comfort. Before his father dies, Benjamin takes him to the lake to watch the sunrise. This makes his father feel more relief and allows him to die at peace.

Last, acceptance, trust, and love are the main criteria of initiating and sustaining a good relationship. They nourish emotional attachment and belonging between family members that prohibit their relationships from deteriorating. Starting from the first time when Benjamin and

Daisy meet at the nursing home, Daisy accepts and trusts Benjamin. Although half of their lives are not staying together, they always think about and care about each other. They always feel connected to each other. When Daisy broke her leg, she does not want to be his burden by expelling him from the hospital. When Benjamin realizes that he will become Daisy's burden as he grows younger, he protects her by leaving her money and running away from home. Therefore, Benjamin writes down everything about their love in his diary. Also, Daisy still remembers their love when she is on her deathbed.

People usually think that parents must provide their children with unconditional love and care, but it is not always true. Acceptance, trust, and love are the things that bind all family members together, not simply the ties of kinship. Moreover, "if we did not lose the people that we love, we would not know how important they are to us." Thus, we must cherish the time to stay with our families and give our family members comfort. If not, it will be too late when we regret our loss.

"Fruitvale Station"

By Alisha Taylor

"Fruitvale Station" is based on and inspired by the murder of Oscar Grant. He was a 22-year-old young man who loved his family very much and only wanted to have a fresh start at life! Oscar had a history of being incarcerated. He was having a hard time with employment and felt he had to lie to his loved ones about working. He decided to stop doing what so many young minority males get trapped or caught up in doing: selling drugs and getting money to live.

The movie really moved me and had me in such an emotional state because of the raw reality of this story. I could relate to scenes of when the mother had to visit her son behind bars. I've felt the same way that I imagined she felt.

This movie had me feeling so happy about this young man's passion to do better and his love to help and do for his family. Then just as trouble is always lurking, it found him. A past enemy resurfaces, and a fight insures his being confronted by the police. Now racial profiling rears its ugly head, and the police feel that their badges give them the right to take away another's rights. My stomach was in knots to see the excessive force and brutality inflicted upon these young brothers. Racial slurs were used, but no one was



charged or read any rights. Wow, this was such a total disrespect and disregard of the law the cops have taken an oath to protect! Then the cowardly officer pulls out his gun and shoots Oscar in the back while he's handcuffed! He's lying there on the pavement of the train station still cuffed and waiting on help while bleeding to death. He's later transported to the hospital, where he dies. Tears just rolled down my face, and I yelled and screamed at the movie.

The officers involved in the incident were fired, which is great, but the charges of the killer cop were reduced from murder to manslaughter, a slap in the face. He only received a two-year sentence and served 11 months. That shows me that we have a judicial system that is just as unjust and unfair as the cops that violate rights and lives. This young man was unarmed and handcuffed, yet his killer received a sentence of less than a year in jail! I'm just glad this movie was made because there are many more cases similar to this that are never told. The light needs to be shined in the face of police brutality and the injustice upheld by the judicial systems. These senseless tragedies are only adding to the destruction of the minority family and home.

Additional Reflections on "Fruitvale Station"

By Robert James

I strongly urge everyone to see the movie "Fruitvale Station," a true story about Oscar Grant, because if you don't, you may never understand the dangers and consequences of being a black man in America.

"Americans suffer from an ignorance that is not only colossal but sacred," wrote James Baldwin. To protect and serve is the fallacy that all black men suffer; it has destroyed minds, lives, and families. It seems every so often that one murder of a black man or boy escapes the restraints of popular media coverage, and we as Americans are brought vis-à-vis with one of the legacies of white supremacy and slavery: the vilification of black men. The naiveté of most Americans leads them to think that since we have a mulatto president, black men are no longer being vilified, framed, and even murdered. Texas has confirmed this truth with regular executions of poor black males even as the "Innocence Project" continues to expose the inherent racism of the justice (just us) and prison systems. . . .

Nothing is safe, not even our black youth. I tell my 16-year-old son what no one ever told me: "Never assume you are perceived as anything other than a n...a!" Before anyone gets upset, ask yourself if Trayvon Martin realized that a hoodie only enhances the paranoia of racist LEGAL gun carriers, would his actions have been different? Failing to understand that some see all young black men as a danger can be a deadly mistake.



At least our country can learn from Trayvon Martin's murder. My concern today is about the countless other black deaths that occur every day that never make the news. Our struggle just to survive in a racist society is ALWAYS overlooked, even by our own.

SPORTS REVIEWS

Badger Game: Go Red Go!

By Charllienne Cotto



Early morning excitement hit me. Today is the day . . . December 28, 2013. I know where we were going all along, but my children thought we were going on campus just to check some stuff out.

As we got off the bus, we could see Red and White everywhere we looked! There was a ripple of excitement as we began the great walk to the Kohl Center. We were there to see the Mighty Badgers men's basketball team take on Prairie View A&M. As I handed our donated tickets to my children, the look on their face was awesome enough. As we entered and gave our tickets, we could hear the

sound of the crowd cheering. The game had begun.

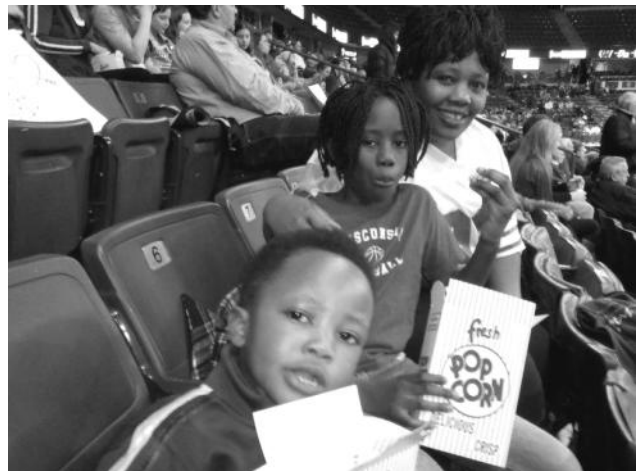
I can't tell you about all of the technicalities of the game, but I will state that we have an amazing group of talented young men whom I know will be getting drafted. My favorite players were Nigel Hayes, Sam Dekker, and Vitto Brown. I do believe they are a lot of Badger fans' favorite players. At one point Sam Dekker slam dunked a ball, and the crowd cheered and rose to their feet. We could see that the men's basketball team was on fire.

One of my favorite parts of the whole game was singing "Varsity." I truly enjoyed the together-ness of the event, and I am looking forward to attending many other games in the future. It was truly an amazing gift from the UW Foundation to my kids, and they enjoyed it very much.

A UW Women's Basketball Game

By Lucia Chikowero

For a cold day like Sunday, January 26, it was heartwarming to get out of the house, let alone be at a basketball game. We wouldn't have missed it for anything. From the day I brought home the tickets, I was constantly reminded by my daughter about the impending game. Game day it snowed, but it did not dampen her spirit; she was up bright and early ready to hit the road. She rushed up everybody so we wouldn't get late.



We went to the Kohl Center where UW-Madison

was taking on Michigan University in a women's basketball game. We were clad in red to show support for our team. Once we got there, my daughter just jumped into the spirit of the game, as basketball is one of her favorite sports. My little man just sat there soaking it all in as he takes a little while to warm up. Once in, he does not hold back anything, and that is what he eventually did. So we settled in and we enjoyed the game extensively, going back and forth with the play and cheering whenever we won a turnover or scored.

We enjoyed the fighting spirit the women exhibited in the first half, the music, and the cheerleaders. Best of all, my children loved Bucky. Everyone's favorite moment was when we appeared on the dance cam. The kids loved it, and they were dancing like nothing I have ever seen them do.

We were disappointed the UW team lost to Michigan. They fizzled out in the second half and gave up so many turnovers leading to their huge loss. Overall it was a good game and a good time out with my family. Since it was so cold outside, it was a blast for my kids as they burned off excess energy though dance.

BOOK REVIEW

Mockingjay

By Kunga Chokten

Mockingjay is the last book in the Hunger Games trilogy. The books are about a world where everyone is split into 12 districts plus the "Capitol," where everyone of importance lived. Each year two people were randomly chosen from each district to compete in what was known as "The Hunger Games." This was a competition where all of the selected people were put in a large jungle-like arena and battled until there was only one person left. This was done to make everyone appreciate life and also a way for the government to keep control over the districts and instill fear into the people. . . .

Throughout the series Katniss Everdene struggles with love, family, leading the revolution, and resisting the Capitol's attempt to control her and hold her family as a sort of collateral. This is a book with twists, mysteries, hopes, and struggles.

What I liked most about the series is that Katniss struggled with a lot of situations that people in the real world may face such as choosing between two people that love you and that you love as well. This book was so well written and thought out that I couldn't believe some of the twists that came about. I really enjoyed this series and would recommend it to anyone looking for a good read.



PAY IT FORWARD



Isis Gives Love and Comfort

"To pay it forward" means to go out of your way to bless someone less fortunate. It has been such a long time coming for my boyfriend's mother because she has been battling with her health. For a very long time, she hasn't

been able to walk or do anything on her own. It is very hard for her to be alone, but all of her children have their own families.

I knew that Christmas Day would be rather hard for her. After all of the gifts were opened and all of the food was cooked, we went over to her house with as much food as we could carry. We set up a nice meal for her. I then topped off the meal with a nice therapeutic massage and really helped her to relax.

At the end of the night, she said, "Now, that was the perfect gift." The best gift I could give was relaxation, love, and comfort.

(Isis Bernard)



LaPrice Cares for the Sick

"My grandma is sick today, Ms. LaPrice," Lil John (age 11) said when I called to wish Ms. Charlotte (age 67) Happy Holidays. "Would you like to speak to her?"

Ms. Charlotte said, "Hello. I'm not feeling so well today. The doctor said I have pneumonia."

"Can I bring you a few things?" I asked.

"Sure," she said.

I grabbed some seasonings from my kitchen

cabinets, and off to the grocery store I went to get a whole roasted chicken, carrots, celery, onion, garlic cloves, bouillon cubes, cream of chicken soup, some fruit, two gallons of orange juice, and some candy for Lil John.

I arrived at Ms. Charlotte's house about noon that day. I went to greet her, fixed some tea, and put the chicken on. She asked if I would help her get her things ready for a shower, and I did. While she was showering, I changed her bedding and did some light cleaning.

I returned to the kitchen to finish up the soup and make some hot water cornbread. Then Ms. Charlotte and Lil John were ready to eat. They both ate two bowls of soup. When Ms. Charlotte was done, she was ready for a good nap.

I put the soup in containers, cleaned the kitchen, and put some fruit and ice water next to her bed. I gave Lil John some instructions and my number, then his candy. Lil John thanked and praised me for the soup and candy. Ms. Charlotte was very grateful for the time and effort I bestowed on her. Now it was time for me to go.

I felt blessed all that day. I helped someone feel comfortable and worry free while helping her on the path of recovery. What a smile my heart was carrying. **(LaPrice Black)**



Jeannine Shares Decorating Joy

Over the holiday I donated my card-making supplies and papers to the residents at the apartments where I live. I donated my time on Tuesday nights to show them how to create their own personal Christmas cards to send to friends

and family.

It was a lot of fun since many of the residents have never done anything like this before. It was also great seeing the families come together to work on these cards.

I have a collection of stamps, dyes, cutters, punches, fancy papers, blank envelopes, stamp pads, markers, and fun stuff to work with that I have collected over the years. I so enjoyed sharing my things and knowledge of card making with my fellow residents. They are still talking about how much fun they had and asked when they can work on Valentine's cards. ☺ **(Jeannine Shoemaker)**



Charllienne Feeds Bellies and Souls

One of the best things about my vacation was the fact that I had time to spend on things that I haven't focused on for a while. I was blessed to be able to help coordinate a Breakfast Service at my church. The main focus was to bring in friends that didn't know Christ and to love them through fellowship, feeding their bellies and their souls.

I love making breakfast food, so this was so much fun. There was so much food, and we fed a whole lot of people. At the end, the purpose was met—souls were won for Christ's sake. **(Charllienne Cotto)**



Jackieta Gains a Family Member

My way of paying it forward this past month was by helping my brother-in-law, Robert Baker. Robert was recently incarcerated. Upon his release only a few days before Thanksgiving, Robert found himself without a place to stay.

Robert asked me and my boyfriend if he could stay just through Thanksgiving. While Robert was there that week, I sat and talked with him and watched his demeanor. Robert showed me some things that I've seen in myself: passion and drive to actually be looked at as regular in society again after making a mistake that has cost him many years of his life.

When Robert was about to leave to go to the nearest homeless shelter, I just couldn't let him. It wasn't sitting right in my heart. I've since then been helping Robert get things back in order in his life. He also helps me in return by cooking and cleaning. My kids have gained an uncle that they adore. I've gained a big brother that I've always wanted and also somebody to watch football and basketball with.

It sounds funny, but I really don't consider it paying it forward. I consider this gaining a new family member. **(Jackieta Fairley)**



Toshiana Discovers Family Power

The day was December 24, 2013. I decided to call my father and set up a date with him, something that I normally don't do. We cannot be together for too long; otherwise, we start to irritate each other.

My father, mother, and I went out to Denny's and ate breakfast together. Although there was a little bickering going on, I was able to look past it. . . .

When I got home, I noticed a card on my door. I took it off and read it. It was a card from DCFS saying that I need to call immediately. I called and the lady said, "There has been suspected allegations that you are abusing your son." I fell to my knees because it hurt me so bad.

She asked if she could come to my house right then and there to interview me, and I said yes. I called my mother and father and asked them if they were still together. They replied yes. I explained over the phone, and they came quickly. They sat in the house with me and supported me during my interview with the lady from DCFS.

This moment touched my heart because I felt like God fixed this day for us to get prepared for what would come next after a beautiful day of spending time together. This showed me that no matter how much my father and I don't get along, he always has that unconditional love for me and has my back.

After the interview was over, I went to get the kids. My mother and father stayed the rest of the day with us to help me and comfort me because I was so discouraged as a parent. I know I give my all. To know that someone thinks I'm abusing any of my children (when I am NOT) hurts my heart a lot.

A lot of the time in my life, I make big and good life-changing decisions for my children so that they can live happy and stress-free lives. I'm really happy that we had this assignment because it opened my eyes to treat my parents better than what I have. When all hell breaks loose, they are the ones by my side, encouraging me to stay strong. **(Toshiana Northington)**



Simone Works with Love and Care

... I spent my holiday vacation working double at work. This was my only way of managing money due to my other half being gone. But I really can't complain about my job. It is the one place I truly feel some appreciation, not because my family doesn't show me love but because the residents and their families remind me that my job does matter. They help me remember why I

became a CNA and why it is important to me to do my job with love and care. **(Simone Lawrence)**



Janet Displays Empathy and Skills

During the winter break while off duty, to pay it forward I utilized my nursing skills to assist my client's mother. I provided g-tubing and a bowel program as well as staying late and coming in early.

Working in the nursing field caring for a child who has a working mother is a challenge. To help her out, I worked every holiday including my birthday. When asked, I would come in early and leave late as well. I also would volunteer to come and g-tube the baby on my off days or during a shift I wasn't scheduled for, as well as handle the client's bowel program.

During some of my late nights off the clock, I would administer a bowel program to help prevent this client from having a bowel obstruction. Also during some of these shifts I would do oral feedings of baby food products to ensure that this client was able to receive the different textures of foods her mother was providing.

There are many things that pertain to the care of another. Having empathy along with compassion and skills, I was able to help my client's mother enjoy her holidays away from home. I provided a g-tube service, bowel program, and feedings to her daughter. If I had been unable, she would be stuck having to provide this care on her own when no one was scheduled to be there. **(Janet Shelton)**



Starr Plays Santa to her Mother

During the winter break I had an opportunity to visit with my family, which I love very much, and to spend more time helping my mother out. She unfortunately had her Samsung tablet stolen, and it

was very upsetting to her, so I rallied the family together. All my brothers and sisters pitched in money. With all their help, we were able to replace her tablet and get her a new Samsung III. She likes it very much and uses it on a daily basis. It felt good to see her happy! **(Starr Miles)**



Jaquan Gives Food to the Homeless

I ran into a couple of guys that I met a few times around Madison. I've known that they weren't doing so well, and I knew from previous conversations that they stayed at a shelter. I was at the bus stop, and we somehow got on the subject of family and Christmas. Long story short, I used some of my money and spent \$30 on food for them. I told them it could be my Christmas present for them. **(Jaquan Fleming)**



Derick Braves the Cold to See a Cousin

I thought long and hard about how I would pay it forward. So through Facebook I ran across one of favorite cousins, Christena. We were as Forest Gump said "like peas and carrots" growing up. Christena was a few months older than me, but when I got into trouble nine times out of ten she was in trouble with me. So I decided to take a trip to a place I've never been before. I love to travel, but finances and responsibilities kept me from traveling for pleasure these last six years.

It was very interesting from the time my charter bus left UW Madison. First off, the bus was late, and it was cold as an Eskimo's igloo. When we stopped in Mauston, WI to eat, the driver stated that we were stopping for a 30-

minute lunch break, which I feel was atrocious. Why would I say that? Well, if you've ever seen a Mega bus, you know it has two levels and is packed front to back, side to side, and top to bottom. Thirty minutes isn't enough time for all to order. So to make a long story short, the bus left a lady behind. Now the bad part: the lady left her four-year-old child on the bus. We were pulled over twice by police looking for the child.

After that unpleasant experience, we made it to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and it was as cold as meat with freezer burns. I got to my cousin's house, and it was like being at a high school reunion. We started reminiscing on all the things we did when we were young. We sat up laughing and asking about old classmates. Now I was scheduled to leave Minnesota on Monday, January 6, but all charter bus companies cancelled the trip until Friday. So that gave me plenty of time to really check out the sights. I saw the Mall of America, which was a blast. Most of all, I got a lot of much needed rest and relaxation. My visit to Minnesota was a blast with only one problem: it was just TOO COLD. I couldn't wait to get back to Madison.

(Derick McCray)



Michael Confronts a Bully

One day while I was on my way home from work, I could hear someone aggressively harassing riders on the bus. Young, old, male, or female—this bully did not discriminate. These rants were vulgar to women and became more disrespectful with every word.

My first thought was to mind my own business, but as the harassment progressed, I couldn't help but inquire what the fuss was all about. I moved my headphones away from my

ears and looked towards the back of the bus. That's where I observed a small, young high school boy being singled out and bullied by someone twice his size. The little guy was being insulted in front of his friends. At first, the kid spoke up for himself and displayed no sign of fear while his buddies were there. When the insults turned into threats of violence towards him, the young man's friends left him on the bus alone. Noticing his victim was by himself, the bully sat right next to the youngster.

After the bully's guaranteed threats of violence, I instinctively moved to the back and sat directly across from the bully. I noticed he was just a kid himself. I could see very clearly that the little kid was shaking in sheer trepidation. His tormentor sat down next to him and promised to beat him up as soon as he got off the bus. After hearing this, I couldn't help but to stare at the bully until he was solely focused on me, with my eyes fixed on him and his every move, purposely trying to agitate him. The bully said to me, "What's up? What's your deal?" I focused on his discomfort and continued to stare at him. The bully was now at the point of irritation and frustration. "What's this guy's problem?" he asked.

I replied while taking off my sunglasses so he could see my seriousness, "Your stupidity and ignorance are what's wrong with me, young man." Agitated with being the target of an insult, the bully said, "I'm not stupid." I questioned the bully, asking, "What's your major malfunction? You're a tough guy, huh? Why are you picking on people, and why were you threatening to beat up a kid half your size and height? Leave the kid alone. Go pick on someone your own size. You're nothing more than a bully, that's all." . . .

After he realized that he had grabbed the attention of all the passengers, some laughing, the cowardly bully exited. Then before I could

turn my music back on, I heard, "Thanks, man," from the young man being picked on. I said, "Don't mention it, young man. I admired the way you stood up for yourself. When people see you doing that, they will respect you for it, and some people will come to your aid." He said once again as he got off the bus, "Thank you very much, sir." I replied, "Any time!" (**Michael Martin**)



Nafisa Contemplates Compassion

On Sunday, January 13, I heard a sermon from my apostle, Erick Maiden, which truly touched my soul and made me really want change in my life. He started with the scripture from Matthew 15:32-39 talking about a

multitude following Jesus for three days. They had nothing to eat, and Jesus felt compassion for them and didn't want to send them away hungry. Those that followed Him (leaders, authority) wanted to send them away because they only had enough for them. Jesus told them to have the people sit and go see what food there was. They found seven loaves of bread and a few fish. Jesus blessed it, for he was thankful for what they had, and he told his leaders to give it out to the people! They fed 4,000 men besides the women and children. They gathered seven baskets filled with leftovers.

A light went off: I finally understood what this story meant.

We of today are always looking to take care of ourselves, leaving others in this wilderness alone, trying to make it with no real support, no real compassion to see somebody else make it. Then there is Emily and the people who work alongside her in the Odyssey Program. They are light to many of us who felt we were in a dark place where we could not see any light. They

gave us hope in our worth and showed us faith in action by believing we can be anything we choose. They are the substance many of us are hoping to be.

I now understand that if you bless others, God or whatever power you believe in will bless you!



Chris is a Good Samaritan

I did a good deed over the break. I was on my way to work out with my little sister at the SERF. I needed to get a workout in before the end of the day. I stopped by her house, and she came outside and jumped in the car. Before I could pull off, a big white pickup truck pulled up next to my car. The driver was an older man, and he looked very anxious, tired, and confused.

He told me in a desperate tone that his wife was in intensive care. She had got on an emergency helicopter from UW Hospital, which is located two hours away from where they originally lived. She was hunting and got in an accident.

He said he was driving around for two hours in Madison after driving for two hours to get to Madison from up north. Also he didn't know where to find UW Hospital. So I pulled up the directions on the GPS on my phone. I wrote down the street names and got out the car. I also explained to him where the streets were. I showed him a map as well, but he still looked confused. So he asked me if he could follow me for some cash. I told him to follow me.

When we got to the hospital, I waved him off and told him he didn't have to pay me. He stopped his car and told me how much it meant to him. He said he would never forget

me and said, "God bless you!" I felt good about doing something so little that was so big for someone else. **(Christopher Bester)**



Latrice Gives Gifts

To Pay It Forward, I gave people Christmas gifts. Giving to others really was a beautiful thing, and it brought me comfort to see the smile on a person's face.

What I did was go to Target, and anybody who knows me knows that Target is my favorite store. I got a jacket, three scarves, purses, socks, shirts, salt and pepper shakers, and a game off the clearance rack called "Whoop!" . . . Then I wrapped the items I got from the store and put them in bags. Most of the gifts were for some of my co-workers, and I put them on their chairs before they came into work that morning. They were so happy to receive them. I didn't put my name on them. . . . The socks were for my baby Dimia, who loves different kinds of socks. I got them right off the dollar rack, which is always a winner for her and me. . . . The salt and pepper shakers were for a friend who loves cat items for her collection.

My Christmas was very nice, and I had my girls together. That always brings a smile on my face. **(Latrice White)**



Amber Tries to Reach her Dad

During my break I attempted to call my father, whom I haven't talked to in over a year. My father and I never really had a good relationship. I met him at the age of five, and from then he never was a father to me. I felt at a later age I was the child he didn't really care for because of my mother's

attitude. He has two other children that have lived with him since birth. His relationship with them is the total opposite of ours. My relationship with his parents is the best. I can call on my grandparents for anything. Growing up, every weekend my mom would take me to their house to spend time with them. I used to cry, but I got over it fast. When I attempted to call my father on Christmas Day, I got no answer and no response at all. I was expecting that because that was usual. I let my grandmother know that I called and got no response, and she told me she would talk to him about it.

The more I think about my relationship to my father, the more I feel like I am the adult/ bigger person. No one should put their child in situations like my father has put me in. Every day I think about how things would be if we actually communicated and had that father/ daughter bond. (**Amber McCarley**)



Vanessa Reunites with an In-Law

Family is something more than just a word or a scientific term that describes a biological connection between individuals. It is a powerful feeling of love that connects one to another.

Being away from my family in Brazil is very hard, especially because I am raising my own children and would like to have my family members' guidance and love to be passed on to my little ones. Holidays are usually the hardest time of the year for me. During this time it is hard to see families preparing for their holiday dinner and think that all my family will be together without me. . . .

This holiday season, my sister-in-law's family and mine were finally able to be reunited after not speaking to each other for over a year. My sister-in-law and I have always had a great relationship despite our differences and disagreements. We share a lot of values in common in our culture as well as our personal family values. We always respect each other, share, and enjoy our times together as a big family. My sister-in-law is the closest family my husband has here in the United States. . . .

As a family, we do our best to always get along, but there are times where our differences play a major role. There have been moments where my sister-in-law and I have stopped speaking to each other. I have to admit that one of those times I was the one who made that decision. . . .

The longest period of time my sister-in-law and I had ever been without speaking to each other was three months; however, that changed when over a year ago she stopped talking to me for an unknown reason. . . . It had been more than a year that we had not spoken to each other. Our children would only see each other on their way to school because they ride the same school bus.

One very cold evening, my kids and I were standing by the bus stop headed towards the grocery store. My sister-in-law happened to drive by and stopped to offer us a ride; we accepted it. Since that day, we have been talking, and we have had family meal times and play times together. . . .

I feel very happy, and I can see the immense feeling of joy that my husband feels because our families are reunited again. . . . I pray to God to bless our families and keep us together at times of hardships and differences.

CREATIVE CORNER

The Courage to Write

By Lucia Chikowero

It takes courage to write when you have never written before.
It takes courage to write when you have always thought
you do not have anything to say.
It takes courage to write.

Venturing into those uncharted waters within you takes courage.
Drawing every ounce of strength within and without
to overcome fear of rejection takes courage.
It takes courage to write.

Putting together word after word to mean something
so dear to you takes courage.
Writing and expressing yourself
so the next person can understand you takes courage.
It takes courage to write.

Writing again when you have been told
that you suck at it takes courage.
Dusting yourself up and picking up
that mighty pen and paper takes courage.
It takes courage to write.

Writing again when you have been knocked out flat
by naysayers on countless occasions takes courage.
Writing again when you have been told
you do not make any sense takes courage.
It takes courage to write.



Night Sky

By Tracker Dunn

Blackness spreading above so high
Darkness deep as infinity
It slips into me
Will I lose myself in the onyx sway
Or will I find a blazing sphere
The life-giving warmth a lifetime away
That life that is so dear
I shall not become lost in the night
For the Sun is coming, redemption so bright

Our Song**By Lucia Chikowero**

I got the inspiration for this poem from what is going on currently in South Africa. From the time of the announcement of Nelson Mandela's death, people have been singing and dancing. I looked at that and also at my admiration of Dr. Maya Angelou's work, and everything just started pouring out. I really thank Odyssey for the foundation it has laid in me.

A song is like a story.
You do not tell a story unless you have something to say.
A song is a story; you sing when you have a story to tell.
Where I come from
We sing when we are happy,
We sing when we are sad,
We also sing while working.
We sing because we have a story to tell.

Where I come from
We sing when a baby is born,
Welcoming them to the blessings and trials of this life.
We sing to soothe our babies from the aches and pains of this world.
We sing to soothe the babies from the stinging heat and salt of tears.
We sing to bond with our children.
We sing to our children so they may know our wishes.
We sing because we have a story to tell.

Where I come from
We sing to visitors who have travelled from lands afar,
Welcoming them, inviting them to lay their burdens down;
We sing so they can feel safe and welcome if they are bearers of good tidings.
We sing so we can show them that we too are bearers of good tidings.
We sing even if they are not bearers of good tidings.
We have a war cry, we have a song.
We sing because we have a story to tell.

Where I come from
We sing when faced with challenges.
We sing when the clouds refuse to yield their tears.
We sing too when the heavens' bounteous tears threaten disaster.
We sing because music gives us strength and rejuvenates us.
We sing to calm ourselves down.
We sing to urge our young ones to fight on.



We sing to remind the young
That a battle lost is a battle for tomorrow.
We sing to rally behind a cause.
We sing because we have a story to tell.

Where I come from
We sing when one of our own gets married.
We sing because we have a new daughter added to the family.
We sing because we have a new son added to the family.
We sing because we have a story to tell.

Where I come from
We sing when we are sad.
We sing when one of our own has gone to lands unknown.
We sing when one of our own goes to that place, land of the ancestors,
That place where no-one has yet returned.
We sing so their spirits may find peace.
We sing that our forefathers may take them into their fold.
We sing so we may find comfort.
We sing because we have a story to tell.



BECOMING A METAPHOR

I am a piece of thread in the fabric of the universe
 Moved from one place to another by the sharp
 needle of life
 While leaving stitches
 Although some stitching may be flawed
 I am making my mark
 I'm not finished
(Nyagosa Hoth)

I am a weeping willow, leaning over
 and carrying the weight of the world on my back.
 I'm told that I have a caring soul,
 but all I do is cry.

I cry because there are loved ones with
 no cure for what is taking them away from me.

I cry because there is a 30-year-old child of mine
 taken over by the "H" in the streets
 who no longer feels my pain or even sees my tears.

My branches can only bend so far and may SNAP
 because I am older now and cannot bear the weight
 of the sorrow that has been given to me.
(Jeannine Shoemaker)



I am a bass line
 Bumping through the speakers.
 I am the rhythm, the symphony,
 The accompaniment,
 The entendres, the hyperboles,
 The metaphors, the word play.
 Hip-hop, rap,
 Rock and roll, country, or
 Underground.
 Don't fight it,
 Don't knock it,
 I come through time after time.
 Don't cry, don't yell,
 Just drop that bass line.
(Shiquille Ward)

I am an ocean calm and quiet
 yet wild and mysteriously free
 I am an ocean that glimmers with the sun
 and glows with the moon equally
 Beautiful at first sight
 with the right strength of the wind
 My mood can change
 like the birth of a nice wave coming in
 I am an ocean with the same type of mystery
 when looking at me regardless if
 you're riding the wave or just standing there
 gazing at my beauty.
 Either way you're still trying to figure me out . . .
 The wonders of the ocean keep you interested
 in what lies even deeper beneath
 Within me I am an ocean.
(Janet Shelton)

I am a matriarch
 My nature is to nurture
 The milk from my breasts
 Nursed the mouths
 Of my babes
 My belly beautifully bears

The scars of the tribal “Levi”
And the eagle’s “Talan”

I am a warrior
Performing my warrior
Dance to the sound of their
Djembe and kamala ngoni
By the warmth of our fire
We celebrate our rebellion
Against oppression, leading my tribe
To liberation and cultivation
Of mind and spirit, in charge

I am the Queen
When I speak, men listen.
(Jamie Hanson)

I am a glass of Merlot wine,
smooth and rounded.
It’s easy to drink my personality.

A Merlot grape, my presence is darker and
easily noticed in comparison to other grapes.
My skin is thicker and I like to think
I’m tougher than the average grape.

A Merlot grape, I’m often used to boost
or hold flavors of other wines together.
As I see it, I’m the grape holding together
a household as a single parent.

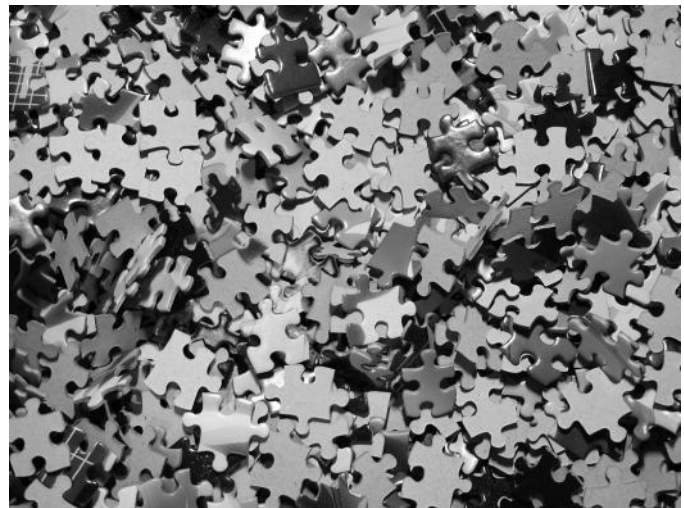
A Merlot grape, I’m maturing gracefully
into this smooth, bold, richly flavored
glass of Merlot wine.
(Alisha Taylor)



I am a raindrop,
The tears from heaven.
Small but powerful,
Keeping my soul at peace.
The refreshing shower from earth,
Wishing to never be hurt.
I am a raindrop, striving
To be as happy as can be!
(Amber McCarley)

I am a painting, a work of art,
a painting that has many colors,
surrounded by grays, blues, and blacks
that overcast a beautifully bright center.

I am a jigsaw puzzle.
I have many pieces big and small,
and no matter how complicated it
may appear, they all fit together
to form a beautiful picture bright and clear.
(Charlienne Cotto)



I am a navigation system
that has many miles and road blocks
to cross before I reach my destination.
The one thing about my system is I’m determined,
no matter what, to get to my destination.

I have a career I’m going to reach
Through being a single parent, family issues,

Lack of sleep, overworked, with no me time.
As I reroute my life/system, my destination is
still the same, just taking different roads.

It's time to go around them road blocks,
avoid traffic, so I can have a straight shot
to my destination.

(Mallory Carter)



I am a wave on the ocean
Calm and steady flowing back and forth
As the moon shines on my surface
As the pressure builds from the storm ahead
As the waves thrash and roll over each other
Like a storm blowing fast **(Jaquan Fleming)**

I am a locomotive.
I am slow to start,
but as my engine (mind) picks up speed,
it's hard for me to stop.
My locomotive mind races with all types of ideas,
races so fast that the ideas
get congested and bottled together.
I am a locomotive,
strong and durable to last throughout the end.
I am a locomotive,
headstrong to get to my destination.
(Derick McCray)

I am an alien
considered to be a hideous, monstrous,
inconsiderate fiend.
Truth is, my shape is of a human being,
although my true identity is rarely shown or seen.
You may have elation if you think you know me
in this formation, but you'd be greatly mistaken.
My presence here is nothing more than a façade,
a judgmental image for your perceptual collage,
a mere meek mirage.
I am an alien without a doubt,
most likely to be uncategorized,
but frequently misunderstood,
and that fact cannot be fought.
My journey through this vast universe
has been compelling,
I only wish to occupy a peaceful, loving place,
somewhere that's intellectually challenging,
so that I can thrive,
as an evolving sentient being.
(Michael Martin)

I am an onion
With every layer that you see,
there is another one underneath it.
I am not just one thing.
With every layer you peel,
you get to see another one. **(Kunga Chokten)**





