

Year 14, Issue 6

January 18, 2017

# ODYSSEY ORACLE

## THE ODYSSEY CONTINUES



*"My classmates are all the same yet so very different; we are all eager to learn. I say classmates, but I gained a family--a big, huge, multicultural family!"*

*"I have been given unlimited drinks from the fountain of knowledge."*

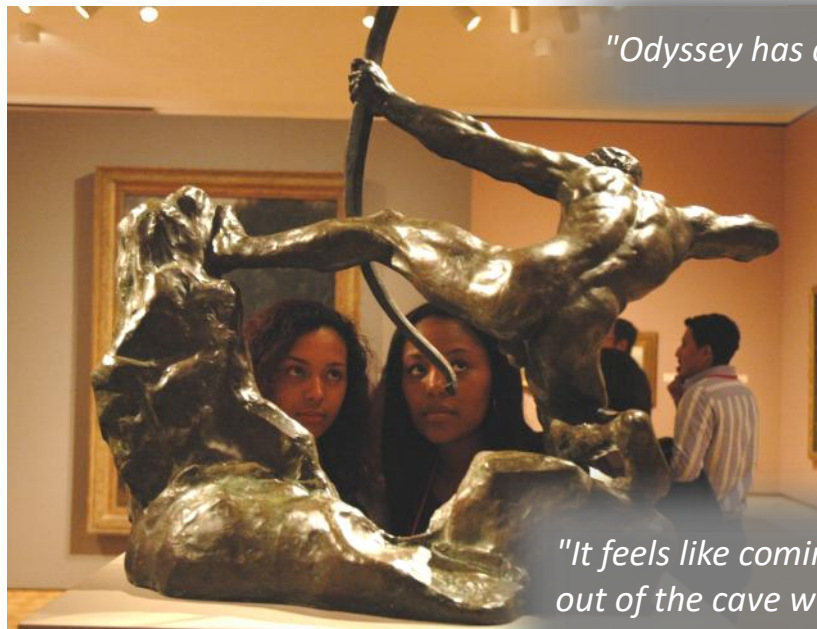
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*"Odyssey has changed my way of thinking."*

*"It feels like coming out of the cave when I come to Odyssey class every week."*



*"This class has slowly drawn me out of a shell."*



*"With this program I am able to do things with my daughter that I otherwise would have never thought about doing."*



# MAKING A CASE FOR SECOND SEMESTER



**Ahmad Nahas**

I honestly feel so pleased just being one of the students in the Odyssey program. Odyssey has taught me a lot of things about history, literature, culture, and so on. I was watching the time

and couldn't wait for it to be Wednesday so I could get to class and feel my teachers and classmates as my family. I guess I'm the luckiest guy in Madison to have been a student in Odyssey for Fall 2016 semester. I'm really looking forward to being a student in spring semester again.



**Alyanna Cooper**

I have grown from Odyssey, and I am finding my voice and meaning in life. Odyssey has given me hope for my future and my children's future. I learned from class that

everyone is different. We all have experienced diverse life situations; with that, we learn and grow from each other.

Finishing out the second semester will allow me to take my final steps to the rest of my life. I now am finding my purpose and what makes me happy. Odyssey has given me more strength and belief in myself. It is also helping me guide and inspire my kids. We do homework together, and they help me with mine. Odyssey is teaching us about what it is like to be a part of something meaningful. My children and I have never been a part of something so positive. Odyssey drives and pushes us to a better us. It helps move us into who and what we are. Odyssey is Odyssey.



**Anthony Jefferson**

I feel my contributions in the form of classroom participation and support for my classmates help my case for continuing in the Odyssey Project. This class has slowly drawn me out of a

shell that hampered my ability to be a functioning adult. With more time, I feel real solid changes can be made. Seeing the serious buzzing as we discuss an author or share an experience kindles a desire to open up and let everyone know I'm human, too, and we have one another if times are rough. These peers of mine have become a security blanket, and this classroom a kind of haven. When life seems too out of reach or difficult, I am grounded by Oracle excerpts or humbled by a compliment on my shared work. It keeps the drive alive honestly, motivating me with every Wednesday to keep pursuing a better future for myself. My goal for graduation is to create an enduring network that mutually propels myself and others toward brighter days.



**Asha Green**

First of all, I would like to once again say thank you for selecting me to join the program.

The reason why I need to continue this program next semester is because I am not done learning. I have skated through life without furthering my education to better myself. I am proud to say that I am a part of the Odyssey program. My daughter is also taking in a lot while attending Odyssey Jr. What I have gotten out of class is correct

punctuation, how to write a thesis, thinking outside the box, and understanding (taking apart) many passages to better understand. The Odyssey program is getting me ready for what is to come.

When I complete Odyssey, I will be pursuing my education to become a social worker. I have the compassion, but I need the education behind me. I have three kids pushing me to better myself. I just gotta make it. I just gotta make it. Odyssey has helped me come out of my shell and open up about what I have been through. Odyssey has changed my way of thinking. I just gotta make it.



### **Avé Thorpe**

Within the last few months since starting the Odyssey Project, I have faced many obstacles. It has taken some tremendous effort just for me to get to class each week with

my entire family and then to have to make it to work a few hours after class is over. With such a busy schedule it is extremely hard for me to take on additional tasks, but because of my Odyssey professors I have learned to really push myself and make necessary sacrifices in order to achieve my goals.

In the past I have put all of my dreams to the side and had a pessimistic attitude about taking on additional tasks outside of work and family. I had dedicated my life to my children and to making provisions for

them, so much that I was beginning to lose myself, putting me last.

Through Odyssey I'm learning not only that it's possible to do something for me, but also that in doing so I'm better able to do for others. Odyssey has brought peace into my life and given me an outlet. By being able to stay for second semester, I believe that I will continue to grow as an individual, a mother, and a leader in the community. I don't have much, but Odyssey is that one thing that I can call my own and be proud of.



### **Belem Calixto**

In this first semester I have learned a lot from history that I didn't even know had happened. Frederick Douglass is a great example. I didn't know anything about him; it was here where I learned who he was.

With writing, I've noticed that whenever I start writing about something, I just keep going and going. I like that. The only issue is that I don't really know how to put everything together in a way that will make sense or how to simply sound better when I read it.

I also like the fact that everyone is comfortable sharing stories of their lives that are so personal. They still do it because they feel, and I feel, comfortable sharing them.







### **Carissa Love**

I feel that this class has made me a better person. This has given me the ability, knowledge, and courage to come out of my shell and find my comfort zone. I feel that I would be a great asset to

second semester with my willingness and the demand for learning and receiving higher education. This class has given me a lot of insight on different subjects and materials we have learned in class. There were a lot of things I didn't know before coming to this class that I now know. I'm very blessed, grateful, and honored to be a part of a wonderful and great program. I want to be able to complete and succeed in the long run. I plan to continue my education after Odyssey and pursue a career in nursing to be a Registered Nurse. I never thought I would make it this far in life and be a part of such a wonderful, smart, intelligent class of wonderful people, with great teachers, tutors, and volunteers. I learned history, art, and plenty of things to help me succeed along the way.



### **Cherri Sorrells**

I would describe myself as a young mother with a thirst for knowledge. I have always dreamed of graduating from college. and I consider Odyssey to be my stepping stone. So far, it feels as

though I have been given unlimited drinks from the fountain of knowledge. I have learned so many new things, new ways of thinking, and I have gotten refreshers on things I learned once before. I have contributed my opinions, beliefs, ideas, and values to countless class discussions. I never imagined I could have an opportunity so meaningful and so grand. I am also amazed at how much my children are growing and expanding their knowledge. My girls look forward to classes more than I do, which gives me peace of mind and allows me to solely focus on giving my all, week after week. I would love to continue

to second semester because I honestly can't wait to see what is in store for me. I am very proud of my success and the dedication and hard work I have demonstrated so far. I am personally challenging myself to do better second semester than the first. So I urge you to do the right thing by inviting me back to class next semester. I mean, let's face it—class wouldn't be the same without me!



### **D'onna Atkinson**

I am a shy person who is interested in learning new teachings. I have gotten out of this class different views other than mine towards certain discussions and towards the teachings we

have been taught. I learn every time I come here. I haven't contributed in a way as in voicing my opinion out loud, but I have contributed my opinion in writing and have improved my knowledge in certain subjects due to the discussions in class and our homework. I would love to be in the class next semester so I can continue to grow and understand way more than I have learned so far about the literature we have been taught. Once again, thank you for this eye opening opportunity that you have blessed me with!



### **Felica Thomas**

Odyssey has taught me it is okay to be raw with my emotions. I have read stories and articles that I never imagined reading or understanding and have had open dialogue with peers of different

races and nationalities. Odyssey has helped me experience life outside of being African American. I have viewed Mexico through the eyes of my classmates. To my surprise Odyssey has shown me that I am but a distant relative of Socrates and a first cousin to Maya Angelou. I am further impressed with myself in philosophy and art history. I crave more of Socrates and the

depiction of art. My classmates are all the same yet so very different; we are all eager to learn. The Odyssey program has been my light in such a dark place.

I should be here because this is a part of my journey....my Odyssey. I made a promise to my baby Zaire, and again I intend to keep this promise. This class has taught me things about me that I never thought of myself. I am thankful to be on this journey. Life has afforded me more than enough turmoil. I am looking forward to a better journey and what there is to offer.

I say classmates, but I gained a family—a big, huge, multicultural family!



**Grisel Tapia Claudio**

I would like to continue in Odyssey for the second semester because it's helping me a lot to grow as a student and as a person. Seeing all my classmates sometimes two days a week fills me with joy to know we are in the same boat heading in the right direction.

I can tell you that it is not easy to work, study, and be a mom and wife, but it is not impossible. This is the reason I want and need to stay.

I love to come on Mondays and sometimes Tuesdays to work with the tutors and Kevin. I come because I really need the extra help. I will continue with my best effort to do well in class.

This experience is once in a lifetime, and I will not let it go. Thank you, Odyssey team, for all you do for all of us!



**Jessica Tucker**

I feel like I should be a part of the second semester because this class not only is teaching me, but it's also definitely helping me grow. I

felt like I used to be completely lost, but now I feel like I've slowly guided myself back towards the right direction in life. I've made friends, made myself more social, and am slowly becoming less shy. I can tell that my writing skills are getting better. I love learning about the symbolism behind our different readings. I have also broadened my vocabulary. I would love to continue my journey with the Odyssey. It's amazing to see how far I've come, but I want to go further.



**Johnnie Walton**

I should be in the second semester of the Odyssey project because I need the skills that the program offers in order to get ahead. I need to know how to write letters to people. I need to know the history of the world in all its greatness and tragedy. I want and need this education. This class is really helping me to understand how valuable I am and how valuable we all are together. I give my spirit in my writing, and that's one thing that I will always love to share with my fellow classmates. The Odyssey Program has given me another allurements, and I like it. Thank you, Emily.



**José Mendoza**

I should continue into the second semester because this program is really helpful for me. I am learning more and more every class, especially with my reading and writing in English. I think my life is changed already because now I spend more time doing homework instead of wasting my time watching TV. I motivate my children by studying books. I have better communication with people. I feel more comfortable in this class when I participate. This is a good place to express my feelings when I write something. I am working hard to keep my goals. I love this class. I really appreciate the help of the tutors. Thank you to Odyssey for letting me be part of this class.



### Joy Bally

I show up to class every Wednesday to learn about new things, to open my mind, and to accept my classmates' ideas and beliefs.

I have gotten a sense of more understanding about where people came from and their journeys and how important it is to listen and feel the pain of others.

I have contributed by asking questions and helping some of my classmates with homework. I've also reached out to others in the class by inviting them to my home for Christmas as they do not have family here.

I would like to continue the class so I can share my knowledge with Angelina while she grows. I would also like to continue to be part of the Odyssey family. This is the most alternative experience I've had where being educated is concerned. If I had this style all through college, it would be great! I always look forward to coming to class for discussions and insight. I look forward to being here next semester.

### Kendra Atkinson



This class has motivated me to return to school and work hard. It has taught me many things and opened my eyes to things I once saw no interest in. It is

helping me with my writing and to expand my vocabulary. The class is so warming. I would love to join next semester. I am a very shy person so it takes a minute for me to get comfortable. I haven't really volunteered, but I have done my homework and done my best.



### Kyisha Williams

I should continue the Odyssey program because Odyssey is for me. I've made it through this first semester proudly on time, and I have all my assignments in.

Odyssey has given my daughter and me something to look forward to during the week. I really, really love participating in the class activities and being around everyone. There are so many different personalities, which is great because we get to see, hear, and feel things from other people's perspectives.

I have been so anxious to get back in school, yet somehow the thought still invades me periodically as to whether or not I will stay focused or let life's obstacles pull me away again. This semester I proved to myself that I can go through challenges and still remain focused on my school work. The love and support here is amazing, which is why I will continue to work hard to apply myself. I have always loved school, and my daughter does too. She is always excited to be in class with me and the tutors' laughing but serious approach makes her feel like a big girl, or maybe it's the thought of being like mommy she likes. Either way, I love it.

Odyssey makes you think about things differently, and it is so amazing. I love Odyssey,



and I am Odyssey, so I deserve to be here. Thanks, Emily. I am excited to see what next semester brings. I've already begun seeing progress in the way I write. So I guess my dedication and commitment speaks for itself.



### **Lawana Diagne**

I suffer from depression. This program gives me an escape from worry and helps me cope. The Odyssey journey has allowed me a chance to learn about my culture as well as other cultures and how

many similarities we have. It's like a new beginning for me. I have learned and continue to learn so much about myself. My parenting skills were in major trouble, but with this program I am able to do things with my daughter that I otherwise would have never thought about doing—plays, getting involved with my community, and supporting my community by volunteering more. I am able to appreciate this class and all the tools I am learning here. I look forward to returning next semester.

When everything else I thought had failed and I wanted to give up, I was always assured with words of encouragement and given support when I was ready to give up on myself. I enjoy writing and learning about myself and my family. If I wasn't in this program, I just would be so isolated away from people in a social way. Yes, I have a church home, but this is different. All of us here are on a journey to find ourselves. It is a beautiful experience. I look forward to working with the team in the semester to come. This program has been a blessing for my family; it is bringing my family back together. My daughter loves this program. On Wednesday nights, she wants to be the first to get to class. She never wants to miss nor be late for class. My son, who is working on

himself, has also started finding himself [he's been reading the Oracles], and his Odyssey of manhood is starting to begin. Please don't stop me from attempting this program! My journey is not over yet, but the motivation and the drive to keep giving to the program are definitely there.



### **Maria Cardenas**

I believe that I should continue into the second semester in the Odyssey program because this has allowed me to open up to a large group of people who I didn't even know. Now more than ever, I look

forward to coming to class every Wednesday. I have learned how to work on a deadline, new vocabulary words that I started to use in my everyday life, and stories that I will forever cherish. At the beginning of the program I was very excited to be part of this, but along the way, life started to get in the way. I became distracted and lost focus on the journey. Coming to class today I had almost all of my assignments done with one week left of the semester. I don't like to be the person that falls behind, but I believe it's good to reorganize when you are in a bad place and start to pick up the pieces and give them back.



I made a commitment to myself, to my family, but more importantly to the Odyssey director and coordinators that I would appreciate and work hard for this opportunity that many others didn't get a chance to be part of. One thing from today that I was amazed by was that Avé of all people spoke up today. I had never heard her speak until today. So that is how you know that this program works.





### **Maria Dary**

In the months that have passed, I have felt a change in my writing. Never have I felt I could truly write my thoughts down for another person to

read and that I would be okay with it. I have never felt so comfortably vulnerable, and I want to keep exploring more of it. When I first wrote to Emily on my application, I shared that I've never been able to get words on a page. This class showed me a way to start doing that. Even in this, my plea to continue, my hand cramps because there's so much I want to say. This class showed me a side of myself that I never even knew I had when it comes to literature. I wish to continue so I can show you the end product of my writing. I yearn to learn here. There's always a circle of comfort and understanding when I come here. We all have different pasts and experiences outside of this classroom that get left at the door; it's up to us to show people our true selves. A simple thank you isn't sufficient to show my appreciation for Emily and Kevin and what you guys do.

In conclusion, I need to continue this class because I owe it to myself and my writing. This class has given me the strength and confidence I needed to write. And I really needed it.



### **Marisol Gonzalez**

In this program I have gained a lot, like the very difficult words that Coach teaches that enrich my knowledge and vocabulary. I learned the importance of keeping on learning and that

there are no limits to achieving your dreams with the help that Emily and Odyssey give me. I am becoming confident enough to become a

writer. I discovered in the program that I can do it. I love to come every week to learn more. I am really enjoying reading the books and the challenge of homework. I feel that this is the biggest achievement in my life.



### **Musab Naji**

My goal this year was to join the Odyssey Project because I saw how it was helpful to my family last year. They learned and worked hard to pass. I need to follow them in learning

and challenging myself to reach my goal. Odyssey is not only a class for me. Odyssey is now part of my life because I'm sharing with students many things about my life and their lives. I'm learning from them how to get better. They give me hope to continue because the future should be better. The big reason to let me continue is that I see everybody here is interested in keeping me. They have pushed me to learn and find myself. I say thanks to everyone in Odyssey.



### **Nathaniel Lake**

I am ever-growing, trying to change and evolve from the person I was the day before. From this class I gained a reason to read and practice my vocabulary, which is very

important to me. I don't believe I would be progressing at all if I didn't have Odyssey this year. I most definitely would be stuck in my cave, with no idea that I was still there. I'm not sure if I really contribute much of anything. Most days when I get out of class, I see where I could or should have held back. Most days my ego runs, and I want to try to answer as many questions as I can, or at least take a stab at it even if I get it wrong. I want to push my comfort and try; if I fail, I learn. This

is good for me but not for the class. It's just me pushing, and if no one else gets much of a word in, then I am just a hindrance to the class as a whole.

As far as why I want to be here, it is a safe place for me to grow without judgment. I feel free in the classroom with no restrictions on my thoughts. In this room I can be as smart as I want to be, and my only limit is me or my dedication. I love it. Odyssey only comes second to a few things. This group is irreplaceable. The people here are all so smart, and I have so much I can learn from each of them. Their lives have made them beautiful. Their stories are more passionate than art work or poetry. I can't begin to express my gratitude to my classmates or my instructors. I've had a lot of bad days or months this year, but here in this room from 6-8:30 is a sanctuary.



**Ngina Ali**

I am well-spoken and shy at times. I have read articles, papers, and stories that I was never exposed to before. I can relate to "The Circuit" and "The Allegory of the Cave." I have sacrificed in order to go to class every Wednesday. I even attend tutoring on Tuesday of every week. I try to stay focused and stay on task. When I don't understand or I need help, I seek out help. I have made this class a great class. I have met classmates that I will always keep in touch with. Each and every one of us has brought something to the table, and we all deserve to be here. I have shown that I am capable of finishing this program and succeeding

in everything that I want to achieve. I have given quality work, and I take my time and give my BEST work. I never come empty handed, and that should mean something. I have bonded with great individuals, and I look forward to seeing them next semester. We are a great group of people, and we all PUSH each other. We all have stories, we share stories, and we comfort each other.



**Shanon Holmes**

Being completely real, I sometimes feel so lost on the materials we are going over. When I do homework at work or home, someone always says "I learned that in high school

already." On the flip side, I come every Wednesday with a smile, knowing I have people in my corner who want to help me get caught up on the stuff "I should already know." Since becoming a part of Odyssey I feel like I have a true purpose of doing better and becoming better! So far what I do take from each class is reading a story from a long time ago and seeing how we can relate a lot of those stories to our own life stories.

I learned way before middle school that it's best not to answer if you don't really know! But in Odyssey class I feel good about raising my hand and getting it wrong. Just being

heard is new for me, and my classmates help me feel I belong. I feel important knowing I got picked. Also, you have my word on me working really hard to get everything in on time for Jan-May and also to seek the help I need!




**Simone Bell-Perdue**

I believe I should continue in the second semester because the class challenges me. It makes me look beyond what I am going through at the current moment. Being around many of my classmates makes me happy. Going to class and making something out of myself is what keeps me going and not feeling so depressed about my situation. I've gotten a lot out of the class, especially reading Plato's "Allegory of the Cave." A long time ago I would have thought I couldn't read it or would never be able to understand it. I really love working hard, and I want to learn new things. I'm excited to see where this program takes me. Being in the Odyssey Project is honestly making me a stronger and more open human being. I can't wait to finish this second semester great, just like I started.


**Spencer Gamble**

I've stated before I wanted to expand my skill set and become a better student. I have taken the class seriously. I've also developed an intense passion for the English language.

Through participating in the program and corresponding with Coach Marshall, I push myself to go above and beyond his and my expectations. I'm working on the reading part. It's been a long time since I've had required reading. But it's helpful. I still intend to work towards my psychology degree or something like that. It's also been remarkable to work with the 29 other eager students who continue to add diversity and enlightenment to my life every Wednesday evening. I've gained so much insight in the short time we've been in session. I've learned about Socrates, Art History, and US History. I get to work on my writing, which I loved

as a child and still love. I get to break out of my comfort zone every time I come to class. I'm positive I will continue to thrive throughout the next semester. Now that the ice is broken, it's not as difficult, and uncertainty is far less. Participating in this program is one of the best decisions I've made in a long time.


**Sukai Yarbo**

I am sitting among 29 amazing people writing this paper. I can't believe we finished the first semester already, and we have to take a break. A whole month feels too long. Just when I am about to really know everyone, now I will miss you all so much. I can't wait to get back in January just because Odyssey is helping me find myself in ways I never thought possible.

There is no stopping for me even at the end of the year because I finally have a great relationship with my pen and my words. I need to get back here next semester and make it stronger and better. I know for sure everyone in my class feels the same way or even better.



To Emily and Kevin, I can only say thank you for adding me to this perfect class. And by the end of the year I know we will all be leaving being better than we are.

See you next semester. I can't wait to get back to class. With love,  
Sukai



### **Susana Gomez**

Although I have been very quiet and shy in class, I love attending the Odyssey Project.

Every class I learned something new. In one

class I probably have learned more than my whole school life (elementary-high school) combined. I loved learning about William Blake and knowing that he lived a long time ago; we both have the same ideas about education, religion, and life in general. Getting to know about Socrates and all that he represents in life today made me feel like I have been in a cave with my education. It feels like coming out of the cave when I come to Odyssey class every week. It might sound too simple, but I love learning and feel like I can actually understand what Emily, Coach, Kevin, Jean, Gene, and Craig are teaching us and apply it to our lives.

I can't really say what I have contributed because I don't participate much in class, but I think coming to class and doing my homework helps. I am excited for second semester because we are learning about Martin Luther King and the time he was in jail and learning about all his struggles during the sixties. I am hoping that I can learn more about him. Second semester I hope I can be less shy. I would love to keep coming to Odyssey to learn more, eat some delicious food every Wednesday night, and be with my new sisters and brothers on this great journey of our lives.

### **Victoria Patterson**

Why wouldn't you want to keep someone like me in the class? I have come to every class with perfect attendance. When I'm in class I participate. I ask questions, and I listen for the answers. The readings have me connecting to



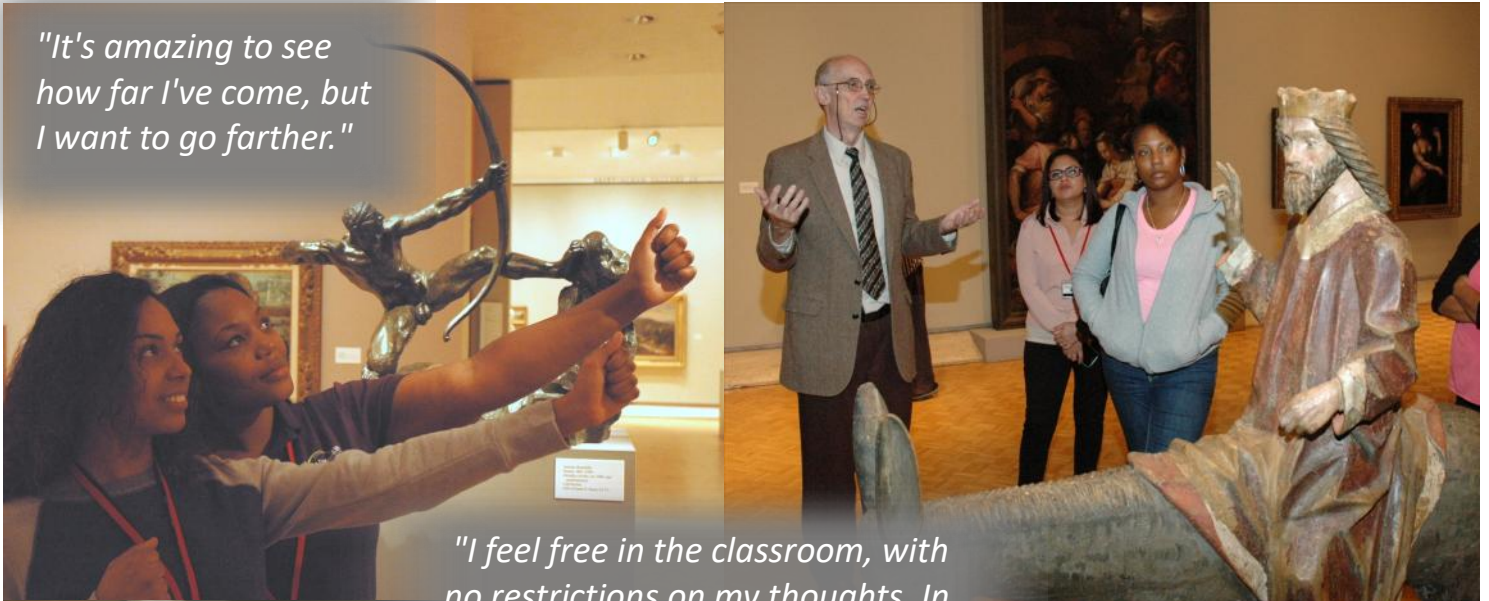
things that happened so many years ago but are still valid today. So far, you all have taught me that writing can bring out emotions we didn't even know were attached. I started off not wanting to share my writing to being able to share

with the class a story about my Crohn's disease. I've gained new family members in everyone. I've been first almost every time for Coach's email. I've only missed two Tuesday tutoring sessions. I've put forth my best effort on all the assignments I've turned in. I have a better understanding of word demons. I often find myself checking if I'm unsure in my work day.

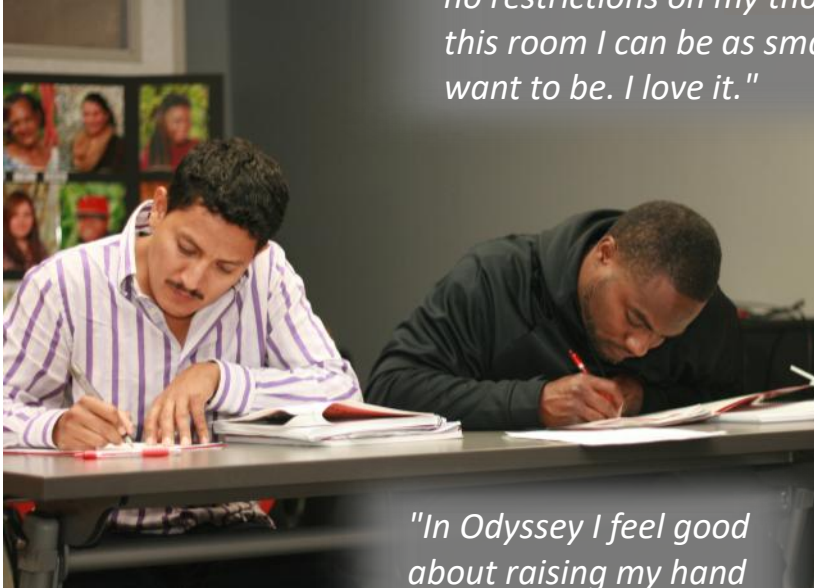
I feel like I've grown so much already from the first night, when I was shy and didn't speak. On break that first night, I asked Emily if she was sure she picked the right person because everyone else sounded so smart. She reassured me that I would be fine and that she was sure she meant to pick me. From there, I felt comfortable and welcomed to let Victoria shine. I feel like second semester can only teach me more.



*"It's amazing to see  
how far I've come, but  
I want to go farther."*



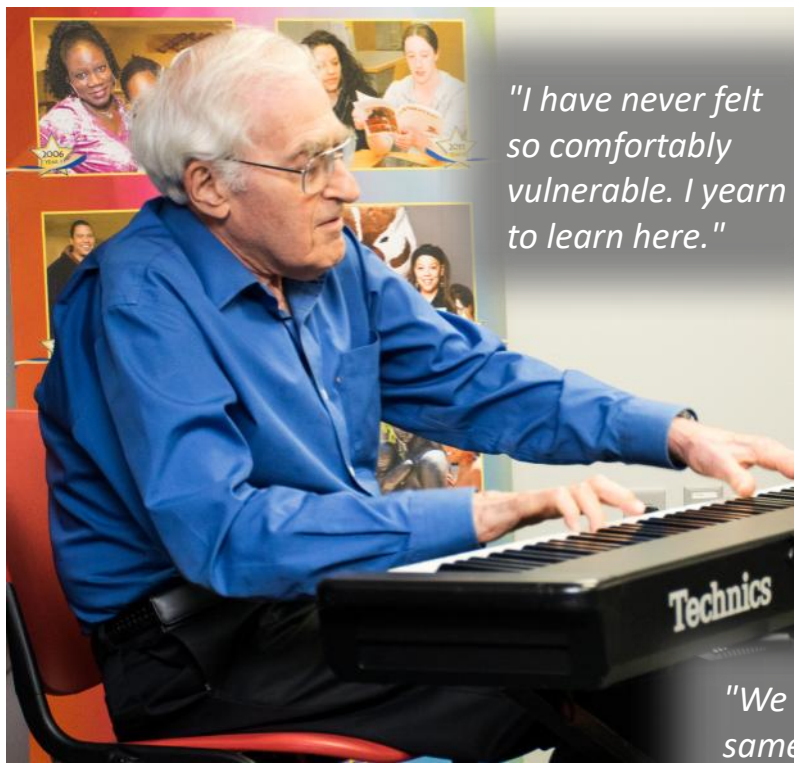
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