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ODYSSEY ORACLE

I LOVE...



In this Oracle . . .

I Love	3
I Have a Dream.....	9
Letters to	
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.	14
Alumni Profile	
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I LOVE ...



I love Odyssey because it's like my dessert, ready to dig in to learn new things every Wednesday night.

Odyssey is my second family, and it has showed me so much. Since I have been in the class, it has showed me that I don't always have to be afraid to read out loud because my classmates will help me out a little with the words I stumble across. My

classmates and teachers really have lifted me up a lot. The Odyssey program has changed me so much since I have been in it. It has made me want to go back to school and has me saying to myself, "Jalisa, you can do it. It will be a long journey for you, but you can do whatever you put your mind to." I love Odyssey because when you come through the doors, you see everyone smiling, laughing and talking. Odyssey is a loving family, and that is why I love Odyssey. **(Jalisa Galvin)**

I love the way my two boys look lovingly into my eyes, planting wet kisses all over my face, right before they ask me for what they want.

"Ooooooh, Mommyyyyyy." I play along and drop the "NO" bomb. Their shoulders slump,

no more sweet kisses; the looks are now sad, and they say, "You meanie Mom. I'm not your friend." Ooooooh, how I love playing both the good guy and the bad guy! What do they know about "not being someone's friend"? I don't care. I'm your mother first before I am "your friend."

My babies don't stay angry for long, though! I am madly in love with their willingness and quickness to forgive and forget. Secretly, I know they'll come at me from different angles. I ALWAYS give in!

(Jelissa Williams)

I love eyes that truly look at you when you expose



your biggest flaws. There are eyes that only look at the surface, your appearance. But there are eyes that want to dig deep and find out about your

biggest fears, what comforts you, and what makes you laugh. Sometimes those very eyes that are glistening and marveling become part of your interior. These eyes unfold, refold, expand, and undress your flaws and perfections. It makes you wonder why you cannot look at yourself this way. There are some evenings when the sun is warm enough and you realize that you, too, have the ability to marvel at your inner beauty. **(Karina Herrejon)**





I love walking down the boardwalk, the salty mist in the air and the cool breeze on my cheeks. I hear the faint sound of palm tree leaves rubbing

against one another in the wind while the hot sand squishes between my toes. As the sun beats down, radiating my skin, the cool vibrant smell of Coppertone masks the sweat rising out of my pores while simultaneously scorching my skin to a Brazilian brown.

The temporary shade the clouds provide is a necessary relief from the sun throughout the day. The seagulls squawk and the waves crash against the pier, one of the most comforting echoes. Fresh cut limes and a cooler of ice cold Coronas join me in the hot sand. I walk down the shoreline, searching for the beach's smallest treasures: mermaid glass and shark teeth. The tide covers my feet with every wave. As I look out into the horizon, there's an ocean which seems endless, where other life thrives. The dolphins skim the top of the water, showing their presence.

Finally the pink and fiery orange sunset reflects off the ocean top; the ultimate relaxation at its finest, encompassing my entire being. – Florida Girl (**Ashley Wills**)

I love my daddy. I loved my daddy to the moon and back—a love with every ounce of my soul. That man not only misused and abused me, but he led me into believing that he cared. Not only did I relieve my secrets to him, but he was the only friend I had.



C.T., my father, had already abandoned me once, put me up for adoption, and moved out of the state. For eight years, my love never faded. I reached out, out of love and fear for losing him without saying goodbye.

I love how hateful my daddy is, how he betrayed me and left me alone, again. I love how emotionless he has left me – hell. (**Tasha Thompson**)

I love taking a nap during some time of the day, preferably in the afternoons.

I have been a lover of naps ever since I can remember.

Please do not misinterpret my love for naps as laziness. Naps work wonders for me; they fulfill the energy and mood boost I sometimes need, or they can serve as a therapy/type of relaxation for when I just need a break.



However, there are mainly two different types of naps for me nowadays. One is an energy booster, so I can recharge my battery and be ready to go again. And then there is the “I need to get caught up with my sleep” nap.

I love the feeling of waking up refreshed and well rested. I look forward to the weekends with a nap in mind. I love to cuddle with my little one and enjoy naptime together. I am not sure who needs the nap more, him or myself. But when he squirms himself into my arms and lays his head to rest, I reminisce on the moments when he was a baby and would only find comfort in my arms.

So as you can see, I have more than enough reasons to love my naps. (**Marisela Tellez**)

I love to spend my free time playing with my make-up and make-up brushes, creating new make-up looks, doing my hair in different hair-do's and doing my nails using all kinds of different colors and shades. I enjoy doing this because it helps me to relax, and it's a hobby that keeps my mind entertained. It is also a job that I love to do.

I love to drink hot or cold tea. It could be any flavor with any season; there's always the perfect time for nice cup of tea. Tea for me is like coffee for other people. Tea is also so refreshing and calming. **(Karina Gómez)**



gentle sleep often preys on my weakness to stay awake and is much more powerful than any bedtime story around.

Tonight, the purple power is packed with a positively potent punch. Wrap your devious arms around me, because tonight and every night, I can't find a more secure place I'd rather be than my blanket-monster. **(Kelly Dixon)**

I love shooting a soccer ball. When I shoot it, it's like a tank shooting it. When I am mad, I get my anger out on the ball; shooting it is like getting madness away. I never liked to be a goalie because the madness might come back. **(Mustafa Mohammed Saed)**



I love my purple monster. After a long day of dealing with eyebrow-raising and patience-inducing rivals, it calls my name as soon as I turn the key of my front door lock and enter my house. After I have prepared and eaten my dinner and gotten myself ready to relax before bed, my purple monster often seduces me by wrapping its super soft king-sized layers of warmth around my neck, all the way down to the tips of my toes.

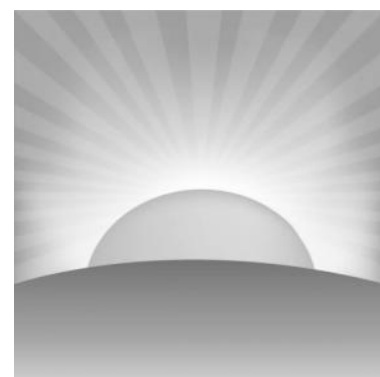
Most nights I reluctantly succumb to this electromagnetic pull of force, but I know better than to start something I can't finish in the evening. My monster's strength to put me in a





I love late nights and early mornings. I find that it is in those quiet hours of late nights and early mornings – they tend to blur after awhile – that I have been most able to find out what I really think and pray so I can figure out what God thinks...without noisy distractions that always come with the sunrise.

I used to be so afraid of the night. I wonder if my continual search for the perfect sleep aid that would take me to oblivion instead of my hidden dreams was the crack that addiction found? Hmmm...



I love who made my heart pulsate for love. I love who made me say “I love you” and understand what these words mean. He is my soul mate, named Musab. I wrote “I love you” up on the clouds. I narrated my love story to the birds and to the trees. I carved “I love you” above the water. I love you because you are my heart’s owner. My heart is grave because you are the only one inside my heart. Even when you are not there, my eyes can still see you. You are the air that I always breathe in. You are the delight in my life. I can’t imagine my life without you. **(Shaimaa Ahmed)**

I no longer fear those long sleepless nights. Oh no – I have actually learned to look forward to them because I finally discovered what was really waiting for me there. It’s in those wee hours that bridge my days that my new friends, Peace and Clarity and Insight and Courage, Acceptance, Purpose, Inspiration, and Freedom, wait for me!

I love the beating of my heart when people tell me, “I love you.” Love is a very meaningful word. With love, I can have the power to be happy. With love, I can feel that I belong to this world. Love is not one thing; love is for parents, children, countries, neighbors, God, and so on. The good thing about love is that it is free, like a roar of a lion in his kingdom. Love cannot be bought or sold. Love is life’s greatest blessing. Without love I would be lost. **(Umaima Mohammed Saed)**



Unless you have gone alone into the dark to find and face what was waiting there, I know this sounds quite insane. As I slowly got to know my new friends, they helped me get strong enough to face those “others” that can and do wait for me there as well – Shame, Guilt, Fear, Hate, Indifference, Heartache, and the dreaded *shiver* INSANITY (evil bitches!) and bravely send them running to the far corners of the night...yeah – good times!

Yes, those magical hours of late nights and early mornings...that is where I most often find exactly what I need for when the sun comes up, so I can face all those arrogant, scary things that go “bump” in the light...**(Lisa Partee)**



I love just the mere thought of decision-making. I love the fact that I could decide right now to relocate to just about anywhere I choose. I love the simple idea of choosing my favorite color, person, TV show, song, or movie. I love

that I can take an idea or my imagination and grow it into reality. I love all the opportunities of growth, be it self-education or from teaching others. I love options and our perceived freedom. (**Tory Latham**)

I love sitting outside during a thunderstorm. I enjoy watching the clouds' white beauty consumed into gray and bitter darkness. The shapes tend to look like feared gods and demon



creatures. I love how warm the earth tends to feel and to see the weather become foggy. It is rather comforting to me. My soul tends to feel this indescribable happiness and peace. My mind goes into this stage of cloudiness then nothingness. For me, that is something that I seem to crave these days.

Then reality hits me as the raindrops hit me. I open my eyes. As the earth is being cleaned and washed away, so is my anger, sadness, and heartache. I can think in a more calming and peaceful manner and that is all that matters to me at that

moment. I can really feel; I can feel some sort of happiness even if the rain only lasts for a while. (**Kala Taylor**)

I love swinging on the trees near to the fields where my father used to grow carrots, onions, and cilantro in Michoacán,



Mexico. I remember the smell of the cilantro and the fresh soil when my dad was irrigating his fields. I used to bring lunch for my dad and siblings. The

basket full of food, usually tamales and homemade tortillas, was covered with a cloth that we later used to place the delicious food on. I love this place because it is very welcoming with all types of birds singing in the sky, and many different varieties of beautiful flowers. (**Guadalupe Tinajero**)

I love listening to the different views on the stories we read. I love it because there's not always one answer to a question, and listening to other people's takes is interesting and enlightening. You learn so much. Even if you don't agree, it broadens your mind and way of thinking. (**Steven Jones**)





I love riding you shotgun, with the music in my ear and the wind in my hair. You take me to limits that change from zone to zone. I push your pedals to the extreme, and you let me without humming a sound. I love you, my love, because you carry me through any storm. You, my love, take me to places that others tell me are not possible. You, my love, are part of the reason I can do better and will do greater with no question. On days when I doubt you, you always come through. You are my darling; you never leave me out in the cold for too long. With the necessary upkeep, you and I will explore many more exciting journeys. I love you, my Buick Rendezvous. (**Rosalyn Richmond**)

I love Africa like a mother. That's what she is to me. When I was a young child in elementary school, I dealt with really harsh and often cruel teasing. When my peers mocked me, they would express disgust when they called me "African," saying I was one of the hungry children on the TV ads for charity.

It pained me deeply because the children were from my neighborhood and had skin with brown tones. I grew to hate my dark complexion, my thin build, and my short hair. My mind had suffered injuries that left no sense of self-esteem or value, and I felt isolated.

I dreamt and fantasized that Africa was a place for people who looked like me. Surely, the people there were kinder and thoughtful. I didn't know anything about African places, food, songs, or ways of life other than how TV portrayed jungle wildlife or famine.

I was like an orphan who uses her imagination to answer questions about what her birth mother must be like – how she dresses, what her laughter sounds like, and if she misses me, too. As I grew older, I started to realize that my features made me somewhat unique. I experimented with fabrics and began to fashion my clothes to resemble African styles on purpose. Slowly, but surely, I played with the idea that I wasn't hideously ugly after all. The word "Black" didn't feel like profanity anymore, and I decided I would try to be beautiful, just like the girls with lighter skin, pretty hair, and nice clothes.

I looked to mama Africa, not across an ocean but inside my chest, and found a confidence that made me stronger than I had ever been. Without family or friends, I told myself to be the African is a compliment, so I learned about tribes, languages, dances, and rich heritage.

I love Africa like a mother. That's what she is to me. (**Tamara Thompson Moore**)



I HAVE A DREAM



I have a dream that college can be affordable for everyone. People can honestly go into the career field they choose and not spend the rest of their lives paying off school loans. Voting for the right people in control

will help. All this nonsense spending needs to stop. If we can give three people 1.5 billion dollars for a lottery ticket, we can offer more funding for school. **(Kala Taylor)**



I have a dream that I will awaken from my closed eyes and dry streaks of my saliva and clouded vision of perfect living. All the children in America who are in foster care will have a loving and caring home with

warm beds, full stomachs, minds filled with dreams, and eyes golden with faith. I dream that no child be left alone, no child will feel pain, hurt or disappointment. **(Brandice Hatcher)**



I have a dream to see everyone have an equal life. I have a dream to see kids go to school. I have a dream to see all of the Arab countries safe and without war. It is hard to imagine my dreams happening

one day, but it is not impossible. If we change the hearts of bad people to love one another, then we will live in peace. I want to choose a career that is going to help me make my dreams come true. I am thinking after I save money I will go to all the poor countries and help the refugee kids become educated.

(Umaima Mohammed Saed)



I have a dream that the world will change—that people will help each other and that we all can be like a family. I dream of a day where injustice will end, where countries will not have borders, and where each of us

can visit and enjoy any country if we like. I dream of the day that we stop discrimination, the day when skin color and language won't be a reason to prevent people from enjoying a beautiful life. I dream of the day when children have all the care they need.

(Guadalupe Tinajero)



I have a dream that all men and women will walk as equal human beings. I wish that there were no gender, sex, race, and religion within us. I shall not stand to have any more injustice towards transgender

people. We need to not have starving kids and elders! I would love to see this whole planet unite because we all are equals, no matter what or who gave birth to us. In the end, we need each other since we can't be all alone. My dream is for love, unity, and justice for all!

(Luna Santos)



I have a dream that if we raised the minimum wage, we as a people wouldn't have to work two and three jobs just to live/survive. We all could work less and live more, follow dreams more. We would do more and dream more.

Lots of problems in our society would be on the right path to being solved.

(Steven Jones)



I have a dream that one day I could be a part of facilitating a movement that would challenge our modern day churches and what “Christianity” means. I dream of a group of radical women

that are quite comfortable confronting and challenging authority. I will call us “The Daughters of Joan.” (**Lisa Partee**)



I have a dream that education will be easily obtained by all, not just the wealthy or well to do. I feel that school now is a privilege and only for the intelligent. Programs and classes are meant to weed out

the unworthy. It is very competitive and astronomically expensive. It is set up for failure. I have a dream that my children will not face the same difficulties as I did and that the entire system will change in favor of the less fortunate. To get us there I will start by voting for a candidate for president that expresses passion for this particular topic. I believe this is an obtainable feat and can be done in the near future. (**Ashley Wills**)



I have a dream to see the world in peace with no more war around the world. I hope everybody gets enough food. I do not want to see any more hungry children or people. Also my big dream is for everybody

to get an education and for all kids to go to school. I do not want to see anyone sick or in pain, so I want to be a nurse to help people recover fast and teach them how to take care of themselves. At least this is what I can do for the world so far. (**Shaimaa Ahmed**)



I have a dream that the homeless and helpless are given more resources! There is no reason why we have money to build new buildings and reconstruct new roads, when we have homeless

individuals who need a place to call home. We have not enough resources to fund a security deposit or first month’s rent but enough to pay workers to construct unnecessary bridges/roads. No way in hell! No way! Makes no damn sense! This world has messed up priorities. The government is for self, though! I have this dream that I pray becomes a reality. For now, it’ll remain a dream. (**Jelissa Williams**)



I have a dream that people do not have to choose between buying food versus daily medication. Having a society where we can survive versus worrying ourselves to an early grave would be a better place

for all. Getting there will be a challenge. but mandating that no one should go hungry, giving more community gardens a chance, and opening the spectrum to reduce hunger in our country could be a possibility. (**Kelly Dixon**)



I have a dream that one day there will be a cure for cancer. Men, women, old or young, will not die in pain, and there won’t be anyone dying at a young age. We will at some point die, of course, but it will not be

from cancer. We will not be hooked up to machines, trying to get air into our lungs, nor will there be any chemotherapy! There will be no pain in the bones due to cancer. There will be no more innocent babies and children

dying from a disease for no reason. No one will be dying! I have a dream that our bodies will be free of cancer and the radiation treatments!

(Tasha Thompson)



I have a dream that one day my fellow race mates will realize that we/they are the only ones in control of our/their destinies. One day we, as the bottom feeders, will rise and take accountability for the

allowance of their blissful ignorance. One day we as the people will become open and accepting of the idea that we may all be a people of financial stability and success, functioning on/in an even playing field.

(Nickitia Cooper)



I have a dream that Iraq will be safer than before. I have a dream that we all will be treated equally. We feel more connected to people that are like us and we treat them better. To end that, we need to

end it in ourselves first so that the dream can come true. I have a dream that my dreams and everyone else's dreams will come true. But we also need to wake up so our dreams can happen. **(Mustafa Mohammed Saed)**



I have a dream that one day crime will stop. Shootings and killings will stop, and you will not hear that someone was killed. **(Jalisa Galvin)**

I have a dream that there will be no barriers for people who want to come to this country to work and succeed. Out there are a lot of people who only want an opportunity to



demonstrate that they can do good for the country. I have a dream that there can be an opportunity for the young people who want to continue with education (free education). **(Karina Gomez)**



I have a dream that one day African Americans will be treated equal and not shot dead by police officers for no reason, while nothing is being done about it. I have a dream that we will have a voice that is

listened to and understood and that we will be accepted by our counterparts. We have a lot to give. **(Arkeshia Bridges Sallay)**



I have a dream that one day abortions will be illegal. Every child has a purpose. It is meant for any child that is conceived to be delivered. I have a dream that one day this dream will be a reality. We can get there by

making it against the law, not that laws aren't broken. This leaves me just HOPING. Nothing comes to a dreamer but a dream.

(Bettye Emmanuel)



I have a dream that one day we can be at peace among one another, hugging and loving our neighbors no matter the skin color, witnessing the love and respect being passed on from one generation to another and seeing justice being served

without hesitation. But first we must order the laws at hand and make sure we all follow them no matter the man. A badge is not enough to pardon an innocent life that might

be taken by a deadly surprise. (**Marisela Tellez-Giron**)



I have a dream that food grown and mass produced all over the world will only be produced by the finest quality and most organic methods. No one is to be cheated by consuming genetically engineered foods with injected growth

hormones. Everything consumed is to be trusted that it will benefit our health and elongate the average human life span. (**Mai Neng Thao**)



I have a dream to succeed and conquer failure one day at a time. I will make it and prosper through God and belief in myself. I want the people to be united in power, success, education, and liberty. I wish a

lot of things will change in our society. A dream starts with our selves – you, me, she, he, all of us. Make a difference and take a stance. Remember it is just a dream, but reality is not far away. Let the people strive! (**Jayvonna Flemming**)



I have a dream to become one of the most famous models. I have a dream to finish school with my bachelor's and then a medical degree (doctor). I have a dream to raise my daughter the best way I can, so that she

can progress and achieve her goals. I have a dream to NEVER give up even when I am at my lowest, and to always remember I am a woman with a little girl that is looking up to me. I have a dream to make sure my daughter graduates from high school with a GPA over

3.5 and gets accepted into a nice and huge university. I have a dream that her FATHER will come home soon and be the best he can be to his daughter and me. I have a dream that one day I will have my full family back together as one. My dreams are big to me and not only big but also goals I am trying to accomplish as my future continues. They say eventually you will get your dreams that you wished for, and I believe my dreams will come true. (**Katia Robinson**)



I have a dream that the moral hypocrisy of this world will be exposed and subsequently cease to exist. We assign gender roles to children, sexualize them, prey on them, and discard them. Once they

are trapped in a self-destructive cycle, we blame them for their current state in life. The “moral” authorities preach against that which it injects into defenseless children, indoctrinates them, and convinces them that there is some sort of honor in suffering and to forgive their abusers.

Child abuse and child sexual crimes are some of the most egregious and heinous acts mankind has the shame to admit to committing, though it is in a hidden, muted whisper. Shame on us all for not screaming at the top of our lungs every time a child is forced into sex trafficking, labor, exploited, manipulated, raped, molested, or murdered.

We ought to be a better society. I have a dream that one day we will not live in a hyper sexualized culture. I have a dream that little children of any gender can be free and respected as individuals. (**Tamara Thompson Moore**)



I have a dream that life could be better for children and women who are abused. I was a child of abuse and dreamed of freedom from pain. As I see stories of children being beat and sold into sex trades, it hardens my heart as it does when people are being judged for being gay. People should be loved at any cost. I have a dream that the world will start to embrace change with an open heart. I have a dream that my son will be able to walk with the "pride" he was born with. **(Rosalyn Richmond)**



I have a dream that the people of African descent will learn and accept their place in this world. We will know and understand we are not all the negative things that are forced upon us. **(Tory Latham)**

I have a dream that one day all cancers will have a cure.

I have a dream that one day education will not cost more than 10000 dollars, in order to help people have a brighter future.

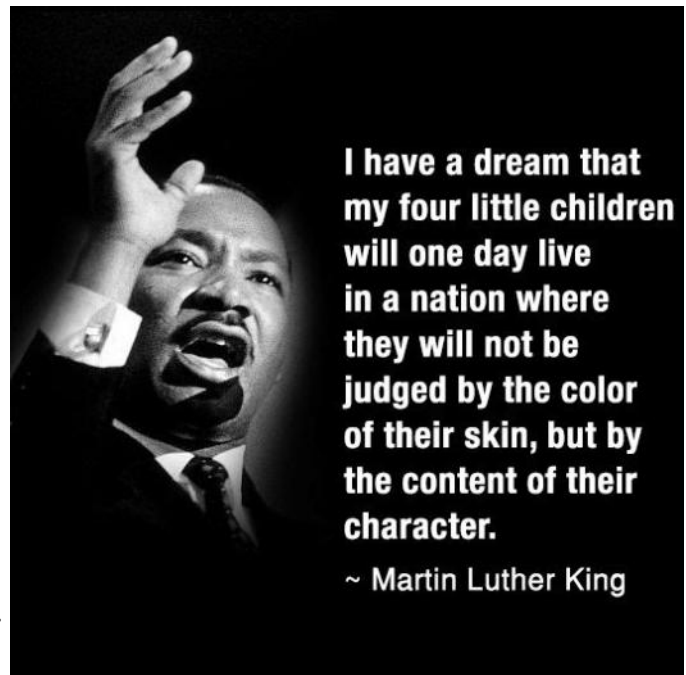
I have a dream that everyone in the world was given \$500k for an opportunity to change their lives with that money, for the better.

I have a dream that one day we will have another black president.

I have a dream that all people in prison for not guilty crimes were set free in order to be with their families and live life instead of sitting behind bars under false accusations.

I have a dream that one day the war on race will forever be over.
(Joe Young)

I have a dream...
I wish we were birds
Not bound to land
Not bound to anything at all
Able to fly to our homes
To care for our children
To care for our old and beautiful souls
Free to live on all lands
Eat just enough to feel content
My people would be free
Free from micro-aggression
Free from fear
Free from separation of families
Free to speak
Free to be birds. **(Karina Herrejon)**



LETTERS TO DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

AFTER READING "LETTER FROM A BIRMINGHAM JAIL"

Dear Dr. King,

I agree with you that the "oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever." Yes, I am not a black woman and I have not lived the way you did. Yes, I have not been in the prison. But I can feel every word you said.

I can feel what racism means to you, especially these days because most of the American people think that Muslim people are terrorists. This is not only in America but in the whole world. I believe that "you never know what others feel until you are in their situation." Being racially discriminated against by others is a really bad feeling. The other day when I was waiting for the bus, one guy came up to me to tell me, "You must be from out of this country because you are terrorists." I did not answer him, and I went inside the bus with a broken heart because I am a very weak person. But, after reading your letter, I promised myself that I will talk about my rights, and I will show others the truth of Islam. . . .

I agree with you that "we will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people." The bad people are using the word Islam to kill others. They think that they are doing good things, but the truth is that what they are doing is far from Islam. I hope one day the whole world understands that our fingers are not the same. *[This refers to a Persian expression 'All fingers are not the same,' meaning that each of our five fingers in one hand has a*

different size, shape, and orientation; each is unique.]

There are a lot of good people around us, but they feel scared to talk about their rights. When I read your letter, I found that silence is never a solution. Do you think if we make a movement about Muslims' rights it would help? (**Umaima Mohammed Saed**)

Dear Dr. King,

"We realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Anyone who lives in the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country." I can feel the pain, the distress, even the enlightenment you felt writing this powerful and effective letter after being arrested in downtown Birmingham on Good Friday. I do agree with you, Reverend King, as well as Socrates, when it is stated that "it is necessary to create tension to the mind so that all can rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths." Not only is it important to wake up the people, but those with power as well.

While you are held in a solitarily confined cell, charged with multiple criticisms, the clergymen are saying that the Negro community should be more patient and wait for society to move gradually towards civil rights. You then point out that the oppressor never voluntarily gives freedom. Why should we continue to live among unjust laws? We want our God given rights! The anger and the rage that I feel for you, Reverend King, is as if I were there in the moment standing by you



when they handcuffed you for not having a parade permit. The context of this letter is very vivid, and your tone is persuasive.

Last year alone, young black men were nine times more likely than other Americans to be killed by police officers. There were an estimated 1,134 deaths at the hands of law enforcement officers that year. Frank Shephard was killed on live TV. The 41-year-old barber sped away from a routine traffic stop in April leading the police on a high-speed chase that was covered live by local TV stations. News helicopters hovered over Shephard's blue Chrysler 300 as it veered along the streets of Houston, crashing into two cars before rolling to a stop in oncoming traffic. Shephard then stepped out of the vehicle. As Shephard reached back into the Chrysler, two officers opened fire, and Shephard slumped motionless near the open car door. My heart hurts for the pain endured by his family, including Shephard's mother, Cheryl, who watched her son murdered on live TV.

When you said you suddenly found your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you sought to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she couldn't go to the public amusement park that was just advertised on TV, and saw tears welling up in her little eyes when she was told Fun Town is closed to the colored, I got an immediate visual



scene that allowed me to connect with you. Like you, I turn on the TV, and I see and feel the hurt of that little girl's disappointment and the emotions and hurt in your voice explaining why she couldn't attend Fun Town. As a reader, Reverend King, I am sold.

It is sad that, to this day, it is still occurring. Over 50 years later, some of the same racism and unjust behaviors are being displayed. It makes me wonder sometimes, Reverend King, was it all for nothing? The bloodshed, incarceration, and deaths of husbands, children, and relatives that mothers have had to bear? The fight to be treated as an American and to be united as a whole nation? But then I tell myself that we are a little closer than we were yesterday. The day will come soon enough, and the fight will continue. It is a slow healing process, but once the sore is healed, you will gently pull back the bandage and slowly unravel it.

(Jayvonna Flemming)

Dear Dr. King,

Thank you for being safe enough on the surface so that our educational system allows your words and actions to be taught in American History classes. What they may not know is that you have become a teacher for many of us still fighting the good fight for civil rights and liberties. As a father, I was deeply touched by your example of trying to find the thoughts and words to explain to your child the reason why he/she isn't welcomed or loved by a country that has been built on the back of our ancestors. You raise the mere thought that, as the most advanced place on earth, we have fallen so far behind what we consider third world countries when it comes to political independence. Sadly, here in 2016, some 53 years later, we are still moving, as you put it, "at a horse and buggy pace" for equal rights.

I was a part of a seminar recently, and one of the questions posed to us was: Is our community too small to have representation of two different communication styles? One style is viewed as aggressive, abrasive, and in your face, and the other is more controlled, articulate, and patient. My initial thought was, is this the Malcolm X vs. Dr. King comparison, or was this what you spoke of when you said you stood in the middle of two



opposing forces in the Negro Community? Hopefully we as a people can come to a conclusion soon for the sake of making a unified effort.

Another thing I wanted to address with you was the warning you issued to the church about being dismissed as an irrelevant social club. That day has come! Many of our youth have little faith and are completely disgusted with the church. With you being a God-fearing minister, how would you respond to such a thing? Thank you again for all of your sacrifices. **(Tory Latham)**

Dear Dr. King,
I would like to say your letter was, and still is, very powerful. It was very well written, and I can relate to being even tempered. The fact that you were imprisoned and kept your cool is an amazing exercise in strength and courage. I want you to know that our world has changed greatly, but we still have a long way to go! Because of people like you, we have covered lots of ground. I would like you to know that racism isn't as widespread as it was, but being from the south I can tell you it

still appears as an injustice in many communities.

When you said if you lived in Germany you would have aided and comforted your Jewish brothers, this shows me again that you are not afraid to stand alone. You are very much a free thinker. The world lacks these types of individuals today. As you pointed out, if you took action for every unjust thing that came to your headquarters, you would surely not ever be able to take action. Choosing battles wisely is the right path to take. Just like back then, today many turn to violence to show frustration, but this does nothing to change things.

I would never say I know how it was back then, and I know today we have it way better than you could've imagined. I just wanted to say thank you for all that you did. I surely could write a book, as you called your letter. I could point out many examples from your letter. I wish I could reach you and share my thoughts in person. Thank you for your time! **(Steven Jones)**

Dear Dr. King,
Your dream was to see America as the best for all the American people. You were dreaming that all humans could get freedom and win their rights. Your dream was for everyone to have the right to live with dignity. Now half of your dream has come true. Now our president is a black man, Barack Obama.



On the other hand, people still struggle for complete rights. New slaves have presented themselves as well; I call them "Modern Slaves." I feel we need someone like you who can dedicate their life to equality and freedom. Our hope is to live on this land as equal beings. Our goal is to not be judged according to our color or our figures. Now everyone is keeping quiet, and nobody cares about others. We need to talk about the truths. We need the courage to confront injustice. We need the faith to defend the oppressed. The modern slaves have no food to eat, no place to live, and no school to bring their kids to. These are the refugee people. The refugee women are exploited with rape. Refugee kids are exploited for hard work. We are saying the same things in 2016 as you did in 1963. "We are in the twenty-first century with a religious community largely adjusted to the status quo, standing as a taillight behind

other community agencies rather than a headlight leading men to higher levels of injustice." **(Shaimaa Ahmed)**

Dear Dr. King,
I am glad that there is such a great person like you. You make me more aware of what is going on around me. You have mentioned that everything takes time. For example, what has been happening in Iraq since 2003 is still going on. What we can do is work hard and use time more effectively. I, as a student, am trying to get into dental school. After I become a dentist, I will go back to Iraq and in some way help as much as I can. Your speeches taught me that we need to be strong. We should try our best to get freedom.

I really get mad and sad when I feel that I am not being respected, and I don't want to see others feel that way. I am happy now that African Americans are being more respected, and you are a part of this accomplishment. I wish my letter could reach you. Thank you.
(Mustafa Mohammed Saed)



Dear Dr. King,
Your eloquent writing has inspired me not only emotionally, but also mentally. There is so much truth packed into your letter from Birmingham Jail. I read this letter over and over again three times. Every time I read it, I

understood your heart's cry for justice and your sincere motivation for nonviolent, good faith negotiation in another light. I admire your patience toward the insensitive bitterness and sinful hatred the whites have brought upon you and your brothers.

Your statement "whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly" is playing out in our society now. Having racially segregated communities based on income affects the person as an individual and as a community, and there are no means to escape. The vicious cycle cannot seem to be broken and is keeping our fellow citizens in poverty. We have a responsibility as Americans to not sit around waiting for our brothers to fail, but to lift them up and help them succeed as a unified whole.

History has a nasty way of repeating itself. Police brutality is a never-ending evil, and vicious authority is being abused. Police need to be held accountable for their actions. Instead, they take advantage of nonviolent tension and abuse any power they hold.

You draw me into the center of your argument on Christ. You are holding men accountable in the Lord's name, and I believe that God had this very purpose for your life. Jesus Christ suffered in torment and agony but made an impact and believed in every word he spoke to those that would follow him. His followers came to believe in his words of wisdom, knowledge, and truth. Just as you said, "The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." It takes time, and people are afraid of change or what could come of change. They stay complacent to the issues at hand instead of changing to deal with them with nonviolent direct action.

It hurts the deepest depths of my heart to think of a child denied the privileges of white children. I can't imagine damaging the very soul of an innocent child, or how the elderly are abused so naturally and unremorsefully. Privileged groups wouldn't give up their privileges and had no qualms of stripping other people of theirs. "Freedom is not voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be taken by the oppressed." Your humble approach and intelligence will speak to the very soul of each oppressor that takes part in this injustice.

You quoted the Bible in your letter: "Bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you, love your enemies and bless them that curse you." You are a walking testimony of God's grace and forgiveness, the hope of the world, and a noble hero to many. You are the leader out of darkness, and I am grateful to have read this letter. It has changed me thoroughly. You speak of love, justice, and peace for all in Christ. If we can all do our part to build the community that so many have fought for and only dreamed of, the world would see the true meaning of peace on earth. **(Ashley Wills)**



Dear Dr. King,

First and foremost: thank you! Thank you for all of your hard work. Thank you for your time and dedication. Lastly, thank you for all of the nonviolent direct-action that took place in Birmingham and elsewhere.

I have personally experienced some racial issues growing up. My parents are different races: My father is African American, and my mother is white. Those types of relationships weren't acceptable. Racial issues still occur in some places. For instance, I have never met my father's side of the family because they still didn't approve of my father's leaving and having kids with a white woman. It is unfortunate that they would be so childish to allow race and someone's skin color to come in the way of love.

Reading your letter from Birmingham Jail has inspired me and motivated me to share and to continue to stop issues that are still occurring in today's world. Today the policemen have yet to change. The policemen are brutally beating, cursing, and killing our brothers and sisters. They're getting away with it because they can!

I love how you politely let the clergymen know what you are doing and kill them with kindness. You are not showing them that you are upset, but you are proving to them that you know what you are talking about and they aren't always right. You, Dr. King, are an intelligent, wise, and brave man, and I absolutely praise everything you have done! You stood strong on what you believed needed to be done and never gave up. You did not allow ignorance to get in the way of trying to make all men and women equal. **(Tasha Thompson)**

Dear Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,

My name is Rosalyn Richmond, and I am an African American woman from Chicago now living in Madison, WI. I am the mother of three children and the grandmother of three grandchildren. I am writing to you in response to the letter written by you while incarcerated in the Birmingham Jail.

First, I would like to thank you for expressing your views on the racial injustice that is facing our nation and our race of people. It saddens me that you had to be incarcerated for fighting for the rights of your fellow Americans before this letter could be written and acknowledged. I do take great pride in having a man of your intelligence go up against the angry, hate-filled people of this world. I am amazed and saddened, too, at the nonsupport you are receiving from your fellow clergy, yet they preach the love of God. I do believe that you are a true man of God, and I would take great pride in following you as a leader.

Being a lover of all men myself, I cannot understand how others could call your actions "unwise and untimely" when your only actions and views are of nonviolence. The only thing that is "unwise" is stopping African Americans from having their human and constitutional



rights only based on the color of their skin. What is “untimely,” in my opinion, is that people can be and are judged by the color of their skin and not on their character or morals. This way of thinking is getting very old.

In reading about your nonviolence campaign, I see that it is based on four basic steps: collection of facts, negotiations, self-purification, and direct action. None of these steps invoke me into becoming violent or into breaking any laws. What it does tell me is to simply know my facts, to go in with good faith, to be pure at heart, and to mean what I am going up against. This to me is a good rule of life, and I thank you for the knowledge. . . .

In your letter you called segregation politically, economically, and sociologically unsound, along with morally wrong and sinful. I regret to say that people have taken this to a whole other level. This is a cause that I could stand behind because it is wrong for us, as people, to be divided. Yet today, people are fighting about something as simple as movie awards while we have children dying in the streets by the hands of police, water problems, hunger and homelessness all over the world. Yet the question today is who will attend the Oscars? I really think people missed the beat of your heart and soul for this nation, which also saddens me.



In closing, I thank you for the knowledge that I have gained from your views and hard work. Your works give me the opportunity to vote for our first black president, freedom to raise three children and to assist with the raising of my grandkids. Your work also made me able to socialize with any and all cultures of people and even call them friends. I am able, at the age of 50+, to attend school for free—not just school, but college. The world is not a perfect place, yet it is a better place because of a man of your love and grace in fighting for the rights of your fellow men. Thank you. (**Rosalyn Richmond**)

Dear Dr. King,
It is an absolute honor to be able to sit down at my desk and write you this letter. You are an incredible inspiration, and I highly appreciate you taking the time to read my letter, which is in response to your own letter you wrote while confined to a cell in Birmingham.

In your words: “I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all the communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” These words alone are so powerful. Birmingham was going through a crisis, and had you not left the safety and security of your home to assist and, in a sense, lead this peaceful movement, I honestly feel that there was a chance that the social injustices there would have never been properly exposed. I say “properly” because you and your followers took an approach that gave our country no other choice than to pay attention.

I am a mother of two sons that I love with all of my being. When you said, “When you

suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her little eyes when she is told that Fun Town is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people," that vision caused my eyes to water and my heart to become heavy. I can't imagine how I would have felt as a young girl with one of my parents trying to explain to me that because of the pigment of my skin, I would not be able to go to Disney Land, Great America, or a place as local as the Wisconsin Dells. That would have shattered me. I don't think I would have been able to look my sons in the eyes if we currently lived under those conditions.

Your letter was so powerful that I had a difficult time trying to respond to it. Your mind is so advanced that I honestly felt mentally inferior, but I did my best. I would just like to thank you for fighting for our people without actually causing physical harm or succumbing to violence. I believe your strategy gave light to the situation. Because of the execution of your movement, you helped to change the views and opinions of Americans everywhere! You helped the laws to change for the better and to be enforced without prejudice!

Our country was lying in darkness. I couldn't agree with you more when you said, "Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Luke warm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection." I felt that you were saying that we need to wake up as one country and do away with prejudice, racism,



and all social injustices; that we all should embrace and enforce what is right without the infection of bias.

I applaud you for meeting the issues head on and standing up for an entire race of disenfranchised, displaced, and lost people. You gave us a heart when our body was without one. You gave us courage when none could be found. Our people were wallowing deep within themselves, hating the images they saw in the mirror, afraid of what tomorrow would bring, and not knowing if they would have enough fight within themselves to face it. They were without a shepherd until you came along. Your leadership is very reminiscent of Jesus. May God bless you for that.

I would personally like to thank you on behalf of myself, my children, my family, and America as a whole. The year is 2016, and the power of your sacrifices back then still resonates with us till this day. Because of you, we live in true democracy and currently have an African American president. Thank you for giving us all hope! Thank you for paving the way. Thank you for investing and sacrificing yourself so that we as African Americans could step out of the realm of alienation. You are amazing!

With the upmost respect and gratitude, Jelissa
(Jelissa Williams)

Dear Dr. King,

Your letter moved me so much; the struggles of African American people reminded me of the struggles of immigrants. In the letter, you wrote about when “you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can’t go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television.” This statement was very unpleasant and still is for many. Despite all the work that you have done, we still face discrimination today. It is sad that things have not changed for many people. After all these years, many people struggle with telling their children things like “it’s not for us because only rich people can do that,” or “sorry we can’t afford that,” or “this is not our country so we cannot do that.” Children can even be prevented from traveling back to their countries because they do not have legal status.

Many people have lived in this country illegally for decades. Individuals who have raised their families and built a life in this country are not even able to get a permanent job because of their legal status. Many people live horrified of being caught by immigration officers. In addition, many people, unfortunately, lose their relatives (parents, siblings, grandfathers, even their own children) but can’t go back to say goodbye and give a Christian burial to their loved ones. Just like you and your people have many issues, immigrants also experience discrimination; although it is hidden, it unfortunately still exists. Just like you, as an immigrant, I hope we can work on these problems peacefully. In addition, just like you were told to “wait” for a solution to all of your problems, we also were told to wait; however, the wait is long and seems like it is taking forever to be resolved. Immigrants from different nationalities came to the United States looking for a better future and education for themselves and their children. Hardworking people are waiting to be treated fairly as citizens.

Candidates for presidency have promised to help achieve a reform; this would allow hard working people to live out of the shadows and start having dignified lives. However, it is easy to make promises but hard to accomplish them. I feel that the only purpose is to keep minorities oppressed so the oppressors have the power as always. They propose comprehensive reforms only to get the votes of immigrants. After they win, they forget about their promises and still treat hard working people as outsiders.



I love the paragraph where you state, “Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.” No matter what race, religion, gender, or color, we all should be treated as children of God. In addition, I like the lines where you articulate, “We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.” I know that unfortunately this statement is true; the oppressor always wants the oppressed to keep quiet and not speak up when discrimination affects them. I appreciate people who really work for the cause. We all should work together to demand equal treatment.

I appreciate all the hard work that you, along with your people, have done for the nation. Undoubtedly, your words have made a difference in many people’s lives. Thanks to your peaceful struggle, African Americans enjoy a better life. Today, the fight is not done. We still need to do more; we need to combine our strengths to achieve all of the dreams that, as citizens, we deserve. **(Guadalupe Tinajero)**

Dear Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
 You have always been a man of your words, peace, and actions. Even though you were in the dark confinements of an unjust jail, you took the time to present your reasoning for being in Birmingham—your overall disappointment with the church and fellowmen within the Civil Rights Movement. Many of your courageous words spoke to me and reminded me that not only have things gotten better, but the struggle is still real in my generation.

“History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture, but as Reinhold Niebur has reminded us, groups are more immoral than individuals.” . . . People tend to not react to a situation unless it affects them on a personal level. The sheer fact that we live in a nation where \$8 an hour is considered a living wage turns my stomach. Another point I want to make to you, Dr. King, is that we have a group of people who feels that this is honestly a living wage. The Republican Party feels that raising the wages will cause a major conflict within our economy. Actually, it’s the simple principle of the rich stay rich and the poor become more financially challenged.

I understand that during the Civil Rights Movement life was very difficult. Black people had no voting rights, little to no education, and no way to express their voice. Information about the world in general was hard to get because the world was so biased about a lot of topics. I want you to know that in those aspects the world has changed. Social media has become more available to the black community. People can take the time and fully express their experiences when it comes to life and its struggles. People of my generation are more open minded to new ideas and ways of thinking. Freedom is a right for everyone. Voting registration has become less difficult and easier for all. Most importantly, the world



isn’t so biased about everything—you have the right to hear and choose what story you want to believe when it comes to life and the facts. There are still some bumps here and there, but the difference from then and now is quite astonishing. . . .

Personally, I feel that there is nothing wrong with being an extremist. I feel that society is quick to harshly judge an extremist. You are an extremist, Dr. King, of peace, love, justice, and God. Yes, Abraham Lincoln was an extremist believing that all slaves should be free at the time. In my generation, Malala is an extremist because she believes that all Pakistani women have the right to an education. Bernie Sanders is one as well because he protested with you. He feels that everyone deserves a living wage and college should be free for all.

My mother lived through segregation. She told me of the struggles and horrors she went through as a black woman living in that decade. Most of my peers feel that things have gotten worse and we are not better off. I beg to differ—I feel that things have gotten better. I feel that all of your hard work and dedication has paid off in a bit in my generation. I can vote, and I have a say when it comes to my education. There is still work that needs to be done, but overall I see change happening and more to come. **(Kala Taylor)**

Dear Dr. King
 Your letter has shown me the moderates are not just lazy for the cause, but also they are often conflicted about going for the cause. Also, just like the white people hated you for representing awareness and creating violence, many black people also hated how you were representing them as all the black people were at risk for getting punished for the stand you were making.

Caitlyn Jenner is both a moderate and extremist as a role model for a lot of people in 2016. She is somewhat superficial since her physical transition was not only quick but also financially easy for her to do. She also was on the most

expensive cover of a magazine right after her transition, and has her own reality show. She is trying to be a moderate advocate, but she is making the wrong extremist decisions of how to come out as a role model for the world as a Transgender woman. Jenner has undercut her actions by being a Republican woman, which technically means she is fighting for something that she is against to because of her party.



Many people see her as now the typical transgender woman, but there are very few transgender people who are even lucky enough to have a shelter or the chance to have hormones, and rarely do they get the gender reassignment surgery to be fully themselves. Thanks to your letter for opening my eyes to notice that it is much easier these days to be moderate people, instead of great extremists for the bigger cause. Thank you, Dr. King, for writing such a wonderful letter in one of the most unjust environments. This shows that we could achieve anything we want if we put effort into it. Love dearly!
(Luna Santos)

Dear Dr. King,
I read your letter from Birmingham and was compelled to write to you. You outline so eloquently why the silent majority must continue to sing the loudest. The statement you made regarding the four basic steps of any non-violent campaign clearly shows that Negroes in this community can and should continue to make their voices heard, to right the ongoing wrongs of Whites that feel oppression is the only form of good control. An example of that, which struck me very hard, were the broken promises made by many of the merchants in this area to take down disparaging racial signs that they hang in their shop windows like trophies.

When you were asked, "Why didn't you give the new administration time to act?" I see in your thoughts that throughout this process of gaining equality the

administrators in our community will always be ready to ensure that Black Americans walk with their heads held down, as if they are walking in shame of something. They constantly assume our decision to protest always seems untimely and that we are more than ready to break laws versus waiting for today's politicians to take action. Dr. King, I agree with you that human progress does not roll in on wheels of inevitability.

Instead, it comes with the tireless efforts and persistence of men, all men, willing to be co-workers with God.

Your words and your vision to end the division of segregation in the south will not go unremarked for years to come. The end to this division will ring true not only in the North, but in other parts of the world where unjust laws keep our sisters and brothers of God separate and unequal to their working counterparts. The pain that keeps them from visiting amusement parks that are only accessible to white Americans, and the pain and disrespect of being beaten in public for simply walking down a city street, will see a promise of co-existence among community members. Also, the existing lack of respect that our elders and our sons and daughters continue to face, in time, will reflect how their souls will be freed of this hurt.

It is my hope that our reasons to march for a better tomorrow will, in time, open the eyes of the closed minded to see the importance that our cause has for all people, not just people of color. I found nothing in your letter to be considered an overstatement of the truth.

Instead, I read heartfelt and direct messages expressing the importance of understanding equality and knowing that no man asks to be oppressed or finds some kind of joy in it.

It is also my hope that white ministers of the south will encourage their parishioners to see the positive side of desegregation and educate against racial bias and prejudice. Many blessings! (Kelly L Dixon)

Dear Dr. King:

Receive my most sincere greetings. I'm writing this letter to you because I want to let you know that I have read your "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." As I read in between the lines, I wish to express my respect and admiration.

Each of your words is so successful, and your arguments are full of good foundations.

Dr. King, I want to say that various parts of your letter touched my heart feelings very deeply, especially, "Never again we can afford to live with the narrow provincial 'outside agitator' idea and anyone who lives in the United States can never considered an outsider anywhere in this country." I refer to this part in the letter because even in these days a person who wasn't born in this country but lives here does not have the rights that other people have, no matter what nationality. We still have problems with that, especially my Latino community—those people who came to this country seeking a better future for themselves and their families. Some didn't choose to come here, but their parents brought them when they were little. A lot of them don't have the choice; it was not an option. We face so much racism in the community, even in schools, because of our nationality.

I had a problem with that when one of my close family members was told that, because of her legal status, she had no opportunity to go to college and had no rights to aspire to a higher education—that high school was her final step of education. It's so sad that an adult will tell that to a child, and it is sadder to know that the person who said this was the career advisor at a school, a person who considered herself well educated and well prepared to make this comment. This bothers me to this day because this incident happened not too long ago and in an era where we have so many tools like the internet to learn about different ethnicities, cultures and



traditions.

"I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, 'Wait.'" For all the people that have been living undocumented in this country for so many years and who don't have the opportunity to prove to this country that they are here just to work and do good to the country, the word "wait" doesn't mean much because it seems like every day things are getting worse and worse for them. "The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are just and unjust laws. I would agree with Saint Augustine that 'an unjust law is no law at all.'"

I'm aware of immigration laws. Laws are unjust when families are being torn apart because of deportation and kids are growing up with hatred because of the way their parents are being treated.

Thank you for your time to read my letter, Dr. King. It is so sad to see that back in your day things weren't too much different than they are now. (**Karina Gómez**)

Dear Dr. King,

First of all I want to thank you. Thank you for all your moving words which have given the people the motivation and reassurance to seek equal rights for all. Your leadership has changed the thinking of immature minds and left a blueprint to follow for peaceful protests. You have given a voice to the mute and opened the eyes to the blind that only saw the world in black and white. I read your "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and felt my heart break to pieces over and over again. It was very emotional to read the part where you mentioned having to explain to a young child why they cannot go to a public amusement park simply for the fact they were born with a darker shade of skin than the whites. The thought of even having to explain this to my little boy with his big shiny eyes full of tears hurts my heart. Your writing has brought light on the reality of injustice that has occurred throughout the years;

such acts which not only affect us but our children as well. No child deserves to go through such humiliation and neglect. Is this not the land of the free? I sometimes wonder if this country is setting up our future generations for failure on purpose. Segregation might no longer be legal, but it is still very much alive. There continue to be negative messages delivered which encourage others to do wrong. As a result, we are unconsciously changing children's minds to be prejudiced and full of racial hatred.

As you might know by now, your fight for equal rights has influenced a change in laws for all citizens. However, I am sorry I cannot say the same for justice being served. It is sad and disturbing to see that in the year 2016 we find ourselves at war where equity continues to be denied. Policemen have decided they can take justice into their own hands. They have developed a new motto across the nation along the lines "Shoot first, and ask later." Corruption has reincarnated and left the streets to serve as graveyards like never before. Statistics show that young black men were nine times more likely than any other Americans to be killed by police officers in 2015. As much as the government and officials want to deny the issue at hand, the numbers speak for themselves. I admired the following parallelism that you used in your letter: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice anywhere." These words describe the issue at hand and the fact that this disgrace continues to occur one life after another. We minorities no longer feel safe anywhere, and we feel much less protected by those who are supposed to live for what their uniform stands for. Protests have taken place looking for the answers they needed, but unfortunately they have not led to many results. What would your advice be? How can we make officials come to the realization and serve the same justice they claim to stand for?



Our country has continued to discriminate once again. We are now facing a potential issue with racism occurring in Flint, Michigan. The residents are suffering from a crisis: they have been

poisoned with lead through contaminated waters, and the lead has entered their blood stream as well. You might ask yourself, what does this have to do with discrimination? Foremost, the governor was well aware of this issue after health officials brought it to his attention, yet he brushed it under the rug. You might also ask why Flint? Based on the news and information at hand, there is a strong theory that the city was neglected because it holds a majority of African Americans as a population and is considered poor. There have been numerous amounts of bottled water donated to the residents who have become victims facing such a crisis. Just as I thought a wrong was being corrected, a new spotlight on another issue takes place. Families have been denied free bottles of water due to "lack of identification." The Latino community had no awareness of the issue since all of the flyers and signs were written in English only. And like most immigrants, they prefer to not expose themselves in fear of deportation. It is quite a disappointment to see that children are being denied the same rights as any other American. I believe the state could have handled things a lot differently with positive outcomes.

America continues to be the land of the free, at least for those individuals who are lucky enough. I hope that as a country we are able to find a way to correct all the wrongs that have occurred and continue to grow positively. We must set a better example for the younger generations to come and give them the future they deserve. **(Marisela Tellez)**

ALUMNI PROFILE

LUCIA CHIKOWERO '14

BY SHAIMAA AHMED

Confident Woman

"Good things come to those who believe, better things come to those who are patient and the best things come to those who do not give up" (weneedfun.com). That is what I learned from Lucia Chikowero when I interviewed her about her life in the past, present, and future. She was born and raised in Zimbabwe, Africa. From her mom's side, she was an only child – her mom died when she was five years old, and her dad remarried and had three more children, making them four. She had a pretty decent life until her dad passed away when she was twelve. When her dad died, she felt betrayed because she loved him and she knew he loved her so much. She moved with her aunt to another city, leaving her stepmother and her siblings. She liked her high school, even though her school system was more of a bottleneck system with a lot of exams. Her favorite subjects were geography, science, sociology, accounting, and history. She hated math; even today she tries to avoid it as much as possible. She wants to be a sociologist so she can help others shape policy.

Before she joined Odyssey, she was a housewife without education. She was very excited when she got accepted into the program. She promised herself that she was going to do her best and keep on pushing through. She loved going to class and never missed one. Some of the books that she read in Odyssey changed her life for the better. For example, *Leaving Home* helped her realize that no matter her situation, if you keep your eyes on the prize, one day you will definitely achieve your dream. In addition, she likes *A Raisin in the Sun*. While she was in Odyssey, she discovered that she is a good poet. She wrote poems, one of which was "The Courage to Write," and another was one she wrote when Nelson Mandela died, called "Where I Come From." There were also many others.

Now, Lucia is a full time student, a mother, and a wife along with helping out every Wednesday night in the Odyssey Junior class at the Goodman Library. She is taking a class at MATC and is in the Liberal Arts Transfer Program hoping to transfer to UW-Madison. In the last two semesters, she has been invited to enroll in the Honors Program because her GPA was very good. She has taken a number of classes at MATC, including Sociology, Intro to Psychology, and English. She is taking 15 credits next semester. She is a Social Sciences major, which will help her aid disadvantaged girls and women. Her ultimate goal is to get an advanced degree in Family Sociology. She volunteers in many different capacities, be it at church where she helps during the summer



to run vocational Bible School, or at the swimming pool where her daughter is on the swim team. In addition, she volunteers to coordinate and connect young girls with mentors and different kinds of pals from around the world in hopes to make them think globally. She is still in touch with her classmates from Odyssey. Her advice for current Odyssey students is to keep pushing forward because there are great things ahead. However, this is not easy, as easy gains do not last.

Lucia's plan for her future is to do her best with all of her heart. In five years she will be finishing her Master's Degree and probably starting her Ph.D. In ten years, she will be working as a Sociologist, helping families and individuals along with plugging the holes in the system, where people are falling into the cracks and failing to achieve their dreams. Lucia's second piece of advice for current Odyssey students is to be watchful for those who need your help and to have the willpower and drive to help turn their lives around. Give, support, and encourage others, as all of these things were also given to you. Lucia encouraged me to volunteer and help the Odyssey students or Odyssey junior students next year, and I feel that's what I want to do.

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.

