

Year 13, Issue 7

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ODYSSEY ORACLE



In this Oracle . . .

Making a Case for Semester Two.....	3
Part of the Journey.....	12
Sonnet Stars	13
Call and Response	15
Giving Tuesday Holiday Fair	19
Odyssey Alumni Graduates.....	20

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MAKING A CASE FOR SEMESTER TWO



Shaimaa Ahmed

Odyssey for me is the gateway of my new journey. I have learned a lot not just by writing and reading but I also learned how to start writing and which books I should choose to read. I feel now that I have an open mind to understand everything around me. From the first day I came to class, something inside me told me to keep going to class. Something attracted me. Also, every single minute I always enjoy my time. I have gotten a lot of information. I want to continue to reach my goals. Odyssey is not only for me but also for all of my kids. I hope that next year my husband can also attend the Odyssey class. My young daughter said, "I wish Odyssey would continue during the summer too" because she likes it. She waits all week for Wednesday. Wednesday, for us, is the happy day and is a special day.



Nickitia Cooper

Thus far, the Odyssey Project has truly opened me up. I've developed new relationships with new admirations. What I once viewed as flaws within are now characteristics within. Pushing through and pushing forward I am familiar with. However, I've never pushed through or forward to allow education to do something for or to me. I'm curious and open to allowing this Odyssey Project to do something to me. My goal for second semester is to allow the Odyssey Project to connect with my authentic self and who I'm supposed to be. I can only be that vivid because the next part of my Odyssey begins with counseling and then it shall all flow from there. Thank you.



Kelly Dixon

Too often, I stop, drop and roll, especially for family members and, in most cases, the situations did not equal four-alarm fires. My thoughts lean towards the postman's creed... through rain, snow, sleet or hail, through dark of night...they will deliver the mail. That is the same commitment that I feel about this class. I started this, and I will finish successfully.



Bettye Emmanuel

As a mom, it's important to me to teach my kids never give up. Many things can happen. Well, when you believe it's hard to change your mind, but I know this class brings the best out of me. It causes me to search, seek, and make sure I apply the truth to my life. It places history to me in ways I never saw,

seeing as though I stressed a dislike for history [before]. My classmates help my thirst to know and engage me by their ways of writing. My kids also enjoy and love "college," as they call it LOL. It would hurt me to know I took what the Odyssey had to offer my family and myself for granted. I truly believe I'm what odyssey means. I've been on this long journey to try to become a Registered Nurse while being a full-time mom to four beautiful children, working full time, having another committed volunteer work for the community, as well as being a phenomenal woman to my loving husband and self. I'm very hard on myself, so I'm destined to complete with honors if the opportunity still remains. Thank you.

Jayvonna Flemming

Odyssey has been a blessing. I have been through so much throughout this class and outside of class. Odyssey has given me that push that makes me eager to want more and explore more in reading and writing. Every Wednesday I get excited about coming to class. I have grown as a person and as a writer. It has been a challenge, but I

constantly push myself when it comes to vocab. The class lures me. My uniqueness is what makes this journey a little easier and more exciting and rewarding.

Jalisa Galvin

The Odyssey Project affected me a lot this

semester

because I have not been in school for so long. Being in this class has gotten me back into wanting to read, write, and ask people for help if I need it. I have come a long way in this class. I want to continue this class because I am willing to put in the work that I need to to be in this class and make sure I'm here. My goals for second semester are to put in a little more work on my homework, not be afraid to call Emily if I don't understand the homework, and try to jump in when we are going through things in class.



Karina Gómez

I'm here to present why I should continue in the Odyssey Project. First of all, this project has affected me in a very positive way. I never thought I would be reading books in English, and now I'm reading poetry, the Declaration of Independence, learning more about history, and going to museums. All of the reading we have done is so well connected to one another. I like the way the homework connects with what we have been talking about in class.

Also, I like the tutoring we have because it helps me understand my reading and helps me figure out the homework and how to express my ideas in the homework.

I would like to continue because I know I can do better. There is so much I need to learn and read, and now I feel more confident; I understand more. I have better ideas, and I stop and think more about books and poems. At the beginning of the program I was a little scared, but now I get excited every time I think about coming to class. I'm proud of myself and all the growing I have done in the past weeks.

**Brandice Hatcher**

It's not *should* I continue but rather I *will* continue. I have struggled with school for the last few years, but being in this program I feel I am at my best. I am tapping into places of my mind that I had no clue were still there. Odyssey has brought



out the creativity in me and the will to continue.

I need to and have to continue to show myself and my daughter that when you put your mind to it you can succeed and to never give up.

My goal for next semester is to be more focused and available

to do my studies and tutoring. I will clear my home, mind, and soul to achieve the maximum of myself. I will cut back my hours at work and focus more.

Karina Herrejon

I have the right to emerge from the many caves I've been in just like anyone else, and all these writers, stories, teachers and tutors are helping me do that. I have the right to be liberated, and that only comes with education; education makes you question people. It makes you question systems. It makes you able to change systems. I want to change systems. I want to stop the circuit. I want to stop thinking I'm not worth having an education and being happy. I want to continue to overcome adversity not for myself, but for those around me. This class is helping me think of how to look at the world in a way that makes me able to survive it and go help people who don't think they can survive. I want to be proud of my writing and become a powerful writer like Frederick Douglass and Walt Whitman. Frederick Douglass changed the way people thought about slavery, and Whitman taught me the power of the wind and to use it as a strength. I need to read more about them.





You can tell that our teachers did a great job at finding special students for this class, and I want to continue next semester to continue watching each of us grow. I am glad I decided to join this class. This is the best class I've been a part of, and it's not even close to done.

Tory Latham

Have I not offered great conversation and presence? I can't imagine that my voice of reason hasn't sent chills tingling up the spines of my brethren. A wonderful, warm weekday wisely warranted the title Wednesday.

Steven Jones

I know I definitely would like to continue next semester. I know this isn't a competition, but I know I wouldn't want to be in any other class. We are a talented group of writers who show that intelligence doesn't come in one shape, size, or form. This class has shown me that I can interpret different types and styles of writing. It has encouraged me to want to read more outside of class. I was already a free thinker, but this class has expanded that part of me. I have watched several of my classmates grow and participate in the discussions. I know a lot of the answers to the questions asked in class, but I don't say anything because I like to hear others speak and break it down, and not be seen as a know-it-all, LOL!



I look forward to Odyssey each week. It is my highlight continuously. I speak of Odyssey everywhere I go with extreme enthusiasm. I present myself well; even Kevin Reilly and Ray Cross would be proud. The best is still yet to come.

Mustafa Mohammed Saed

At first I wanted to be in this class to learn, but I did not know how it was going to be. I thought it was going to be so hard and I would not learn much. The first day was okay, and then I started to count the days; suddenly I stopped. I thought within myself, why am I counting the days? At that moment I said I will live in the moment. I started learning from all the books, but I learned more from the classmates. For the first time, teachers are students, and students are teachers. Every class I attend, I attend with my mind. I'm lucky and I'm so grateful to this project. I'm finding myself learning even when I think I'm not.

Umaima Mohammed Saed

I believe that to be a successful person I need to finish what I started, even if it is challenging. There is nothing that comes easy in this world. I need to work hard to get what I want. Odyssey is the first step for me to be successful. I remember the first day when I met Emily to tell her about my life, I cried; I cried because I remembered how hard my life was in Malaysia because I was unable to go to school. I remembered how I used to look at the kids going to school with crying eyes because I couldn't go to school, and I remembered how my life was in a cave. When I got accepted into the Odyssey Project, I felt like there was nothing impossible in this world. Odyssey has made me a talented person. Now I can express my feelings through my writing more than before. Today I had to write about my book in my reading class, and my teacher was surprised at the way that I wrote my opinion of the book. I am proud of myself for doing my homework all of the time and for not missing a class. Thanks, Odyssey, for giving me hope for the future :) !!



experience until we read (or share our stories). Please allow me to return. This is just the beginning of what I want the rest of my life to look like.

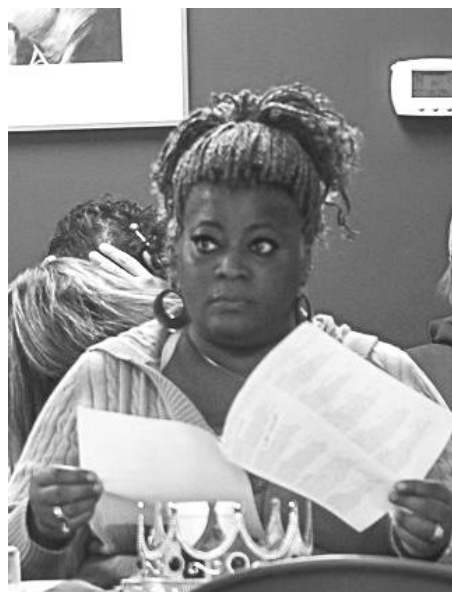


Rosalyn Richmond

Words really can't express how this chance has changed me. I used to read, yet now I am learning things. I am geared to complete this journey that I have started. I want to continue because I am addicted and cannot get enough. I plan to: Stay on track with assignments. Focus on what's important. I enjoy learning of lives other than mine. I will work to fuel knowledge of what I need to succeed.

Lisa Partee

I don't know...I feel as though I have received far more than I have given. Any reason that immediately comes to mind sounds childish and selfish to me. I need to go further because there is still so much for me to learn. We are given "feasts" each time we meet. I feel as though I am still trying to finish the appetizer. I know that this educational experience is not therapy or "church," but for me it is all of that. This place/opportunity feeds me and heals me and grounds me and gives me chances to know others like me, and it also *humbles me*. Someone said that we think we are all alone in our





Katia Robinson

I feel I should move forward to second semester because I have achieved some goals that got me this far into this class. It has affected me in a strong way as far as not giving up because I didn't get all my homework done or not giving up because I have personal problems going on. It makes me think about what the Odyssey can do to my future. I know that I have many other goals to

accomplish further on in my life because I have a daughter.

Arkeshia Sallay

I love the Odyssey class. It's so very insightful, and I have learned a lot. I've also met some great people. I actually look forward to Wednesday night class. I love how hands on and dedicated the professors are to us and our goals in life. I feel you couldn't get a better experience/ jumpstart toward a better, more rewarding life. I want to continue because I'm already in a better place in my life due to my participation in Odyssey. I feel like they will not let me fail, and therefore I cannot or will not fail. Odyssey is a part of me, and this



journey for me has started off great. It will continue to be great, full of enjoyment and fulfillment. I feel I will successfully complete this journey and go on to obtain and endure great success in life, with the experience of the Odyssey Program under my belt. Then I will come back to tell my story and help others. My goals for second semester will be to write and speak with more ease and efficiency, to dig deeper and relate even more to the subjects, and to understand myself more because of that knowledge.

Luna Santos

I would love to continue with the Odyssey program. This opportunity has given me so much to learn about myself and others. I have become more confident about myself around others, not to be "normal" but to stand out as a unique woman



with a beautiful soul that can change and help others. Not only has Odyssey helped with my studies but also with my health and well-being. I never dreamed of going to a clinic and starting my hormone therapy . . . Odyssey is a transition for me and for all of us. It is a lifetime opportunity to become better ones. Thank you, Emily and Odyssey staff, for this lovely opportunity. I really hope I can continue with you guys!

Kala Taylor

I know I'm not the best student in here, but everything we have read so far has touched my heart. Every word I've read and topic has made me think on a deeper level. This course has made me stop and truly think about life. Things I've learned I've questioned. It's turned my mind to some beautiful, endless questions and life lessons. I need to learn. I feel I can learn something from everyone in this class. I'm in a class with wonderful and intelligent people. I'm lucky to be here with my niece and friends, making new friends. Every time I'm here I feel like I'm more thoughtful and intelligent than I think. I can do more and set goals for myself. I would continue because I simply love the readings we do here. These writers inspire me to continue on with my education; I feel they had even worse disadvantages than I did and are happy. Motivation



has always been an issue for me. At times I feel that my life is worthless and I just coexist. When I come to class and learn something new, my spirit awakens. My mind feels empowered once I reconsider the dark, cloudy thoughts that consume me sometimes. I personally feel that I'm here

because of a beautiful fate that needed to be put in front of me.

Marisela Tellez

When I first started Odyssey I was under the impression/feeling that it would be a difficult class/challenge full of loads of homework. This class has by far been different than any other class I have taken. I am thankful for all the opportunities Odyssey has given me. I enjoy feeling that the class is more one-on-one. This class has made me really pick my brain and

prove to myself the knowledge I hold and am capable of learning. I have always been scared to succeed; nonetheless, this class has given me the push I needed to leave this fear behind. I would love to enjoy the rest of this Odyssey. I have already embraced so many things we have learned that I can't wait to see what's left. My goals for second semester would be to learn what I am taught, to teach others, and to continue the path I am on by finishing all of the homework lessons, arriving at each class, and embracing all opportunities.

**Mai Thao**

What is my testimony? How do I justify myself that I, too, deserve a red seat in this room every Wednesday night? There was once a time when I thrived on human interactions and my creative ways of conversation were fluid and easy. My writing skills came freely and I expressed openly. My reading was packed with imagination and adventure. There was once a time when I envied my friends because they had a friend like me and I wished I could also be Mai's friend. I forget exactly when it happened but it was as if Mai contained too much explosion, so we



decided to put her on pause. She has not been fed the power of knowledge and good conversation in years. Her brain cells have not had to be exercised to think critically for many, many moons now. She values variety, needs stimulation, and requires someone to kick her ass. So I say let's do her a favor and humbly kick it for her. She doesn't quite understand it yet, but she will thank you in the end.



Tasha Thompson

The Odyssey Project has affected my life a lot so far. I would be honored and blessed to complete another semester in the Odyssey Project. Reading all these interesting, challenging, but amazing books, I have taken in so much as well as learned so much. I have learned things I had absolutely no idea about. I am enjoying being here every week at

5:15 pm, eager to learn. I would like to continue another semester because I don't want to stop learning here at only one semester. I would like to continue to go on and learn more, to graduate! I want to walk across the stage in May. One reason I want to continue is to be around everyone in my class because they're like family. I may be quiet and not talk, but I am learning so much. I definitely do not want to stop here. Being in this class, from the first day to now, I just want to continue to watch everyone in this grow. Each of us has grown a lot so far. I've been doing and trying my best. I would be devastated if I didn't continue for another semester. Thanks for the great opportunity so far!! I look forward to continuing to watch everyone, along with myself, grow.

Tamara Thompson Moore

The Odyssey Project has disrupted my comfort in being mediocre and my willingness to accept that I haven't accomplished what I intended. I am



intellectually stimulated and challenged to produce evidence of such in my writing. This has provided me with the

fire I needed so desperately.

As a person who has endured many setbacks, I have a tendency to point at those things to explain why I did not succeed. I don't want to do that anymore. I don't have the space in my heart to tolerate that I have wasted an opportunity as valuable as this course. I am in the midst of personal and public turmoil, but I fight against the temptations to lie down because I'm so tired; in order to catch my second wind, I must push myself to the point of exhaustion and fatigue. Brokenness must yield me something. I clung to the margins assigned to me for so long because I didn't understand the meaning of what it's like to graduate. I can do this. I will do this.

Guadalupe Tinajero

I am going to continue a second semester because Odyssey is helping me grow. I am learning so much about the different subjects that I thought I was

never going to learn. For instance, I thought the poems were very complicated to read but the message that I got from them helped me to connect the meaning of life with the writing.



My goals for the

second semester are to participate more in class and to not procrastinate with my homework because that makes me stressed. I will continue with class because it helped me to improve my learning, my English, and to improve my self-esteem. I love this class and really enjoy the talking and the comments of all of my classmates. Even though I sometimes end class depressed with some topics, I mostly feel very happy and ready to keep learning and enjoying this fun class.

Ashley Wills

I'm so thankful for the opportunity to be a part of such an influential program with so many intelligent professors and peers. I've learned so much more than I could've imagined. I really surprise myself by the feedback I receive. I think that continuing through the second semester would broaden my horizons and mentality emotionally and influentially. My goals for second semester are to continue to observe and utilize the skills and knowledge I've learned so far. I'm looking forward to the next semester and what it has to offer.

Jelissa Williams

This Odyssey! My Odyssey! My journey! It's not over! It's not done! Why should it be over? No, no, it can't be over--not even halfway over. I need more. My soul yearns for more--more education to mentally mature, more knowledge to empower myself as well as my thoughts.

My writing has taken on a new form. It's like every sentence, almost every sentence, tells a story or describes a path one has taken. No, no, it can't be



almost over. I'm just getting started. I am finding myself fully and discovering my voice—the voice I KNEW I always had. This is my moment! It's time for change.

I've grown as a reader, a writer,



and a thinker. I'm improving as a student. I find reasons to move forward when I feel like giving up.

Joseph Young

So far in the Odyssey class I've been able to grasp and comprehend content that we studied in high school but with a better understanding of what it all means. For example, we studied US History in school, but in the Odyssey class we broke down exactly what every line and word meant in the Declaration. If I were

to go back to high school, I feel as though I would know more than any of the students in my class about the history of America. Also, years ago I was a part of The African American Ethnic Academy. We learned all about our culture and history of slavery. Since I was so young, we only listened and did projects or performed plays. This Odyssey class gave all of the information I had about the African American culture a more in-depth meaning.



Odyssey has opened my eyes and ears and mind and created avenues in my brain that were once dead ends. This class will help plunge me into my intellectual adulthood, with a clearer transition. I had no idea if I'd ever end up back in school until Odyssey gave me the clear path to take towards continuing my education. I appreciate all advisors for their belief in me as an Odyssey student. I can't wait to see what else is in store!

PART OF THE JOURNEY



Three of our original 30 students are taking different paths now. Carnell Perkins has moved with his new wife to Rio and is awaiting the birth of their child. Raven Fabal finished credits for semester one but is now working as a children's book illustrator out of her home while dealing with medical issues. Shayba Pierce hopes to come back as a volunteer for Odyssey but, like Raven, is dealing with medical challenges. We wish all three of them the very best. Here are notes from Shayba and Raven.

Hi everyone,
I know you all have been wondering why I have been

absent from class. I have been under tremendous amounts of stress due to a long, nine-year fight with Endometriosis. I cannot begin to tell you the struggles I have faced and hardship I have gone through over this. It is the cruelest thing to look around, be around, and interact with other people's children and have to come to the realization that you might not ever get the chance to do what women were naturally put on earth to do: be nurturing mothers, to procreate, bear children. I could continue; however, I will not cast my pain on you all. I do wish you all the best at Odyssey as well as in your personal lives. Continue to shine like glitter while reaching for the stars. Thanks to the staff and students.

Shayba Pierce



To Odyssey Students:

I suppose you know by now that I have issues that won't allow me to continue attending Odyssey Project classes with you. I want you all to know that it has been an amazing experience being in class with you, even for the short time I have been with the project.

Emily and the rest of the Odyssey Project faculty have really chosen some very special, talented, and unique people for this year's class. I know that we've all have had hard times and challenges on our journeys before the Odyssey Project, but I also know that the Odyssey Project is already changing all our lives for the better. Although I won't be in the classes now, I want to say that I'm very proud to have met you all and I wish you all

great success in the future. You are all smart, special people and I will miss hearing your stories and laughter. Carry on my classmates and rock the world as I know you can! **Raven "Ravenbird" Fabal**

SONNET STARS

sonnet: a poem of fourteen lines using any of a number of formal rhyme schemes, in English typically having ten syllables per line

Congratulations to these three Odyssey students for winning our sonnet competition with these entries.



Part-Time Father
By Mai Neng Thao



In a neglected house he has been crowned
Fifteen heartbeats he has descended down
And not one invited to his embrace
His love is cheap and a shameful disgrace

Across the sea he ships his finest love
Leaving fifteen souls sadly empty of
Softly they wait and yearn to rid the burn
For one they know has long shifted and turned

The caress of his voice is high prestige
Something fifteen bleak eyes will never see

Fifteen lonely minds stare wondering why
They can't get close enough to feel the tie
Of a bond so powerful from their sire
Who deprived them a love they most desire





Patience

By Jelissa Williams

Life gets me down
 Although I try to stand strong
 Everyday a new struggle arises, as the world spins 'round
 Wallowing in my iniquities, feeling so alone
 I wish things weren't as tough!
 So hard to stay focused
 These bills piling up
 Most days I am hopeless
 Bow down to my knees in submission
 This load I cannot bear, inside builds up fear
 Through faith I receive permission
 To conquer my worries, to persevere
 I must not stress over life's obstacles even though I am not complacent
 Yet and still I am thankful for today, I must have Patience

I am Woman

By Jelissa Williams

Tell me that I am weak, I will prove you wrong
 The might of a thousand men lies in me
 Created and held two lives inside of me, nine months long
 Nursed those angels with the soul of me
 Women are the weaker of the two!
 Deep inside I possess the strength of an entire nation
 There is nothing I can't do
 Seeking to nurture my mind through education
 My feminine touch restores that which is masculine
 See me as the better half
 Heart set on surpassing them
 Give me the opportunity, I won't crash
 See me for me, fire burns in my stomach
 Standing here stronger than ever, I AM WOMAN!



**Mom****By Joseph Young**

Hey mom, I miss all the things you used to do for me,
 Give me your last dollar even when you barely had your own money.
 Must have been hard, but you never left us hungry.
 I'm missing your cheesy macaroni, pork chops, and spaghetti.
 You took on the world even when you wasn't ready.
 That's a learned lesson,
 You taught me how to take what I was given and treat it as a blessing.
 That was nothing. The way you forgave and never forgot, that was something.
 Never took a lesson for granted, always learned something.
 Always burning and drinking,
 Too much time spent thinking
 How the world keeps taking but never giving back.
 I would get out of line, you put my mind back on track.
 I guess you the reason why I'm at where I'm at.



CALL AND RESPONSE

This is a small sampling of the perceptive and empathetic comments classmates made about each other's writing in the Oracles.

**Shaimaa Ahmed**

I couldn't imagine what it would be or feel like to come to America. A lot of people look at this country as a place where dreams can be achieved, where they can live freely and without fear. Shaimaa stated

that when she went to explore her surroundings, that she saw good and bad things. The way this country has been behaving as of late, I don't know what good people see in a place where there is continuous police brutality, new age racism, and, for a lot of us, unequal opportunity for a better life. Those are the things I see around me. I hope you are able to find happiness here in Wisconsin. It's a cold place to live.

(Joseph Young)**Bettye Emmanuel**

I read Bettye's piece on Finding Plato's Cave Today. Growing up I was always told you will never fully appreciate what you have until it is gone. The pain of losing a child is something I hope to never

experience. However, reading her piece gave me new insight on how ladies such as her cope and manage through such extreme pain. If there was ever a super hero cape factory somewhere, I would buy her one in her favorite color and line it with gold. **(Kelly Dixon)**



Jayvonna Flemming

Jayvonna, I liked your writing on what you took from the parenting empowerment classes. I've also taken some parenting classes. However, I missed this one, so your take on it was eye

opening and welcomed. You stated you tried some of the techniques when you got home but found yourself falling back into old habits. I feel you on that because I've been a parent for 20 years and still sometime fall back on old habits. Change is hard, especially if it's been something instilled in you since you were a child and it was your belief that it was the right way of doing it. It's very hard to relearn things, but you are a young parent, full of life and parenting ahead of you. If you feel yourself stumbling and falling, pick yourself up, regain that momentum, apologize to your babies, and turn it around. It's never too late to make a change for the better. You've already made great strides by being open to and willing to change. Good luck, young lady. **(Arkeshia Sallay)**



Karina Herrejon

I chose Karina Herrejon's "Embracing Difference" because we have things in common—like, I also have a learning disability, take tests outside of class, and am not a good speller. When she

wrote that I was, like, "oh, that is so me." I know how it feels to think you don't fit in because you have a learning disability. At the same time, I feel like people really don't know how we feel about spelling. I misspell simple words and feel stupid. I really like this one she wrote because I have something in common with her.

(Jalisa Galvin)



Mustafa Mohammed Saed

Hey Mustafa,

I'm responding to your piece from the Oracle on October 7, 2015 "Embracing Difference."

Your English has improved tremendously since your arrival in Malaysia in 2006. I'm happy to see you aren't remaining silent as much as before, and I encourage you to speak more. There is much value in your words because they come from experience unique to you. I recall our field trip to Union South to get our University of Wisconsin identification cards. Carnell, Joe and myself were about to take a picture, and at the last minute we asked you to join us. Thankfully you did! I hope you felt as though you fit in with us in that moment because no one should ever feel left out. **(Tory Latham)**

يا مصطفى،

أنا الاستجابة ل ديك قطعة من أوراكل على 7 أكتوبر 2015 "الفرق احتضان". لغتك الإنجليزية قد تحسنت بشكل كبير منذ وصولك في ماليزيا في عام 2006. أنا سعيد لرؤيتك لا تبقى صامتا بقدر ما قبل ، و أنا أشجعكم على التحدث أكثر من ذلك. هناك قيمة كبيرة في كلماتك لأنها تأتي من تجربة فريدة من نوعها لك. أذكر رحلة ميدانية جهدنا ل اتحاد جنوب أجل الحصول على جامعة ويسكونسن بطاقات الهوية . كانت كارنيل ، جو و نفسي على وشك التقاط صورة ، و في اللحظة الأخيرة طلبنا منك أن تنضم إلينا . الحمد لله أنك فعلت ! وآمل أن شعرت كما لو كنت تناسب معنا في تلك اللحظة لأنه لا ينبغي لأحد أن تشعر بأنها مستبعدة من أي وقت مضى .





Umaima Mohammed Saed

It is amazing how each and every one of us has our own story to tell and share. I was left in shock upon reading about Umaima's own cave, which she experienced in Iraq and as a refugee. It must be terrifying to

know you cannot leave your home because of the bombing taking place outside, much less be able to play outside and enjoy your childhood because of living in fear of being kidnapped or killed. With everything going on recently in the world, it really puts into perspective the saying, "there are two sides to every story." It's sad to see innocent families and children suffer and fall to be victims based on others' poor mistakes. The worst part is that, most likely, many share a similar story to Umaima's but are not always fortunate to be able to live and tell their experiences. I am glad to be able to read her story today since it is proof she survived living through such trauma, kept safe and can embrace the opportunities she has been given for a new life. **(Marisela Tellez-Giron)**



Lisa Partee

Lisa touched my heart when I read her feelings about our trip to the museum. I can feel her happiness for finding her way. I would like to tell her that nothing is impossible in this world; all we dream for is going

to happen one day, even if it comes late. I can see her children being proud of her. Lisa is an awesome woman, and she has a talent in describing her feelings through her writing. Keep up the good work J **(Umaima Mohammed Saed)**



Rosalyn Richmond

Just from watching Rosalyn from our very first meeting until now, I am often left feeling like I am looking at another me. We can't be too far apart in age. I see her with who I believe to be, her

grandchildren, and I imagine that she is as tired as

I am at the end of the day with so many responsibilities...and she, like me, starts and finishes her day with gospel music. I LOVE gospel music! And I also imagine that because of her love for gospel music, she must also have a deep love for God. **(Lisa Partee)**



Luna Santos

'Luna Santos' sounds like a celebrity's name. I imagine a fashionable lady on a red carpet, adorned in the finest couture, but in reality, Luna is a fighter. She says she wasn't given her name, and

later mentions beginning a process of becoming who she was meant to be; to me that shows Luna has so much zeal. Appreciating beauty and the other qualities of the moon, Luna also relates to the audible pronunciation. She seeks comfort, protection, stability, and strength in the glow of this ancient star. I loved the description of rising from the dark; this made me understand how Luna herself is the moon. The joy and triumph are right there, boldly being celebrated, and I want to cheer her on! **(Tamara Thompson Moore)**



Kala Taylor

I choose to write about a piece from Kala because she always has a lot to say. I choose to write about what music means to Kala because what she has to say is interesting.

"Music is my soul mate. Music has seen every side of me." That is so me! I feel the same. Music is my escape, and it seems as if that is the only way that I can vent, express myself, and even cry. Kala also mentioned, "Music was always there to motivate me, to remind me that violence only makes things worse." That is a true statement. She said when she had a painful big decision to make, music was there to help her make that. I agree with a lot of what she said because music is very calming and relaxing, especially, when you can relate to it and think, and just clear your head! **(Tasha Thompson)**



Tasha Thompson

After reading about Tasha's own cave it really made me take a step back and reflect on many things in life we take for granted. You can tell that she has been through a lot at a young age, especially when she mentions being in residential treatment at age fourteen. I can only imagine how hard it was on her to go through such daily activities, feeling like she was stepping on someone's toes all of the time. It could not have been easy for her to live far away from family. She didn't have the freedom to do what most of us take for granted every day. Her writing reminded me of Frederick Douglass because she, too, worked for her freedom, was isolated from her family and did her own schooling at home. She has come a long way from a rough childhood. Nonetheless, she is still here standing. **(Marisela Tellez-Giron)**



Tamara Thompson Moore

Tamara, wow, you are an incredible writer. I really enjoyed reading your piece of written art. Along the way of self-development, I also lost several friends, and I like the honesty you placed behind your writing about having the willingness to have difficult conversations and living enslaved by a "prison of external validation and approval." There's so much truth to this. My most favorite reading from this entire passage was the seventh paragraph when you talked about fearing the unknown but that when we abandon fear all together, we release ourselves into a world of opportunities. I am still working on this and I truly believe every word you had said. This was so beautifully and well written. **(Mai Thao)**



Jelissa Williams

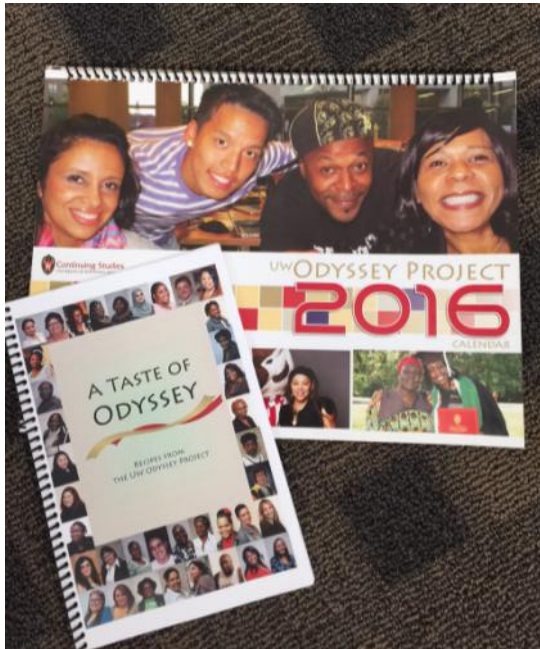
Reading Jelissa's response to government assistance, I was not surprised to hear what she's saying. First, I wanted to hug her and tell her she's on the right path. Long nights of studying and struggling through a low wage job will pay off only because she has will and determination. With her personality, I know she won't be defeated. Her points are all valid, only I'm on the other end of the spectrum. I have to work three jobs and I don't qualify for anything. But how do I continue? I am working my life away, being a mother and trying to incorporate school and homework. It's tough but I'm refusing to work my life away at dead end jobs. Jelissa is a warrior. I believe this vicious cycle will not define her but that she will succeed tremendously. I believe in her. **(Ashley Wills)**



Ashley Wills

Ashley's response moved me and made me cry. I know how she feels; I know how it feels when you think that you don't fit in. I know how it feels when you try to make ends meet. The worst thing is that it is not only you who suffers; it is also your children. I think about them, seeing how, at their age, they have to get used to living without many things. That is what makes you try to move the world in one day. Many times I feel like I want to run and get an education and the job that I need to provide my children with what they deserve. I know I can't. What makes me feel better is that I am on the right track, and that with perseverance and determination I am going to be able to provide not only the materials, but the education that my children have the right to obtain. **(Guadalupe Tinajero)**

GIVING TUESDAY HOLIDAY FAIR



ODYSSEY ALUMNI GRADUATES



Keena Atkinson
Odyssey '10, UW '15



Milli Lau
Odyssey '14,
Madison College '15



Edwina Robinson
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