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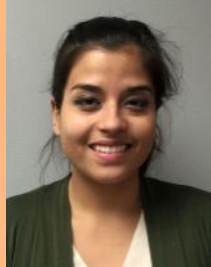
Joy Bally



Simone Bell-Perdue



Belem Calixto



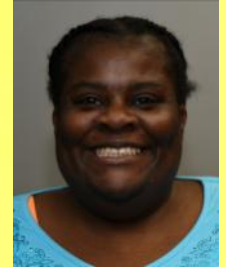
Maria Cardenas



Alyanna Cooper



Maria Dary



Lawana Diagne



Spencer Gamble



Susana Gomez



Marisol Gonzalez



Asha Green



Shanon Holmes



Anthony Jefferson



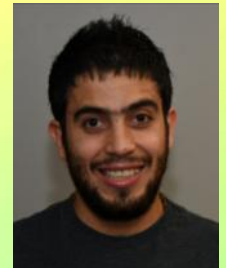
Nathaniel Lake



Carissa Love



José Mendoza



Ahmad Nahas



Musab Naji



Victoria Patterson



Cherri Sorrells



Grisel Tapia



Felica Thomas



Avé Thorpe



Jessica Tucker



Johnnie Walton



Kyisha Williams



Sukai Yarbo

FINDING COURAGE

courage: the state or quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face danger with self-possession, confidence, and resolution; bravery; the ability to do something that frightens one; strength in the face of pain or grief (from Latin *cor* heart)

I got in a canoe after midnight in a storm to cross an ocean. This trip takes about 35 minutes on a ferry, but in a small boat like the one I got on, it took about



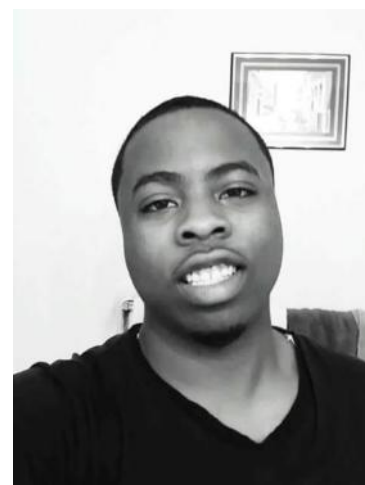
two hours. I was so scared. At some point on that little boat, lightning struck, and I held my head and screamed at the top of my lungs. Eventually, I settled for prayer. Oh boy, I prayed and said about every word I knew in the Qur'an. When I thought I could pray no more, I saw the lights of the city in the distance. I've never been happier to see the lights of a sleeping city. After a few minutes, I sat down on the sand of the beach, and it was all over. I took a deep breath and just thanked God. I thought to myself, how did I do it? But, anyway, I did it, and it's the most courageous thing I have ever done. **(Sukai Yarbo)**

A time when I felt courageous was when I went to the Illinois Department of Corrections at the age of 14. The year was 1998, and I was sent to one of the worst juvenile corrections centers in Illinois. I had to fight a lot. Everyone was older than I was, so winning the fight made me feel like a natural born warrior. Besides fighting, I had to pay very close attention to those around me. I had to be emotionally intelligent and empathetic. I had to survive, so I did. **(Johnnie Walton)**



Finding out that my brother from another mother had been shot and was fighting for his life took a lot of courage. I had to have the courage of being there for his immediate family, spending long days and long nights at the hospital because it was too hard for his mother to deal with, finding encouraging words, trying to make

others laugh to keep from crying, being the messenger of such horrible news both when he was shot and when he passed away, and then not allowing myself to break down in front of everyone because I was the positive energy in the room. Finally I allowed myself to embrace the



emotions that he was really gone as they lowered his body into the ground. I nervously spoke at the funeral on behalf of everyone, stating how we put our differences to the side and became a strong team, a family trying to make sure he was okay, that everyone was okay. We may not have been close coming into the situation, but because all our hearts carried love for him, we created a love for one another. **(Kyisha Williams)**

When I think of a time I was brave, I think of the day I rode a rollercoaster for the first time. I was about 20 years old and had been deathly afraid of heights my entire life. I attended a church outing with a youth group to Dorney Amusement Park in Pennsylvania. All the girls paired up to ride the orange monster that promised certain death. There was an uneven amount of girls, and I was begged to ride to complete the pairings. I reluctantly agreed. As the protection bars lowered on my waist, I broke out into a cold sweat. I tightly squeezed my eyes closed the entire time. I knew I would lose consciousness at the sight of my body defying gravity. I prayed to God the entire ride and promised never to sin again if He let me live. **(Cherri Sorrells)**



Two weeks after the birth of my son, I began to experience headaches like never before. I tried everything under the sun to ease my headaches. The hot, steamy shower was the only thing that worked until my boyfriend found me passed out in the shower. I was rushed to the hospital and numerous tests were run: still nothing. They didn't know the cause of the

headache, blurred vision, and high blood pressure. I was treated for high blood pressure and released.

Two days after I got out of the hospital, I was driving to the doctor for a hospital follow-up, and I had a seizure while driving. Back to the hospital I went: more tests, no cause found, release. Two months later, I was diagnosed with eclampsia, high blood pressure after pregnancy.

(Asha Green)

A time when I had courage was when I was weak with no career and at a standstill in my life with no money. I had the courage to realize I needed a new beginning, and I needed to start my life. I enrolled back in school. I was scared because I am a shy person. I have had to force myself to engage in class more than I ever have, talk to classmates, and make school the best I can because this is it. I won't back out; I will finish. This is exactly what I did and have been doing. I've never engaged, laughed, been myself around people in a classroom like I have been doing since I started school, and that to me is courage within myself. **(D'onna Atkinson)**

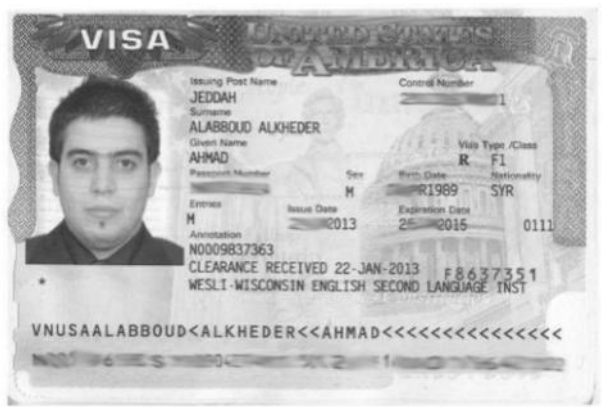




I felt brave taking projects I have never done before, like teaching a basic computer class, coordinating parent trainings, organizing press conferences and, most importantly, being active with the Latino community. All of these experiences have given me the organizing skills I possess now. And something that I notice is that my children see the importance of serving our community. I might say that what I do now is based on my childhood experience; by that I mean suffering because of not having the basics in life. **(Grisel Tapia Claudio)**

with an alcoholic father. When my family offered to help me move to the USA, I was very sad to leave my country, and I knew I would need to have to have lots of courage to cross the border with my little son. After spending one week apart from my son and being deported, I got the courage to try again because my family and son were already in the USA.

I didn't have an option. I had to cross the border, to keep trying until I got together with my son and family again. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**



I remember I was a single mother. My family was in the USA, and I was alone in Mexico. The father of my son offered to get back together. Sometimes I thought that it was my only choice, but I got up the courage and made a promise to myself and to my son that I would make a good decision for both of us. Then, I took my son to work and asked my aunt for help because I didn't want my son to suffer



One day I woke up with lots of emotional feelings that came to me when I got my

student visa to pursue my education in the U.S. That moment was unbelievable for my family and myself as well. After receiving an F1 visa and coming to Madison, Wisconsin, I felt more excited and interested in making a new life here. **(Ahmad Nahas)**

I was brave when, at the age of 14, I was assaulted. I felt like I was brave because somehow, some way, I got out of the situation and ran all the way home as scared as I was and told my mom. She immediately called the police. Still to this day, I can't believe I made it out as it was me against two men, so I look back at it, like, man, I was brave. Even now when I feel like I don't have much strength, I go back to the time I was 14 years old and made it out alive. I was scared. I told them I would not tell anyone, and they were dumb enough to believe it. I remember running home; I could barely form the words out of my mouth to my mom because I was supposed to be at school but I wasn't. It was then I remembered how much trouble I caused being a teenager, but did I deserve this? In my mom's words, "No way in hell." (**Simone Bell-Perdue**)



On March 7, 2016, my son's father and I had to make the toughest decision that a parent could ever face. I had to decide to take my Zaire off life support and donate his organs. In that moment, my heart stopped, knowing that his heart would not beat in his body, but in the shell

of someone else's five-month old child in Ohio. All my mind could think was, "Zaire, wake up in these last minutes. Do not leave us to make this troubling decision. Do not leave me with the decision of letting you go. How do you expect me to move on?" I had a choice, a decision, and a right to decide my son's fate. I didn't know if he was hurting or suffering, something I never wanted him to do. I was told my boy had no brain activity, yet his heart was still beating in his body.

My mind told my soul that he still had a chance.

The doctors said no chance.

On March 8, 2016 at 4:49 p.m. and five seconds, Zaire's heart no longer beat in his body. (**Felicia Thomas**)

There have been many moments when I have had to be courageous, like the time I went to work maintaining a smile on my face, as if everything was perfectly fine, but inside, I was dead, my soul was gone, and I was hurting. I was being betrayed, but every time I stepped into my job, I helped the residents with no complaints. I did more than help: I listened to their problems and solved them; I held their hand when they started crying. (**Kendra Atkinson**)

My spouse went to work when he was in a bad position in his life. He was faced with a new family, a family back in his country (Senegal), and being a new father. With all the demands of life, the day he went to work, a tire rod hit him in his face. He broke his jaw. I received the call telling me that my husband was hurt. . . . When he wanted to just give up, I had to assure him that we were going to be all right. . . . I had to be the voice, mother, and backbone, as well as take my husband to doctor appointments. My faith helped me and my family pull through. . . . Since then, I knew I had a gift to never give up, for I had become that woman who was working diligently to keep her family together. (**Lawana Diagne**)



A time in my life when I was brave would be recently. As my kid's father spent eight years mentally and physically abusing me, I had finally had enough. I finally stood up on my own two feet and started taking care of my son and myself alone. When he started to see me succeeding without him, he asked for me to take him in. I finally put my foot down and said, "No! You have manipulated my brain for far too long. I don't think that would be a good idea." People who knew me and my situation knew how hard this was for me. I had always let him get his way with anything he wanted. This time I had finally said, "NO!" I no longer feel bad for the situation he had put himself in; he made his bed, and now he can lie in it. **(Jessica Tucker)**

A moment when I felt I had courage or had to be brave was when I decided to leave the city of Chicago where I was born and raised. I was leaving my entire family behind due to the fact that I had a one year old and was eight months pregnant with another child, searching for a safer environment.

I moved to Madison, WI, where I knew no one. I went to a shelter for help, which is where my journey began. **(Avé Thorpe)**

I can think of a time in my life when I was a young girl. It was hard to accept the fact that I had a learning disability and was going to special tutoring and having a special education class. I had to be brave enough to stand tall and accept the facts. That means knowing that it's OK to be different. God didn't make us all the same. I had to have the courage and strength to know that this is OK. It's what makes me be me. I was starting to lose



hope and faith. Also, being around people who have the same issues as me and finding my place where I fit in was like segregation, being separated from my classmates.

I used to attend Masonic Learning Center for help with reading and writing. It really helped me along the way through struggle and hard times. **(Carissa Love)**



I had a huge decision to make at such a young age. I was lost in how to make the right choice, with only being 16 and all of the options. How was I going to make the right one? I was pregnant and scared of the unknown. The stereotypes people made of it were as if my life was over, although I was never one to give up. The decision was probably one of the most difficult ones I would ever have to make.

I took some time and backed away from everyone's thoughts, only so I could have my own. That's when it came to me. I'd keep my baby and fight for our future. I can do this; I can become more than a stereotype.

My son is now 14 years old, and we beat the odds together. We learn and grow every day as one. Because I made the decision to keep him, we both are who we are. **(Alyanna Cooper)**



A time I was brave was recently, actually. I was in the E.R. in horrible pain, unable to keep anything down, move or think straight. I was admitted into the hospital, and the pain seemed to be getting worse. They said I would have to go into emergency surgery; there was a chance I could end up with a poop bag (colostomy) if things went wrong or were worse than they thought. It could be temporary or permanent. I showed courage to make the decision to go through with it with the odds not in my favor. It was very scary and nerve-racking. I survived bag-free. **(Victoria Patterson)**

I showed courage when I left Trinidad at the age of 27 for New York City with \$100 in my pocket. When I arrived in NYC I thought to myself things could only get better and not worse.

I stayed with a friend for a month or so. The first week I went job hunting and I found one as a babysitter for a 9 year old boy named Ned.

I was renting a very small studio in Greenwich Village for \$800.

NYC was a little too fast and expensive for me, so after six months I moved to Madison. **(Joy Bally)**



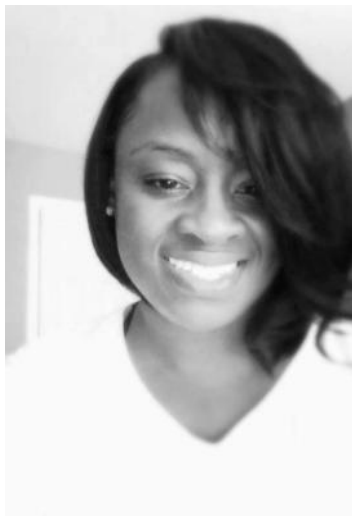
When I was 14, I tried to end my life for the final time. I woke up the next day determined that if it wasn't meant for me to die, I would then live my life to the best of my ability. I would no longer trap or push myself down so far but instead push myself to enjoy the little things in life. This was a promise to myself. It's one I will work on always! **(Nathaniel Lake)**



I went to Rosarito several years ago. I was with three of my college chums. We proceeded to go to the bars. I had too much to drink and wandered off. I was lost, completely lost. I stumbled upon

Allejandro. He spoke little English as I spoke little Spanish. He offered me a place to spend the night. We tried to communicate the best way we could under the circumstances. I actually enjoyed my time there. The next morning, after I was more coherent, Allejandro guided me in the direction of the hotel where I was supposed to be staying. I fought through the fear of being lost in Rosarito, Mexico and trusting the kindness of a complete stranger.

(Spencer Gamble)



On a particular day, I received a call from my baby sister, crying and telling me she had got jumped on by her so-called boyfriend. I was so pissed I started to cry with her. I knew I couldn't let my sister hear me cry. So I gave my sister some encourage-

ment and asked where she was. I then proceeded to go get my sister. I wanted to harm him like he harmed my sister. I knew deep down that two wrongs don't make a right. So, I reached my sister and comforted her and told her that everything would be all right. I told my sister as long as we have each other, no one can tear us apart. It was a long journey ahead for my sister. I have never been in an abusive relationship. All I know is that it is not right. I wanted to hurt him so badly. My sister eventually left him and never looked back. **(Ngina Ali)**

The summer days between my sophomore year and my junior year were the hardest days of my life. I had started coming into my own sexuality. My grandparents on my mom's side were sick, and my grandparents on my dad's side had died. My grades had plummeted so badly that I was removed from a scholarship program that I had worked hard to get into. As a result, a depression came over me that I had never felt before. Knowing that mentally I was not in a good place, I decided to remove myself for a while. I packed my things and moved from my hometown of Madison to San Diego to live with my dad. I knew no one there except my father. I had to start at a new school with all new faces. At first, the

transition was overwhelming, and I began to regret my decision. But as the weeks progressed, I realized that such a change was necessary. Stepping out of my comfort zone made me realize that my happiness needs to come from me. I changed for myself, and I've never felt so proud of myself for taking the necessary steps in bettering me. **(Maria Dary)**

I live with my family (my wife and four kids). I like to make breakfast every day before going to my job with my wife. Five days a week I work 30 hours in the week,



starting at 8:00 a.m. and ending at 3:00 p.m. On the weekend, I like to do my work at home (repairing my car, shopping, cleaning), and reading my homework for my class. **(Musab Naji)**

During some time in my marriage, my husband and I were not getting along that well. I really thought at one point we were going to get a divorce because things were not working all right. Since we are from different backgrounds (age, race, culture, etc.), I just thought things would no longer work out. But I was too afraid to mention anything to him. Whenever I wanted to talk to him about my feelings toward how things were going, I was always so nervous, I would not say anything. I was just letting things go badly. But I thought about my son and how a divorce would affect him and us. So one day, I put all my fears aside and had the courage to finally speak to my husband. We talked about our feelings. Now we are still happily married. **(Susana Gomez)**

I am a person of courage because I am a hard worker, I never cry when I get sick, and I always enjoy my kids. At my workplace, I like to help new people. I like to teach them my knowledge. And they always appreciate my help. They thank me for being helpful and for building teamwork.

I love to spend a lot of time playing with my two children. I take them to their soccer practice for two hours twice a week. I go with my kids to different places. Everything that I do, I do with love. If we don't have enough food, I like to find some free food at the food pantry. That way we don't have to suffer from hunger.

I have been feeling back pain for years. I don't care how bad it is, I don't take any drugs. I will just let time take care of it.

I like to finish my homework no matter how tired I am, because I know it is important.
(José Mendoza)

I can't really think of a specific time when I have ever been brave. I think most of my life I have been led to believe that if I put my mind to it, I can achieve it.

Going back to high school after running away from home was a hard thing to do. I was 18 ½ years old, and I wanted to get back on track with my life. I didn't have anything else going for me, so I made sure that I focused on that. I started taking classes at MATC at the downtown campus with a program called Bootcamp. Little by little, I got back into the idea of school and was getting excited to turn in assignments and get feedback. Regardless of whether it was positive or negative, I wanted it all.

The months went by, and the pressure started to kick in. For a long time, I had kept it to myself that I was still taking classes to get my HSED and not even my

family members knew. I was so caught up in trying to learn and relearn new materials that I didn't even realize that the months had gone by.

The spring had soon arrived, and it was time to graduate. I had made it one month before my high school was supposed to graduate. All of my family was invited, and I've never been so proud. I walked as they called my name, and I saw my parents tear up and smile up at me. **(Maria Cardenas)**

On May 30th 2015, I can still remember that day. It was my last day home. On that last Sunday of my month home, I was getting ready. I knew that this visit to my grandparents' house was going to be the last one. I didn't even know when I would see them again. When I was little I grew up with them, including living with them for two years when my mom came here. I knew this was going to be a hard goodbye. We were at my "abuelito's" house for a while, talking about different stuff, including what time I was going to get to Madison the next day and when I was going to go visit them again. I told them I didn't know, I told them that it was up to God when I would see them again.

When it was time to say goodbye, my grandma gave me a tight hug, which felt nice, and she also gave me her blessings. My



grandfather did the same thing. Both of them had tears in their eyes.

Even now I don't know how I did it--to be strong in front of them and not shed a tear. But as soon as I got to the car, I started crying like a baby. I had been away from home for 12 long years, and it was uncertain when I was going back.

As of now I thank God everyday for the amazing family that I have. They always have my back, no matter what. . . . While I'm writing this is, I have a knot in my throat because I don't know when I will see them again. I know one thing for sure: I'm always in their prayers, and they're always thinking and wishing me and the rest of my family that is away from home the best. **(Belem Calixto)**



I remember when I was in a meeting for my job, I was just sitting back listening to my coworkers downtalk a student. I could have joined and added to the conversation, but instead I had the courage to speak up and tell them that it wasn't right. Still to this day I believe a few of my colleagues look at me as the "too good" one because I didn't go along with what was being said! **(Shanon Holmes)**

A time I had to summon all of my courage was during my mother's freak spinal injury in the fall of 2010. On Thanksgiving day, after three weeks of watching her wither from independent movement to needing a walker and assistance, we finally made the call to send her to the hospital for deeper examination. The doctors found that her spine was crushing and grinding a few of her disks to nothing, causing the paralysis that had

devastated her in the past month. I felt alone and unprepared for the responsibility of helping the person I depended on so much get on their feet instead of it being the other way around. Seeing her cry and watching the possibilities thin and realities set in really shook me to my core and chiseled away some of the whimsical wants, replacing them with more grounded goals and objectives. The surgery and following recovery forced me into the true role of secondary adult from earning the supplemental money to providing morale when I didn't exactly have much myself. In a sad way it showed me a little of what my mom already went through as a single parent, from the isolation to the defeatist attitude lurking around the corner, but also highlighting the ways to persevere and make light of something that terrible. **(Anthony Jefferson)**

WORDS OF COURAGE

From politicians:



"Courage is not having the strength to go on; it is going on when you don't have the strength." —**Theodore Roosevelt**

"Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen." —**Winston Churchill**



"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.'" —**Eleanor Roosevelt**

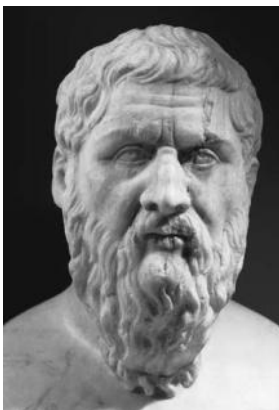


"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." —**Nelson Mandela**



"You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own." —**Michelle Obama**

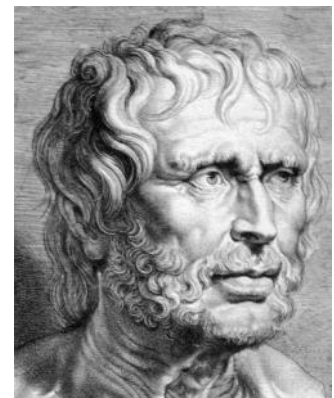
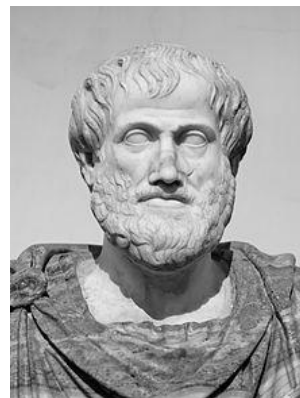
From the ancient Greeks and Romans:



"Courage is knowing what not to fear." —**Plato**

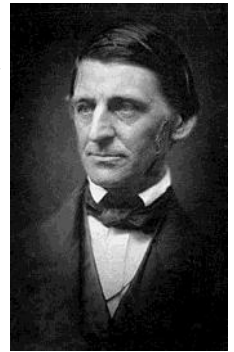
"You will never do anything in this world without courage. It is the greatest quality of the mind next to honor." —**Aristotle**

"He who is brave is free." —**Seneca**

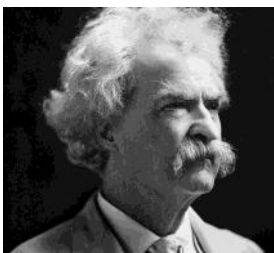


From famous authors:

"There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others. My courage always rises at every attempt to intimidate me." —**Jane Austen**



"Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them." —**Ralph Waldo Emerson**



"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear - not absence of fear. . . . It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare." —**Mark Twain**



"To succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul, the brave soul, the soul that dares and defies." —**Kate Chopin**



"Freedom lies in being bold."
—**Robert Frost**



"Courage is grace under pressure." —**Ernest Hemingway**



"We must have the freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think." —**Virginia Woolf**



"You cannot swim for new horizons until you have courage to lose sight of the shore." —**William Faulkner**

"It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are." —**e.e.cummings**



"I have accepted fear as part of life – specifically the fear of change... I have gone ahead despite the pounding in the heart that says: turn back..."
—**Erica Jong**

"I believe that the most important single thing, beyond discipline and creativity, is daring to dare. . . . Have courage to trust love one more time." —**Maya Angelou**



From children's books and books by youth:



"You have plenty of courage, I am sure," answered Oz. "All you need is confidence in yourself. There is no living thing that is not afraid when it faces danger. The true courage is in facing danger when you are afraid, and that kind of courage you have in plenty." —**L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz***

"It is hard to be brave, when you're only a Very Small

Animal." —**A.A. Milne, *Winnie-the-Pooh***



"It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to your enemies, but a great deal more to stand up to your friends." —**Dumbledore, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter***

"I know what I want, I have a goal, an opinion, I have a religion and love. Let me be myself and then I am satisfied. I know that I'm a woman, a woman with inward strength and plenty of

courage." —**Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl***



"One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world. . . . All I want is an education, and I am afraid of no one." —**Malala Yousafzai, youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner**



PACKING A PUNCH: SEVEN-WORD POEMS

I wish the rent / was heaven sent. —Langston Hughes, “Little Lyric of Great Importance”

Dreams become goals as fear loses power.

—**Anthony Jefferson**

I wish to be free and fly! —**José Mendoza**

Soft hearts always go through the most.

—**Kendra Atkinson**

You’re the key that unlocks my heart.

—**Spencer Gamble**

Walk again in strength. Discover peace within.

—**Johnnie Walton**

Days go by; night stays the same.

—**Felica Thomas**

Wearing coral brings out my beautiful eyes!

—**Ngina Ali**

The mind is leader of one’s soul. —**Avé Thorpe**

Will wisdom become a virtue of man?

—**Nathaniel Lake**

If only all people had kind hearts!

—**D’onna Atkinson**

Never stop dreaming; dreams come true sometimes. —**Musab Naji**

I wish the poor had my endurance. —**Joy Bally**

Once change comes, others will follow suit!

—**Alyanna Cooper**

Hate, pain, shame, no gain; I remain.

—**Victoria Patterson**

Health insurance should be free in America.

—**Kyisha Williams**

I wish my life could begin again.

—**Cherri Sorrells**

Oh, how I wish I was free! —**Asha Green**



Addicted to drugs, sex, money. That’s life.

—**Carissa Love**

I wish I could travel while dreaming.

—**Belem Calixto**

In America, rent eats before the kids.

—**Shanon Holmes (quoting Matthew Desmond)**

I wish no family the burden of shelter.

—**Sukai Yarbo**

Love is too sacred to be bought.

—**Simone Bell-Perdue**

By the gloom of moon I sleep. —**Maria Dary**

Self affliction nevertheless reminds me of eviction. —**Lawana Diagne**

My mind is blank from information overload.

—**Susana Gomez**

I will not stop until the end. —**Marisol Gonzalez**

Turquoise lives in the sea and sky. —**Grisel Tapia**

The country of all wars is Syria. —**Ahmad Nahas**

Through the storm, I see the light.

—**Jessica Tucker**

Dancing makes me feel happy and free.

—**Maria Cardenas**

WHAT'S IN A NAME?



My last name, Ali, means “most highest.” A couple of months ago, I took my 14 year-old son to Summit Credit Union to open up a bank account. A red flag came up because my son’s name is Isiah Ali.

My son has never been out of the country. He was born and raised in Chicago. This red flag came up because of his last name. Some people and politicians think or assume that everyone whose name is “Ali” is a terrorist. It’s not right, but it happens. My name may mean “most highest,” but to the world now it means “danger/dangerous.” **(Ngina Ali)**



For the most part, I like my name. All three segments have a kind of formal appeal to them in my eyes, and each has its own place in history . . . Something I don’t quite like is my last name. After reading *Malcolm X* and studying the old

slave naming tradition, I can’t shake the feeling that ours might have stuck. It’s a silly thing to fret about, but it feels hollow or even borrowed, like it’s already been spoken for. Without proof it’s just paranoia, but it feels like a justified concern.

(Anthony Michael Jefferson)



Louise → Powerful. The name Louise has been passed down from generation to generation.

Although I strongly disliked it at first, it has grown on me. My great-grandmother will be 100 this year and she is a Louise. My grandma

who beat breast cancer is a Louise. My aunt who is very successful is a Louise. My niece who holds a special place in my heart is a Louise. So I am honored to be a Louise. The name comes from strong women in my life who have done great things. **(Kyisha Louise Williams)**



I don’t feel any emotion about my name, I feel emotion for my spirit and its name. If I had to give it a name, it would be ‘Universe.’ This is the first name that comes to mind when I think of everything. I feel like my emotions are the

water, the rain, the sky—everything in the universe. I guess that’s my new name.

(Johnnie Walton)



I used to tell myself as a child that my name meant ‘rich,’ so that meant I was going to be rich, not realizing back then that richness can take so many different forms. I feel like I already am rich: rich in family, friends, support and love.

I’ve been through a lot in this past year, which has really made me learn more about myself and being alone. I have also found out who my real friends and family are, which has let me to where I am right now—in school, working hard at my fulltime job, and living under the roof of a two-bedroom apartment that my son and I both love.

(Jessica Tucker)



My name is Avé. In my family this is significant because it’s my mother’s name spelled backwards. Her name is Eva. It was chosen for me because my mother wanted me to be just like her. Having this name had made a difference in my

life because, although I’m shy and would rather not be noticed, the name draws attention to me and kind of forces me to be social. I feel like the name has shaped my identity because I am a lot like my mother. She was a single mother living in an impoverished neighborhood while raising her children, yet worked hard to come out of it.

(Avé Thorpe)



Turner (my maiden name) is English and Scottish: “an occupational name for a maker of objects of wood, metal, or bone by turning on a lathe.” So I am a laborer! Funny that this is the definition of my name. I

have worked since I was able to legally get a job and have pretty much worked nonstop.

(Felicia Thomas)



My first and last names are almost always mispronounced. It used to make me hate my name when it was constantly mispronounced. I feel as if this is tied to the low self-esteem I had in childhood. As I grew

older, I grew more comfortable with myself and eventually with my name. My first name is spelled traditionally, and I believe this has shaped my identity and overall life. I haven’t done many things “traditionally” in my life. I had children before marriage, I did not complete college right after high school, I don’t own a home with a white-picket fence, and I am still unsure which direction I want my career to go. But in some odd and unorthodox way, I have been able to manage whatever life throws at me. **(Cherri Sorrells)**



Personally, I can identify with the Old English definition: Spencer is the butler or keeper of household provisions. I’ve spent most of my adult life in the food service or service industry, taking care or serving

the needs of others. I take much pride in my work—I have worked as a server and bartender for 25 years, and I’m the head of my household, where I cook all the meals and purchase all the food. **(Spencer Gamble)**



Marisol: to me it means ‘sea’ and ‘sun.’ What can be better than that? It represents fun, happiness, joy and peace, but also adventure. It has the importance of the two most powerful elements: water in

the sea, and sun in the universe. My mother gave me this name because my aunt suggested it and my mother liked it. My father wasn’t very happy with this name. He wanted to name me Isabel, but in Mexico the nickname for Isabel is “Chabela.” No way my mother would let that happen. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**



L is for luster, my dark skin

A is activities, for I like to take on many

W is for the wisdom I acquire with my age

A is for accepting the things I cannot change, my giving nature

N is for noble—my regal leaning

A is for altruism, the unselfish me

(Lawana Diagne)



I went to a youth conference with my church. We did a session on what our names mean and I found out my name means “listening intently,” which totally sums up my personality. I’ve always been

someone other people can talk to.

(Simone Bell-Perdue)

MOVED BY MUSIC

Music is everything to me. It's loved me when I couldn't love myself, consoled me when there was nothing that could. It held me on wooden stilts when I was crumbling in on top of myself.

Music reminds me of the heavens that one can find in life such as love, friendship, trust, and self-worth. It reminds me that we have flaws and that growth is a never-ending process. It reminds me that there is nothing wrong with dreaming or following your dreams just as long as you don't lose yourself. Music to me is blue skies that will never come again, crisp, cold winter nights where I stayed out too late, and lying in a summer rain with friends.

I would give my life for music; it is the lover I have never and always known. Music is soul. It is art, divine in all forms. Music is what it means to be alive because life in one way or another is a series of harmonies or rest where the lack of sound or movement still creates a beat. As long as your soul still stands, there will always be music, even when the chords don't feel right.

Music wraps me up in her warm, calming arms and cuddles me like a loving mother would do. I live. I breathe. I am music. **(Nathaniel Lake)**

My life without music wouldn't be life. Music is like talking to my ears.

The music I listen to depends on the mood I'm in, or what I'm doing at that moment. For example, if I'm doing chores, I put on my comfortable clothes, pull my hair up in a

"Music for me is to be alive!!"

ponytail, and put the most danceable Latin music on. While doing my chores, I tend to sing and/or dance with the music. But if I'm

in the office, I listen to soft or smooth music. Listening to this music while sitting in my chair in front of my computer helps me concentrate better and the time goes faster. I also listen to relaxing music when I'm in a waiting room. It helps me feel less stressed, and the time goes fast.

The memories I have when I started to listen to music were from when I came to the US as a teenager. There were students like me who came from different countries, and each one of us listened to different kinds of music. We shared not only the music but also the steps on how to dance along with the music. This helped us to meet more students and to get to know each other better. This was a great experience for me.

Music nowadays is very important for me and my family because oftentimes when we listen to music at home, my kids tell me they want to learn how to dance. I can teach them the different rhythms I learned while in high school from my friends at the time.

All I can say is that music for me is to be alive!! **(Grisel Tapia)**



"Music makes me rethink my past and cherish my future."

I love music. I feel it cleanses my soul. Music makes me rethink my past and cherish my future.

Music explains feelings that words could never describe. Music creates strong feelings, helps me remember memories, and helps me relax. It takes me out of my shell; music is my friend. It helps heal the wounds I have while I go through rough phases. It can bring everyone together. Music helps me express my individuality. (**Kendra Atkinson**)

Music to me is much like my light force. It helps me think, concentrate, and find much-needed entertainment. The most frequently asked question I've ever heard is, "What's your favorite type of music?" to which I usually reply, "I don't really have one." It's true: I've never been able to narrow down a song because each song is attached to a memory; it would be nearly impossible to narrow down a favorite memory.

Music always used to fill my house. When I was growing up, my grandpa used to sing me my nursery rhymes until they would get stuck in my head: "*Los Pollitos dicen pio pio pio cuando tienen hambre, cuando tienen frio.*" I still remember them. . . . My house was full of salsa and bachata. My mom would take us to dance clubs growing up, and we would dance around the floor until probably what was considered too late at night for our age.

Every memory in my life has a song tied to it that will instantly transport me back to that time. Music is my time machine to my happiest and saddest moments, from when

my grandpa would sing to me "How do you solve a problem like Maria?" to the moment I heard Frank Sinatra's "My Way" at my grandpa's funeral. My heart is always full of songs. (**Maria Dary**)



Music is the soundtrack to my movie called life. I love hip-hop and rap music. I love the heavy bass and clear word puns that also happen to rhyme. I love airy pop music when I haven't a care in the world. I love, love, love Broadway musicals.

It amazes me that every story can be told through song. Sometimes when I am sad, I listen to songs of heartbreak and despair to correlate with the sadness I am feeling. When I'm happy, I can sing a show tune word for word or recite a rap song as if it were a poem I have always known.

My life without music would be like a world without color: dull, lifeless, and depressing. Music is so powerful. It has the power to make me cry, make me laugh, make me think, and make me feel.

Music to me is a friend. It always can pick up on my current mood and reflect my feelings in song. I enjoy listening to R&B, hip-hop, pop, gospel, Broadway, alternative and music from every decade dating back to the 1950s.

When I was a little girl, whenever I told someone my name, they would sing Frankie Valli's hit song "Sherry." I didn't understand

"Music is my time machine to my happiest and saddest moments."

the likeness and actually got quite annoyed when it happened to me. Fast forward to adult life, and I really enjoy “The Four Seasons” and the Broadway play “Jersey Boys.” I now understand why older adults sang me that song, and it feels oddly significant in my life now.

For as long as I can remember, I have loved music. When I was 11 years old or so, I loved recording mixtapes from the radio. I used to record over my mom’s old school soul music and get in lots of trouble. She wasn’t very happy when she listened to the tape the next time. Originally, I wanted to study musical theater as a college major, but I soon realized that would be a very risky career choice and might not guarantee a career after graduation. I also suffer from a horrible case of stage fright!

When I was a pre-teen I attended a memorial service at the Monona Terrace for Otis Redding. I knew he perished in a plane crash in Lake Monona, but I had no idea who he was. I did not make the connection of who he was until many years later. I know Otis Redding was not from Wisconsin, but it feels pretty significant that Wisconsin will be a part of his legacy forever.
(Cherri Sorrells)



Music has always been in my life ever since I can remember. My mother brought us to her choir practices for church, and I learned a lot about different sounds and different tones. At home my mom was always putting on gospel music, but I always knew when I woke up to smelling carpet cleaner and hearing vacuuming that it was deep cleaning day. She played gospel and old school 90s music as well. I knew when I would hear the Jacksons’ Christmas album playing on Christmas Eve that she was making everything in preparation for Christmas Day. . . .



When I am down, I sing, and when I am happy, I sing. I mostly sing lullabies to my daughter with added gospel to it. My life would be difficult without music, mostly because when I am going through a hard time in life and it seems like nothing is going right, I sing pick-me-up songs.
(Simone Bell-Perdue)

There are some songs that bring me back memories from when I was in Mexico. There is this Mexican band called Los Rehenes that reminds me of when I used to listen to them with my dad.

He would play the songs while he drove. Even now, whenever I hear those songs I can still picture my dad in his truck driving with me sitting in the passenger’s seat. Two months ago, while I



was in Mexico, I gave my dad a cellphone. He asked me to put music on it. There were those songs again—or at least that kind of music. My dad is like me. He has to be listening to music while he drives.

With my mom it's different. We don't really have music memories. But last year in May I went to Mexico, and it couldn't have been any better. I spent Mother's Day with my mom. I had her listen to this song that's called "Mi Primer Amor" (My First Love) because that is what my mom is to me. The song talks about this guy that is telling his mom that although he is making his own life with his own family, she will always be his first love. . . . Every time I listen to this song I cry because everything this song says is what my mom is to me.

Music is amazing. It's just a good way to connect or think about someone special. **(Belem Calixto)**

Music for me has been a source of identity, remembrance, and stress relief. It offers an escape from a lot of the rigors everyday life brings. From hip-hop to elevator music, even melodic noise, I've found tracks that had the essence of life moments I either experienced or wanted in my future. Riding the morning bus to school I might play a little



Kenny G to shoo away the worries of a test or switch to some old Bon Jovi, Rat, Cinderella, or Skid Row if it was a day worth looking forward to.

My varied taste in music has helped me quell a lot of questions lingering in my mind about myself. When I was growing up with a white mother in predominantly black neighborhoods, my CDs were the one fluid possession, no color about it; no real grouping. My mom played R&B

albums, and my dad played rap, introducing me to Jodeci and Biggie Smalls as a youth.

Getting older I realized my childhood favorites didn't really register with white classmates that preferred pop or rock. Around the fifth grade I started buying heavy metal albums in a bid to become more like my peers. This was the case for a good three years or so. But upon entering high school, I started to embrace the differences in message and motion, finding that level of music appreciation where it becomes a badge of relation and not a ploy to fit in. The smooth echo of Enya might help me ponder a homework assignment, while my Easy-E gives me an outlet for worldly frustrations. **(Anthony Jefferson)**



I like to listen to music early in the morning. Music to me means starting a new day. I like to listen to slow music. When I was a child my uncle woke me up early in the morning while a special singer named Fayruz's music played. We enjoyed a special prepared breakfast while my auntie baked the Iraqi bread. The sun was just starting to rise, while Fayruz sang her warm song. The songs were about how the farmer went to his farm and how the birds played around. When Fayruz was singing, she brought happiness to everybody. She made them sing with her. Her voice is like a mother singing to her baby because it contains love, warmth, hope, sweetness, and happiness. Now when I hear Fayruz I am reminded of my childhood



and the lifestyle that I miss now. It reminds me of my uncle and auntie. **(Musab Naji)**

Music is an intricate art of my life. I use music to get through difficult times or as an inspiration to keep moving forward and stay strong. I

listen to various genres of music including classic rock, alternative rock, classical, rap, and rhythm and blues. However, contemporary Christian music is what I listen to most. When I was younger I used to have a keyboard and was able to play tunes from the radio just by listening. I also remember my dad playing Bongos, although he never had any formal training musically.

I do have a few songs that I own figuratively. I'm a



huge fan of Stevie Wonder, and I love his "Higher Ground" song. I tend to love songs that resonate with my own hardships or songs that speak about overcoming.

Music has the ability to motivate me as I

work out, lift my spirits when I'm feeling sad, help me connect with my children, and let me relax. Without music, my life would be empty, and I wouldn't have a voice or way to express myself. **(Avé Thorpe)**

I love music. I listen to music depending on the mood I am in. If you check my playlist from my phone, you will see that I have a very diverse taste in music. It ranges from rock to soul to opera to Latin music. When I am feeling thoughtful and spiritual, I like to listen to classical or rock, especially Pink Floyd or Led Zeppelin. Strangely enough, and I know I am not the only



"Music is the sound of our emotions."

one, I also love the soundtrack or scores for big movies. It gets me excited and emotional when I listen to the *Lord of the Rings* soundtrack

or the *Harry Potter* one. After listening to this music I just want to go home and have a marathon weekend of *Lord of the Rings* or *Harry Potter*.

Now when I listen to some Mexican music and, more specifically, Mariachi music, it makes me feel proud of where I was born and proud of my culture. It reminds me of the delicious food, the language, and the people of right now and of the past. When I want to move my bones around, I listen to salsa music or some merengue. They both make me happy, and I dance like a fool around my kitchen when my husband isn't home. It fills me with energy and happiness, plus I get more done at home with music on in the background. Also, when I listen to a song I haven't heard in years, it makes me think of what I was doing at that time, how the years have gone by, and the good ol' memories.

Music is the sound of our emotions. Any music that is able to move or produce some type of emotion, like when you get goose bumps, the hair at the back of your neck stands up, or you cry, is great music. Music that just makes you want to dance is great music. I don't know how life would be without music. **(Susana Gomez)**

I love music. It means beauty to me. There are too many great songs to just be my song. I don't make any kind of music, but I do listen to a wide variety of music. My childhood memories of music consist of Country, Bollywood, Soca, Calypso, reggae, heavy metal, and top forties by Casey Kasum.

The music that reminds me of

“Music feeds my soul!”

Trinidad and Tobago is Soca and Calypso music... not Harry Belafonte. To me music makes the world come together as one. I have expanded what I listen to since I was a child. One of my favorite bands from South Africa will be in Milwaukee on December 12th. Die Antwoord, the name of the band, means “the answer” in German.

The lyrics of songs can be very powerful. Music helps me to be calm or to make a statement, and it gives me the energy to keep living and dancing no matter what happens. Music feeds my soul!

There is not a day that goes by where I am not listening to music. My job allows me to listen to music all day long. The music helps me to keep a positive attitude at work and keeps me smiling all day. **(Joy Bally)**

Music means everything to me. Without it, I would surely cease to exist. It brings me up when I am down and brings me to a calm place when I am upset. Music is a great motivational tool. It inspires me to work out hard, tackle errands efficiently, and gain a feel-good vibe.

I enjoy every type of music. . . . There are two songs that I relate to without fail, and I always have: Janet Jackson’s “Control” and Human League’s “Human.” These two songs have helped me develop my self-awareness. When I was a pre-teen, my parents and some others had an unrealistic idea of what and who I should be. I was extremely shy as a child. I didn’t enjoy being stared at or watched. I immediately identified with the messages of both songs: “I did what people

told me, but that was long ago,” and “Of flesh and blood I’m made born to make mistakes.”

These were the anthems of the 80s that reigned in my heart and soul over the decades.

I still carry that same weight today. I want to live my life without judgment and needless commentary. Through music such as this I am able to accept me for me and not care about any of the prior insecurities. **(Spencer Gamble)**

I personally love music. I listen to hip-hop music every day. I cannot spend a day without listening to my music. I used to even sleep and workout with my iPhone playing music at all times. Listening to music makes me feel optimistic, rejuvenated, and motivated. I usually dance and sing when music is playing. I have good memories of music based on my home country of Syria and my family. I didn’t start listening to music until after the war in my country. I now have memorized almost all of the songs that I listen to. **(Ahmad Nahas)**

Music is my life. I have enjoyed music ever since I was a little girl. I would sing and dance and put on dance recitals in the basement for my family, thinking I was a celebrity. As soon as I could talk I would sing and people would always tell me to tone it down.



I like all types of music. Music is the key to happiness, joy, and relaxation. When I am having a bad day, I turn on my favorite slow jam and get out of the bad thoughts and deep depression. It brings joy to my heart, soul, and ears. My friends and people around me tend not to like the same music as me because it’s not their style, genre, or kind of music they

like. It's hard being biracial. People make fun of the music I like. My voice is my option. And music shouldn't matter. Whether hymns, gospel, reggae, pop, rap, or R&B, all music is the key to language. (**Carissa Love**)

"Music speaks for me when I cannot explain things."

First of all, I love music. Music is my life. Personally, music has been a big partner in those difficult moments such as when I wanted to cry because I was sad or to jump because I was happy. Music is a way to express my feelings, and it makes me think about how it relates to life. I love the beats. Every note keeps a special feeling and helps me remember those wonderful moments.

Music is a source of stress relief. It helps me to calm down or just to get relaxed after a bad day. On a good day, music helps me get through the day. Music is my way to escape from sadness, frustration, or tiredness. Music lifts me up and always makes me feel energetic. Music speaks for me when I cannot explain things.

Music means a lot to me. I used to be a musician. I play a little bit of saxophone and drums. When I feel frustrated or stressed, I just take my instruments and start practicing. After I play, I feel so relaxed and alive. Music is my passion and my favorite hobby. I could play all day long and never feel tired. Music is a therapist, a friend, a drug, an entertainment; music is life. (**José Mendoza**)

I listen to R&B, gospel, and some rap. I grew up listening to music. Music to me cleans the soul. Music calms me down and lets me know everything will be all right. . . . When I listen to

music it gives me strength to move on. I start to clean up and listen to music. It gives me life and lets me know that it's going to be okay. I stop worrying and start to think about my current situation and how I will defeat it.



I used to love the song by Tupac and still do to this day. It is named "Keep Your Head Up." No matter what you are going through, you will see brighter days. This one verse [Tupac's remixing of a song by "The Five Stairsteps"] says, "Keep your head up, ooh ooh, child, things are gonna get easier. Ooh ooh, child, things are gonna get brighter." This makes me stronger and lets me know I can get through anything. Tupac raps about the truth, and I just sit and listen to the song over and over again. I know I will get through this. It's going to be tough, but it will get better. (**Ngina Ali**)

Music is a happy place for me; I go to my music to feel connected to a very good place within myself.

I mostly listen to African music called "Mbala." It's exotic and completely captivates my mind. When I listen to my music, I am home in the place I want to be: The Gambia, West Africa.

I do connect with my music at different levels. Music brings out sadness that makes me



happy. Certain music, like a Backstreet Boys' song, reminds me of my late dad. I feel sad listening to the song, but it brings back great memories I had with my dad. It still gives me a nostalgic feeling of missing him too much and knowing he can't be here and I can't be where he is. It's sad but enjoyable because it awakens a very good memory I hold dear. I recollect very well with music. **(Sukai Yarbo)**

Music means so much to me. ***"Music is where I find peace."***

I listen to all kinds of music, and I am also a songwriter. I started writing when I was 13 years old. In the beginning I only did rap and I was really good. In 2004 I started writing R&B and gospel. I never really wrote anything down. I would just keep it in my head as I made it. From the very beginning I know I'm writing a good song. I redraft in my head until it feels right. The melody and the words are what attract me. I remember music playing all the time as a kid. I would always be dancing. I used to sing in the school choir and church choir. My favorite song is by Tim McGraw – "Live Like You're Dying" – because the words speak to me.



Music makes me forget about my troubles and the troubles of the world. If I didn't have music, I probably wouldn't be here writing this paper. If I didn't have music, I would probably die. Music is where I find peace.

(Johnnie Walton)

Music: vocal or instrumental sounds, combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion. What music is to me is all part of the meaning of music! Music is my emotion and helps me express myself.

Music is what love means to my family. We sing, laugh, and dance with one another.

I have loved music since I was a little girl. I like the way it makes me feel. It almost takes me to another place or gives me a different identity. I can be anyone while the music is playing. But when it stops, back to reality; back to life! **(Alyanna Cooper)**

Music to me is the best way to express your feelings, emotions, and thoughts. It knows how to say things and describe what you can't put together and say. I love country, R&B, and slow hip-hop music. It plays a big role in my life. It soothes me when I am going through a rough time/moment. It helps me

when my sky is grey. It uplifts me. Music is the only thing I have anything in common with.

I can feel music as if it is the blood flowing throughout my body. Music puts me in a happy place, a place where I can just cry and feel the

goodness of noise creating a tune called music. I would be lost and depressed without music. Music is what I go to when I am at my lowest point. It's what motivates me and brings me back to reality and myself! (**D'onna Atkinson**)

Music is my life. My all-time favorite kind of music to listen to would be 90s R&B music. The music was proud and expressed love, happiness, and sorrow. I don't have a song that's my song. In general, I just love music. When I'm down, I listen to music to uplift my spirit. I remember as a child every Saturday morning I would wake up to my mother playing what she called "grown folks music," cooking a full course breakfast and cleaning at the same time. I looked forward to every Saturday morning singing and dancing with my mom.

To this day with my child I follow the very same routine. I make my children a full course breakfast playing "old folk music," cleaning, singing and dancing. I can't imagine a day in the life without music. When Ashzianna was about two months old, I saw a study that said if you play Mozart's music for your child they would be great at math or something like that. Well, needless to say, I played Mozart's music for her and she loves math. I played all kinds of music for her, like hip-hop, country, and R&B. You name it... I played it. This day and age Ashzianna loves music. This girl is a



dancing machine; she dances to any and everything, wherever she is. Our morning commute to school and work would not be successful without music. We are up at 6am every morning heading to school and work, and music is our motivation. I can't live without music. (**Asha Green**)

Let's just say I got the music in me. It doesn't matter what kind of music I hear either. My life wouldn't be the same without it. From the sounds of smooth jazz to the love melody in the lyrics of R&B, I love music. Lyrics or no lyrics, there is just something about the rhythm and the beat that comforts me.



Music makes me happy. Some music helps me go to sleep. I come from a family of church-goers; old folk hymns and strong gospel music have ministered to me when there were difficult times in my life.

Most of all, music makes me happy whenever I hear the old school Motown greatest hits. My Aretha Franklin, Smokey Robinson, and Luther Vandross (and I can't forget Mrs. Pink and Lisa Stansfield) are super soothing to me, totally inspirational. No matter the genre, I just adore music. I would be lifeless without music, dull without the melody. (**Lawana Diagne**)

Music means a lot to me. When I'm happy, I listen to it. When I'm down, I listen to gospel, uplifting music. When I am sad about relationship issues, I listen to music about women being strong and dealing with similar situations to me. When I feel overwhelmed with life, I listen to India Arie to



center and uplift myself. I listen to R&B, hip-hop, pop, old school, soul, gospel, and country. I like music with meanings that tell stories. The songs that get me going the most when I'm hurting or overwhelmed are "Now Behold the Lamb" and "Open My Heart." Since my childhood, I have

listened to uplifting and positive music all about love. Music can put a good or bad mood in me, but it can also take me from them. Music is powerful. **(Victoria Patterson)**

Music is very important in my life. Now that I live out of my country, I have so many memories and feelings attached to the different music, like Ranchera. It reminds me of my grandmother. Rock Mexicano reminds me of my parents when they were young. My uncle's pop and ska makes me think of my teenage years. Salsa, Rumba, Merengue, Chacha and Tango remind me of when I met my husband and we would dance ballroom. It just brings me joy and many memories. For example, if I listen to romantic music, it makes me think of my

parents. My father always listened to that music.

A singer named Leo Dan sings a song called "Mary es Mi Amor" (Mary is My Love). Most people call me Mari, so every time I hear that song on the radio I will start screaming and saying, "It's my daddy on the radio! He is singing to me!" My mother will hug me with a smile on her face and say, "Yes! Yes! Sweetheart, it's your dad." The song says, "Mary is my love. Only with Mary I live the happiness. I know that I never will be able to love nobody like I love Mary because my love for Mary is a true love. If one day you're not with me I will ask God to help me die because I will never be happy with this life without you, Mary. If I'm alive it's because of you..."

I grew up thinking that my dad was the one who sang that song. Everybody knew the truth, but everybody kept it a secret. Now that I'm not with my dad it brings me to tears when I listen to that song because I miss my parents so much. It also makes me feel connected to them and my country.

I use music to teach Spanish to my children and to my students. Music is essential in my life and in my family's life. My children choose a favorite song and ask me to repeat the same song until they learn it. They sing the same song for months—even my teenager.

When I came to Madison I learned the



importance of music. I put my three-year-old son in music classes, and eventually he learned to play the piano. Now, he has been taking music classes for eleven years and has discovered that playing the piano helps

him in many ways, like when he is angry and needs to calm down, improving his mathematics, solving problems, and helping other people relax. He made this test. Without telling me, he didn't finish his chores so I started to get mad and frustrated. I yelled at him to hurry up and finish! Then he started to play the piano. He played one song after another for ten minutes, came to me, and said, "How do you feel?" I responded, "Very good." Then he told me he thought I was stressed out. I told him I was but I feel better now. He explained to me that it was the power of music that can change the mood of the people.



We love music. My children sing and play the piano, and I am learning how to play the guitar. I want to be like those people that can join a party with their guitar and add a good memory to that particular event. Maybe I will even reach my goal for Odyssey graduation! (**Marisol Gonzalez**)

Music is soothing to me. I have different types of music for certain things I'm feeling. One of my favorite songs is called "I can only imagine." I love this song because I can only imagine what my baby boy is experiencing in heaven. How beautiful it must be and how much fun he must be having!

We listened to a lot of Blues growing up in the

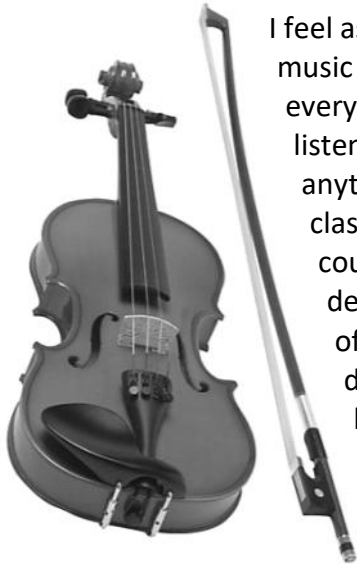
South. Every Saturday morning when the radio came on, we knew my granny was getting ready to start cleaning.

I think I would honestly be lost without music. This is a gift that someone else gives to me on a daily basis. It soothes my soul and keeps me through stressful days. It's as if someone has captured my words from my mouth and added a beat to it. (**Felica Thomas**)

To begin, music plays a big role in expressing myself. I love all kinds of music. Gospel music gives me peace and makes me feel spiritual. I really, really, really love old school music. Old school music always has a message. New school is okay. I just feel it's a little disappointing in the messages given, if there is any message at all. When I'm feeling moody or overwhelmed, I listen to juke music, house music, or anything fast so I can dance. It's like a whole new world for me. I like the blues. It reminds me of my grandma. One of my favorite blues songs is "These last \$2." Old school hip-hop and R&B are good for the soul, especially from a relationship perspective. You could feel the words of the artist, like Mary J. Blige's "I'm not gon cry."

A childhood memory would be moving from Chicago listening to "It's so hard to say goodbye," crying with my siblings. That song will always be painful for me. Music is an emotion. (**Kyisha Williams**)





I feel as though I turn to music for anything and everything in my life. I listen to pretty much anything, from classical to hip-hop to country to rock. It depends on the type of mood I'm in that day. I usually like listening to classical, calming music while studying or keeping myself

calm before a test. Music is a way of expressing myself. I'm not sure what I would do without music because it has been a big part of my life. I played the violin from third or fourth grade until my junior year in high school, where I received a varsity letter for my talent. **(Jessica Tucker)**

Music is an important part of everyone's culture. In Colombia we have cumbia, vallenato, salsa, merengue, and reggae ton. Ever since I was younger I remember being at parties or gatherings and my parents teaching me to dance. Dancing makes me feel happy and free. Colombia is known as "the land of a thousand rhythms."

Music has a lot of meaning for me. It can be used for happiness, sadness, or any emotion. I use music to get me through tough times, like when I am tired and want to wake up or when I'm working out and need to get through a hard cardio session.

I listen to all types of music genres. My favorites are Latin music, R&B, and country. This type of music makes me feel happy, has my body moving, and puts me in a better mood. My life without music would be dull. I would probably fall asleep at my desk without it. **(Maria Cardenas)**

I listen to music for a lot of different reasons. I listen to any music that can hold my attention or music that has lyrics that explain my life and its situations. I mostly listen to music to help calm me or to take my mind off something that is bothering me. I listen to dusty music on Sundays to help me clean. I use music to help me help my one year old learn basic things. I'm into Spoken Word as well, which to me is a type of music. My favorite thing right now to listen to is Sunday Night Slow Jamz. It helps me relax and get ready for the week ahead.

As I'm listening to Dr. Robert Auerbach, it reminds me of being a child and not having any worries in the world. The music I'm hearing is so free, meaning it could make me happy, sad, joyful, or excited. It also helped me think what to write. **(Shanon Holmes)**



HOUSING HORRORS



I never imagined there would be a time when I wasn't sure where my family would live. In early June 2013, I thought I had found the perfect apartment. I had been searching for housing for many months with no results. At the time, my children and I had been living doubled up with another family. I found an apartment that was decently priced and had an in-unit washer and dryer. I felt as if I had hit the housing lottery.

Not long after getting comfortable in our new home, things took a turn for the worse. One sunny afternoon, I stepped into the walk-in closet and instinctively shrieked. Thick, fuzzy green mold had appeared out of nowhere. The left side of the closet had shoes neatly lined up. All the shoes and any items within close proximity were a mossy mess. Over the next year or so, I had constant verbal battles with my landlord. Each time I had to contact him, I dreaded the outcome. I was forced to run dehumidifiers in each sweltering room of the house, to lessen the chances of mold growing. My electric bill was consistently increasing, my rent increased each year, and, by this time, I was the mother of two small children.

The final straw was broken in October 2015. After a recent tornado in the area, the girls and I were forced to take cover in the laundry room. I discovered harmful black mold behind the outdated washing machine. I was so infuriated that I immediately composed an email to my landlord giving notice of intent to vacate. After sending said

email, the landlord shockingly agreed to vacate my lease. It was then that I realized that I had less than 30 days (25 to be exact) to find housing, complete an application, get accepted, pack up my apartment, and move. I lost many clothing and shoe items due to the awful conditions. I was forced to dispose of my two-year-old couch which showed signs of mold growth. I think the stress and pressure that rested solely on my shoulders was my motivation. I don't have any family members in the area that could take us in while I searched.

Saturday, October 24, 2015, I was given keys to a new apartment. Pure relief is the way to describe how I felt. I had nowhere to store my things or for my family to rest our heads. I am not happy that I had this experience, but I can say I learned many things about renting units. A lot of knowledge obtained has helped me with future interactions with landlords. I have a much clearer understanding of what is legal and what is not. I also have a much higher expectation for what I will accept in terms of housing. **(Cherri Sorrells)**





Since I was born, I have been in this situation several times in my life. My parents never owned a house until now, so when my mother got pregnant, my father took her over to my grandmother's house; my father built a little room where we could only fit one bed, a stove, and a table. The room was very dark without windows, and it was my grandmother's property, so every time she got mad at my mom, she told us to leave her house. At one point, we moved to my other grandmother's house (my mom's mother), but it was the same or worse, because all five of my uncles lived there, too. So, we decided to rent a room. It was very embarrassing when my parents were late paying the rent, and the landlord sent messages to us, saying that if we didn't pay the rent, we would have to leave. We moved many times to different rooms, always trying to find the cheapest room, and always dealing with the same problems and the same shame of not having our own house.

Then my father came to work in the USA; not long after, he asked my mother and sister to come with him. I stayed in Mexico City as a single mother with my brother and four-month-old baby. Those were the most difficult times of my life. My brother was unable to help with my baby or pay the rent and my father was not able to help either, so I had to do it myself, taking my son to work with me every day, cleaning houses while carrying my baby on my back for really very little money. It was never enough to pay the rent, buy food, and pay bills.

Many times I waited outside until the landlord was asleep so he wouldn't bother me asking for the rent.

Then my brother decided to go to the USA and join my parents, and I stayed

alone with my baby boy. I tried very hard to not become homeless, but unfortunately, life was too hard, and my landlord asked me to leave. I remember sitting on my bed, holding my baby in my arms, crying, not knowing what to do, and asking God what to do next. I had no house, no food, no job, because the patroness no longer needed me to work; she said that my baby was making me slower, and I also asked for a raise, but instead she fired me. I cried until I fell asleep.

The next day, somebody knocked on my window. It was my aunt. She came over and told me that it would be a good idea for us to move in with her because she was worried about us staying alone, considering that I was only 18 years old, and she worried about the baby, too. I said yes right away, and I moved in with her that day. She helped me a lot, and I will always be grateful for her help. A year after that, I moved to the USA to connect with my family again. We also moved a lot. Thank goodness, this time we all had jobs, and we were able to pay the rent, buy food and pay the bills.

My parents bought a mobile home (trailer), and I lived with them for a little bit. I met my husband, and we moved in together. Today, I rent a house that has legal issues; we rented this house thinking that we would eventually buy it, but it now seems impossible. I'm still in the same situation, not knowing what is going to happen to us: if we will be able to buy this house or if we have to move. Some months ago, I was very stressed out about this situation, but today, I know that I'm not alone.

I have my husband and a loving God who is always by my side.

One of my dreams is to own a house, to feel free to do whatever I want, and to take off of my shoulders the stress of where I will live next. But I know that I just have to have determination.

(Marisol Gonzalez)





My birth mother did the best she could with what she had. We always had a roof over our head, even if it wasn't the best living circumstances. The life I lived as a child has better prepared me for adulthood. With that being said, there are still laws that disagreed with the ways she chose to raise us... When I was eleven years old, I was taken out of my home and placed in a group home and juvenile shelters. I went through six different homes within the seven years of being in the system. My homelessness is a different type of homelessness. I say I was homeless because I was separated from my own family and forced to live with strangers. Each home reminded me less of what I was used to.

(Shanon Holmes)



In 2013 my house was raided and drugs were found. I was placed in the county jail on a \$20,000 bond. Within the first five minutes, I was on the phone with my sister, telling her to go to my house and put all my things in storage before someone stole everything. When I was released on bond, I found out that my sister had sold and given away all of my things, and I was broke now. All I had were the clothes on my back and the shoes on my feet. My pride wouldn't allow me to ask my friends if I could sleep on the couch, so I stayed in a shelter. My BMW X3 turned into my ex-



wife's BMW X3, and I still owed \$5,000 for help on my bond. I couldn't face my four children this way and feel like a dad or a man. I decided to find a job and leave the streets alone, and that's

why, three years later, I'm in the Odyssey Program writing this story from my life to you.

(Johnnie Walton)



Growing up having a single mother raising two children alone with no help was a struggling challenge: trying to find a babysitter so she could work two jobs to just live and survive, being able to provide clothes and a place to stay. As children, we got moved around a lot from school to school. I was not in a stable school until I was in the fifth grade. We moved from house to house, and we struggled to pay rent and bills. My mother reached out to many different organizations for help, such as churches. We never were able to receive help from the state or the government because my mother made too much. So she struggled. But with the strength of God and good faith, we survived and never went without.

(Carissa Love)



I recall five years ago in Syria when the war started, I was living with my family on the east coast of Syria. Protests broke out and escalated into a major civil war between the regime, which was the Syrian government, and innocent Syrian people. We lived each day not knowing whether our home would be destroyed or invaded. As a result, we eventually had to leave our home country.

(Ahmad Nahas)



I have been homeless at least four times in my life. My mother was a single mother, and I myself am, too. Keeping and maintaining housing while the economy grows so slowly is a struggle. I have been from job to job and home to home. Due to everything I have been through, I remain driven. I still love family and having a home to share with them. As long as we have a roof over our heads and food on the table, I am happy. **(Alyanna Cooper)**



I was seventeen, homeless, living in the shelter while attending my last year of high school. It was hard to find an apartment because I had no credit or rental history, so I was declined a lot. I was working part-time because I was attending school. I had no support system; the only thing I had was self-motivation and a car. The hardest part was being homeless. I wanted to be able to take a shower whenever. I wanted a place to put my stuff other than in my car. It was frustrating, not having someone give me a chance when I knew I was capable of paying rent. **(Kendra Atkinson)**



At times, I was in need of a home; I would search and search and when I would apply at a place that I considered "nice." Instantly, when setting up a time for a showing, I would get nervous because I am "colored," and I felt I would get denied because they wouldn't think highly of me and would assume I wouldn't treat the property nicely. I am young, trying to build my credit score. Because it is low and because I don't

make "2x or 3x" the rent, I've been denied housing a lot, even though I've always paid my rent on time. Also, because I haven't been at a job longer than a year or so, they think that doesn't show consistent income, when the reason that I switch jobs is to find out my interests so I can choose a career; it's not because I've been fired or had problems of being irresponsible. If only they would give me a chance, I would prove to them that I am a perfect tenant. The main problem is being able to afford certain places. Some places are bad neighborhoods with cheap places where as good places cost so much you are left without hope or anything in my eyes. **(D'onna Atkinson)**



When I arrived in the U.S. in 2014, I found a refugee agency that rented an apartment for me that cost \$1,013 – monthly. Also, they paid for the first three months; after that, I had to pay from my own money. I was surprised because the cost was very high, and I didn't know how I could pay all that money. At that time, I wasn't able to work since I needed surgery, and I had to finish paperwork for things such as getting my driver's license. During that time, I struggled to meet the basic needs of my family, but I felt the most important need was a house. For example, we can buy clothes and other stuff from thrift stores or Goodwill. But without a house, we would be sleeping in the streets. For this reason, I decided to get a job as soon as possible, even though the work was basic with little salary. I decided we should get started right away and then everything will get better and better. Anything at the beginning is always hard, but with time, we can make it easier by working hard. **(Musab Naji)**



There was a time my sister rented a three-bedroom house in Jamaica, New York. The landlord rented the basement of the house to another family, and their utilities were being paid by us.

The landlord made us believe that their bills were separate. He knew that we were new in the country, and I didn't know that the basement was supposed to be part of our living space, and it was in fact illegal to rent a single family home to two families.

My sister and I struggled with the rent and our bills to a point that we were behind in rent, and the landlord decided to evict us and took us to court. It was a very difficult and frustrating moment for us, the insecurity was overwhelming and scary. Luckily for us, somehow in court the conversation of the basement came up. The judge ruled in our favor and asked us not to pay the landlord any back rent because for two years we were cheated out of our living space, and we had borne the responsibility of the utilities for another family. **(Sukai Yarbo)**



I am currently working full-time at a domestic abuse shelter, and although our preference is for domestic abuse victims, our clients often seek shelter because once they have left a partner, they are no longer able to pay rent or

manage bills without the additional income their partner would provide.

I myself have never been able to identify with having someone in my household to share financial responsibilities with, so my family and I have been struggling for quite some time. Now, I do work 40-60 hours per week, when overtime is available, but if I do not work six-seven days per week, it is often hard to find money left over at the end of the

month for gas and food.

I am a single mother who does not receive any child support. Whatever money I have left over at the end of the month, if any, will go towards either playing catch up on bills that I've defaulted on or towards one of my children's needs.

A check without overtime each pay period is \$977. I get paid twice a month, on the 5th and 20th. My rent is due no later than the 3rd of each month so, without being able to pay until the 5th, I am responsible for the base rent of \$966 plus a \$35 fee. However, I've started submitting my payments online via virtual check on the 3rd. That doesn't clear or take money out of my account until the 5th which helps me to avoid the \$35 fee.

Then there's an MG&E bill which is around \$100 per month plus cell phone bills at \$130 per month, a car note that is \$311 per month due to late fees added because I can't pay until the 20th; this is for a truck that costs me about \$60 per week in gas and doesn't have working heat or windshield wipers. So, that leaves me with around \$200 per month after all of my rent and bills are paid. And with the bulk of my income going towards the rent on my two-bedroom apartment for myself and my four children, it's almost impossible to live comfortably without struggling each month, or to get out of debt.

(Avé Thorpe)





It can be frustrating to find ourselves unemployed. One time that I struggled to figure out how to balance the cost of rent, food, and clothes was two years ago. In January of 2014, I got laid off from work. I remember the last day of

work. I was very happy and listening to my radio when my supervisor called me to the office and told me that they did not need me anymore. I felt so sad because I knew it was so hard to find a new job. I had worked for six years as a tailor. I had all the benefits such as vacation days, insurance, and a good salary. I had a good relationship with my boss and co-workers. They really appreciated my work.

After that day, I started looking for another job. I applied in many temporary agencies. They provided jobs for me for a few weeks and sometimes a couple of months. So, the rent was due, the pile of bills grew bigger, and we didn't have enough food. I had to visit many different food pantries. My car was broken, and I had no extra money to fix it. I wasn't able to have a good night's sleep. My life was so difficult. I was about to give up. One day a friend offered me a job in his workplace. I went to apply, and I got hired the next day. The work is harder in this place, and the working conditions are dirty, but I still work there.

I prefer to work in these conditions than be unemployed. **(José Mendoza)**



The sounds of fire truck sirens and firemen with axes bursting through the walls are continuously ringing in my ears. It seems like it happened yesterday, but it was two years and a few months ago to this day. I went to church with my family, and

the service was very emotional for me. After dinner, my spouse, daughter, and I decided to go out for brunch. We had a lovely dinner; however, I was not feeling too well afterward. We went

home, and there my son and some friends were hanging out in his room. He came out to address me and went back to his room. I took some medication and told my spouse that I wanted to take a rest. He told me that would be a great idea and that he would take our daughter with him to visit relatives.

As I was lying in bed medicated and on my CPAP machine, I remembered being awakened by what appeared to be a spider web-like material sprinkling on my skin. I seriously thought that I was sleepwalking. I recall seeing bright flashing lights and thick smoke in my entire unit. I called for my son, and he was nowhere to be found. I yelled for my husband and daughter; no one was at home. The next thing I remember is going back to my bedroom and calling out for family again. The kitchen was clear up in flames, and the heat was so hot it had melted the pictures on the wall in the dining room. By this time, my neighbor had come over, pried my door open, and told me to get out of there. I was in complete shock like a statue that was mounted in one place. He rushed and grabbed the fire extinguisher to put out the flames. By this time, I was worried about the outcome of my home.

The fire department deemed it was unsafe for us to stay there. Without any money and anyone to call because my spouse was without a cell phone, I went to my neighbor's house and got on social media telling my family and friends what had happened and that I needed to get in touch with my husband. I didn't have my sister's phone number because we usually chatted on Facebook. It was a total disaster. By this time, we were trying to figure out what had happened, and my son was nowhere to be found. The house was clear of everyone but me. The Red Cross offered help, and I was relocated to a hotel for a few days. I had completely lost everything except my life.

When my family came home, they were worried because the door had yellow tape and a sign that

said “Do not enter.” My husband thought that perhaps a murder had taken place in our home; thanks to heaven that wasn’t the case. We were eventually reunited and everyone hugged me. We just leaned in and cried tears of joy for my life and tears of sorrow for what lay ahead. A week had passed and the hotel bill was continuously adding up. We were paying \$1600 a month to live in the hotel. We finally were told that we could not move back into the damaged apartment. Without renter’s insurance, we were definitely in a tight situation. With help from my husband’s job, our children’s school, and our community and family coming to our aid, we somehow ended up in the Salvation Army. It was a difficult time for us. I had lost my job, we had a teen with serious growing pain issues, and now we were homeless. With a host of other law suits, why not just add one more?

My heart was truly heavy, in pain mentally and physically. Every day, I would drive our one vehicle loaded with the few belongings we were able to salvage. I would wake up early in the morning and take my husband to work from Madison to De Forest and my children to school in Waunakee. I found another job doing CNA work at a rehabilitation center. We were sharing one auto and driving across town daily, but we never gave up. After filling out many housing applications and not getting approved due to the fire, we ended up moving back to Madison. The landlord that I rented from when I first moved to Madison gave me a unit. I was not happy but very grateful to get off the floor at the Salvation Army warming house. In the blink of an eye, the inevitable happened, and we were definitely not prepared, but my faith and determination pulled my family and me through. Today, we are homeowners, and I hope to never allow a situation like this one to take us by surprise again. **(Lawana Diagne)**

I remember a time when I was pregnant with my second child. It was a very difficult time for me and my family. This happened the second time I came



to the United States in 2013. My husband and I came when I was six months pregnant. We had to leave my one-year-old son back in Mexico with my mother-in-law. We made this decision for the wellbeing of both of our children.

The plan was to settle in Wisconsin before our second child was born. We first needed to find a place to live, find a job, and buy a car. We didn’t expect that it was going to be very hard. At first, it was hard to find a place for us to live together. I found a place to live with my sister, and my husband found a place to live with some friends. This situation was very complicated because we could only see each other once or twice a week due to lack of transportation. Fortunately, right before my due date, we all (my husband, my sister, and I) found a place to live. It was with my sister’s friend; we all had to share the same room.

A few weeks after that, my son was born. At the time, my husband could only find a job where he worked a few hours a week. That being said, we had not enough income to really support ourselves. I couldn’t work because I had to take care of my baby. We had no money to buy diapers, baby clothes, or formula. At the time, it was a huge relief to receive food from the WIC program where we could get some milk, formula, juice, and cereal.

I remember I had to stretch \$50 to make food for the whole week for all three of us. I didn’t know about any resources available in the community to help in our situation, like where to get food from food pantries, early childhood program assistance, or community center services. So, on the one hand, it was difficult because we had no money; on the other hand, I was so



depressed because I had left my other baby in my country with my grandma. Eight long months passed until I was reunited with my one-year-old son.

I was very thankful to God to have my family together again after going through so much. Due to these experiences, I felt it was my time to contribute to our Latino community. I started to volunteer in different non-profit organizations to inform people in need. **(Grisel Tapia Claudio)**



The cost of living in Madison is very high. I have always tried to live in a good neighborhood where my kids are safe. In Madison, that means the rent is high. My main struggle since I moved to Madison was providing a home for my family. I

have three wonderful kids. My youngest is a teenager and a freshman in high school. My older two are young adults. My two kids work, but that doesn't matter. I still have to help them. If I struggle to live in a decent neighborhood, they will struggle more. So, we all live together.

I work a full-time job and a part-time job that I work nearly every weekend. I am also in school. Most of the money I make goes to rent. Sometimes I may be late with the rent because I'm trying to juggle my paychecks. I have to make decisions, hard decisions, every month about my rent, food for my family, electricity bills, phone bills, clothing, and transportation. What do people do who don't make the money I do?

My older kids work a lot. They have good work habits. It makes me upset when my older kids won't help out – when they are selfish. I need more from them. We are family. We have to support each other.

I struggle with my landlord. I just moved into a new duplex this summer. He wanted so much money that I had to pay him in installment

payments. Since I couldn't pay him all the money at once, I had to pay for rent, but my landlord wouldn't let me move in. When I finally moved in, there were all sorts of problems with my apartment. The shower didn't work, the counter needed repair, and the garage was a mess! The thermostat didn't work. My washer and dryer aren't working right. My landlord should have fixed everything before I moved in! He didn't. He tried to push me around, but I had to put him in his place. It is a struggle. I wish I could buy my own home. **(Ngina Ali)**



Honestly, it's a monthly struggle in my household to make rent, and the issue itself has been recurring all of my life. Whether we don't have the last little bit or none at all, there is just always the stress of potential 5-day notices and

eviction looming. Thankfully, we've managed to pull it off in most cases, but not all. I'll always remember the few nights we had to spend at the Salvation Army or late drives across town to one of my mom's friends to crash on the sofa if only for a day or two. It hasn't always been so unstable, but that is the pattern of recent times. Even trying to find a place of my own for the first time has proven almost impossible and definitely deflating. Rent costs, work wages, availability, all factors that don't seem to add up the least bit for me or most people I know. The stigma of living at home seems unfair when you look at the difficulty behind striking out alone. **(Anthony Jefferson)**



GO BIG READ:

MATTHEW DESMOND'S *EVICTED*



By reading the beginning of *Evicted*, we get to know about Arleen and her two boys and their struggles of being homeless and evicted throughout their lives. From Arleen we learn about her evictions from not having money to pay rent and sometimes getting kicked out of buildings for code violations. Then from Sherrena we learn of all the evictions she has to give out to people, as well as the money and time it takes for landlords to keep up with the building maintenance. **(Susana Gomez)**

every evicted tenant is wrong, and not every landlord is right. **(Johnnie Walton)**



From Arleen's story, I learned that the landlords in Milwaukee are very strict. In my opinion, I believe that before the landlord evicts the tenants, they should make a deep investigation about any problems in the housing. In this case, those boys were too young and innocent. The problem that they caused wasn't a good reason to be evicted. **(José Mendoza)**



I learned that the housing problems are not going to change or get better. It will get worse before it gets any better. For example, "There are hundreds of data-mining companies that sell landlords tenant screening reports listing past evictions and court filing." Some people have to make a choice either to pay rent or buy the necessities that they need in order to get by. The tenants are at the mercy of the landlords. **(Ngina Ali)**



From the reading, as well as personal experience, I begin to see the depth of the issue as well as the growing corporate or venture capitalist nature some landlords and realty offices exhibit. The personal factor is brought out and true struggles, like Arleen barely affording essentials for her family, take a backseat to cold deadlines. I ask myself if Sherrena would crumble without one month of rent or even a late one, and if not, why can't she or other monetized slumlords find compassion? **(Anthony Jefferson)**



Arleen wants a place to live for her two children and can't pay rent. Sherrena wants to help but not if it will cost her money. What I learned about housing problems from the reading is that everyone wants something and almost no one wants to pay the cost. I also learned that not





Arleen is a poor single mom and trying to make ends meet. Sherrena was very much aware of all her tenant's situations, being a landlord and black. Also, she had to evict people because she needed to make money. I learned that there are people so poor that they cannot afford to pay rent. Poor people have to pay a lot for substandard housing, broken pipes, leaking windows and no hot water. America is a super power in the world, and it baffles me that the government cannot get rid of poverty in this country. Poor people should get free education. This exists in the U.K. **(Joy Bally)**



I learned that there was a huge upswing of people being evicted. People were paying more than 50% of their income, almost up to 70%, which is where we are now. It's hard not to get into rent trouble living paycheck to paycheck. A lot of times, people a lot of times have to choose between all of the rent and no lights or short of rent and lights. It shows how hard our times are. I also learned that Sherrena tried to be a good landlord, but she had her own bills that had to be paid, too. She could only help for so long until she was falling behind on even bigger bills. **(Victoria Patterson)**



In my opinion Ms. Arleen and Ms. Sherrena had an understanding. Things may not have been up to one's liking when it came to the condition of the homes, but the effort to help with little things like



groceries and giving her sons a chance was greatly appreciated. As far as housing problems, it was all about the money at the end of the day. Ms. Sherrena didn't really care how her tenants lived; as long as they paid their dues, she was okay. It seems like she was being lenient and trying to be understanding until her tenant's shortcomings were affecting her mortgage, etc. She had no remorse about putting the girl out because she wasn't satisfied with her complaining to the state, when in reality she should have fixed the window and made sure it was a safe environment for the young mother and child. "Money talks, bullshit walks." The money would have kept her there. Her mother calling the state was the "bullshit" that got her. **(Kyisha Williams)**



I am already devastated with Arleen's situation. She is barely surviving, and due to something out of her control (an irate stranger kicking her door down), she is immediately evicted from her home. In a very short time period, she moves from one awful housing situation to the next. I am not sure how Sherrena is able to dissolve rental

relationships so fast. I understand she risks a lot on her behalf, but to some extent, tenants are at risk as well. She knowingly rents uninhabitable properties to desperate poor people who have no other options. She illegally retaliates against renters rather than using that energy to get properties up to code. I have very quickly learned that housing in Milwaukee is problematic. Many people cannot afford adequate housing and are forced into unhealthy living conditions for not only themselves but children, too. Disabled tenants, families, etc. are not shown any mercy and are at risk to be forced out at any time. **(Cherri Sorrells)**

. . . Sherrena lives a lavish lifestyle and wouldn't have it any other way. When Sherrena feels like one of her tenants burned



her, she will become a cold, heartless landlord. I understand business is business, and nothing is free, but where is the compassion as to how the woman and children are living? I

understand that there is a lot of background work that tenants don't acknowledge, such as mortgage payments and water bills. When tenants become delinquent in their rent payments, landlords have to dig into their personal savings to avoid the property being foreclosed and losing out on more money. At the end of the day, business is business, and nothing should be taken personally. Landlords and tenants need to establish better relationships. Maybe some of the madness can be stopped. **(Asha Green)**

Eviction

A Poem By Lawana Diagne

Self-affliction

Nevertheless reminds me of eviction.

Not that living in a dome

Would not be considered by me the perfect home.

Life circumstances are bitterly placing us out in the cold;

However, asking for help seems to be rather bold.

Somehow I fight hard to evade the cold,
Working hard to strive for my family until I get old.
Through knowledge I hope to rise
To educate myself and family.
I hope to never have this happen again.
In the midst of the storm,
I hope to make it end.



CHANNELING FREDERICK DOUGLASS

It is 1852, and escaped slave Frederick Douglass has just read a review in The Southern Quarterly Review stating that slaves cannot dream of liberty because it is "a conception which belongs so naturally to the white man." The essay goes on to argue that it is "a cruel task to disturb him in the enjoyment of that life—slavery—to which God has destined him," that slaves bask in the sunshine and are happy, and that "Christian slavery . . . is the brightest sunbeam which Omniscience has destined for his existence." Frederick Douglass responds:

Dear Editor:

My name is Frederick Douglass, and I was a slave. I have read your paper. You mentioned that we, the slaves, do not understand freedom . . . and are happy with our lives. Would you be happy working from sunrise to sundown with nothing in return, even when it is freezing or a hundred degrees outside, getting nothing in return and maybe being beaten? I have to wear clothes that have holes. Can you imagine eating the same thing every day? Next time that you have to write about how "happy" we are with this life, please take into consideration everything that I have said to you here. We are human beings also; we have a heart and a soul.

(Belem Calixto Martinez)

You said the Negro enjoys being a slave and has a great life. Would you be willing to trade places? No one woke up saying they wanted to be a slave, not treated as a person but as property given the bare minimum in shelter,

food, and clothes, worked from sun up to sun down with no pay. No one wants to see loved ones beaten within inches of their lives over little things. No one wants to see a grown man shot down like a dog, his blood and brains flying everywhere and no justice being done.

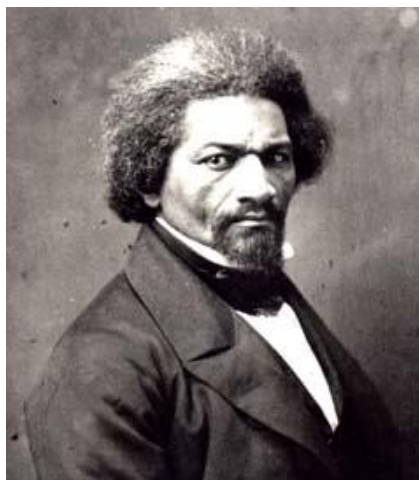
(Victoria Patterson)

I cannot think of a slave under the harsh crack of cow skin that doesn't long to be free of pain and obligation to a master that would sooner break their will than raise their spirits. Perhaps few on this Earth know the plight for liberation better than my black brethren who even now are sold as crudely as the butcher's offerings. Under your "Christian" slavery, I have seen children torn screaming from their mother's arms, husbands whipped or worse for sneaking out to see a love, and bloodlines perish under the toil of fieldwork and savage oppression. When the slave driver is as bloodthirsty as the demons in your Bible, I can't help but wonder how God would allow such a thing. **(Anthony Jefferson)**

Slaves are not happy. They are living in cold weather and with sadness in their lives. Slaves are not lucky. God is the one who decides who is a man, and you cannot choose who is a man. People do not treat Negroes like men, only like nothing. Is being nothing basking in the sun? No, it is not. **(Ahmad Nahas)**

Everyone is entitled to liberty. The Bible or God does not specifically condone slavery. Examples: "Masters, do the same to them, and stop threatening. Knowing that he who is born their master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality to Him." *Ephesians 6:9* "Masters, treat your bond servants justly

and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." *Colossians 4:1* "If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, . . . [in] the seventh year, you shall let him go free. And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed; you shall furnish him liberally out." *Deuteronomy 15:12-15*
(Alyanna Cooper)



needs; forced to live without parents from an early age; kept in captivity like animals; imprisoned from the opportunity to be free; being tortured and whipped for no reason; being humiliated and dishonored. **(José Mendoza)**

There is no life without liberty. God made all humans free, and when anyone loses his/her freedom, life will be out of

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." *The Declaration of Independence* recognizes that all men are created equal – not all white men, not all yellow men, not all black men, ALL MEN! Your editorial refers to Christian slavery as "the brightest sunbeam which God has destined for his existence." But, both the Old and New Testament command us to treat others the way we would like to be treated. If you want to be a free man, then free men.
(Joy Bally)

In your letter you said, "The Negro doesn't dream of liberty." Why do you think that they try to escape slavery? Also, you said, "it is a cruel task to disturb him in the enjoyment of that life- slavery." Do you think being treated as property, forced to work, and being punished with no reason is an enjoyable life? You declared, "Christian slavery is the brightest sunbeam which Omniscience has destined for his existence." If you think God prepared this life for us, I challenge you to have your children live in our situation: deprived of food, clothing and all human

his/her scope. When a man is in constraints, how can he use his potential in appropriate ways? Slavery lets a person breathe little air, not all that he needs. Can you imagine a bird in a cage will be happy even though you put him in a golden cage? **(Musab Naji)**

As a child, I saw the slaveholder whipping a woman for no reason on open wounds repeatedly at different times of the day for the only reason that she got burned when she was a child. She was not the same person, meaning that she could not use her hands as her master could have wanted her to use them, so that she could produce him money through her labor. How can a person feel happy being treated the way a slave is treated? The memories I have as a child include the suffering of being beaten up, being cold, feeling starved, and being discriminated against to date by people who have the same thinking as you. Who can tell better than a slave what it feels to be the slave?

(Grisel Tapia Claudio)

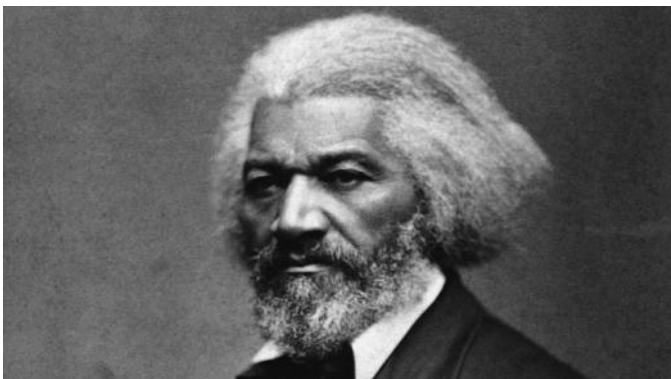
Bondage left me feeling broken in body, soul, and spirit. But I rose to the challenge of seeking another path. Through my travels and life experiences, I have met with many prestigious individuals such as Garrison and

Lincoln, to name a few. Through such meetings, I can discredit your point with no room for doubt. I am human, just as you are. My blood runs red, just as yours. The quest for freedom is continuing to thrive. "People might not get all they work for in this world, but they certainly will work for all they get." **(Spencer Gamble)**

You, my friend, are the "slave" – maybe not tortured or separated from your mother or not knowing your father, but you are a "slave" because you were raised to say and do such cruel behavior just because you have the power. You do not have the power over me. You do not or will not determine my identity, for I know who I am. I had faith and courage to get me out of the situation I was in. It was hard, but I made it through. I never gave up on myself even those times I was beaten, abused, and neglected. I never gave up and never will.

(Simone Bell-Perdue)

I am outraged that a white man thinks he can attest to the horrors of slavery. I was once a slave and dreamed of nothing more than freedom. It was all I could think, dream, and pray to God about. White men were not kidnapped from their homes, brutally beaten, and forced into labor. Therefore, they cannot accurately give an opinion on slavery. At the very least, the white men of this country have convinced themselves otherwise in a poor attempt to ease the evil conscience they possess. My ancestors were not born into slavery, which shows my people were



not ever supposed to belong to the white man. If slavery is so wonderful, why are no white men slaves? Since it is illegal for a slave to read or write, it is my duty to shine a light on the dehumanizing practice of enslaving human beings. **(Cherri Sorrells)**

How can you say, "The Negro, left to himself, does not dream of liberty?" The thought of being free made me teach myself to read and write. The possibilities of being free made me strive for freedom. Every time I was beaten, I thought about being free. Every time I had little or nothing to eat, I thought about being free. Every time I felt myself being watched, knowing that in any moment my owner could jump out of nowhere, finding joy in our fear, I thought about being free. Not being allowed to know my mother made me want to be free. Working to the point that I was sick made me want to be free. Watching my fellow Negro shot dead for not obeying a simple order made me want to be free because in any moment that could be me. Witnessing someone getting beaten bloody or being the bloody victim made me want to be free—Free, Free, Free! **(Kyisha Williams)**

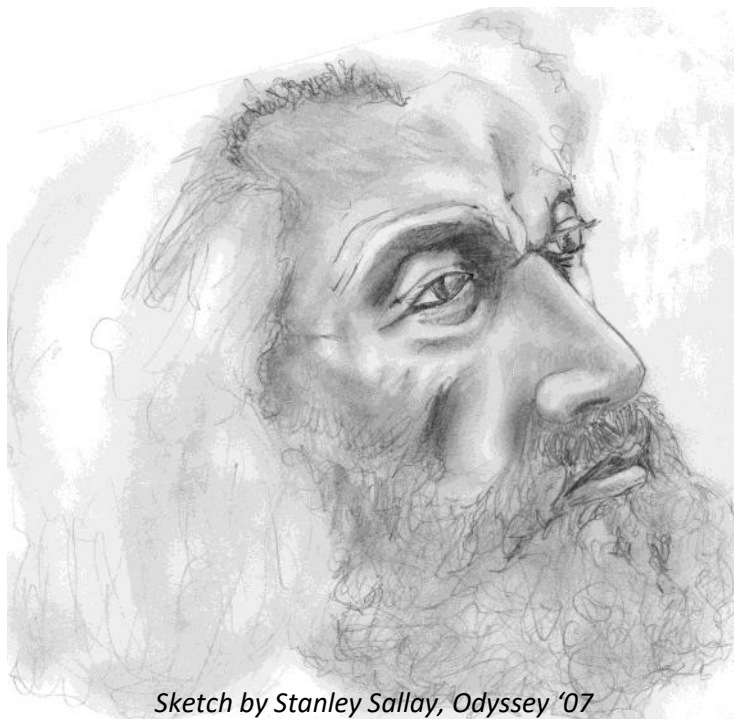
All we Negroes dream of is liberty. The conception that it is natural and clear for you is only dark and hidden to us because you make freedom unknown and blurry for us to acquire. 'Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?' Slavery is misery, so why must you white men be so visionless? Only one blessing comes with being out in the field, and that is to be far from you white men and able to connect to the world and the dear Lord above.

(D'onna Atkinson)

We have been kidnapped from our own home and forced to be enslaved; we are no longer able to come and go as we please. Freedom is what we had; freedom is what you took from us! You

ripped us from our children when they were just babies, yet forced us to care for your infants and children! Do you know the feeling of being worked from sun up to sun down with barely any food to eat, going to bed, sleeping on dirt floors? Do my veins not bleed red blood the same as you? What happened to “love thy neighbor” and “do unto others as you would have them do unto you”? **(Asha Green)**

I was taken from my mother with no clue of who my father was, watched my aunts get beaten, was denied being by my mother’s side while she was on her deathbed, and was forbidden to learn. Although these plights were meant to distort my understanding of joy and meant to make me believe that darkness was light, God’s spirit which dwells in me, as available to any other human black or white, pricked my heart through the moans and wails of my fellow slaves to let me know that this was not the way God intended humans to live. Fear-driven acceptance of circumstances that are difficult to change does not equate to contentment or joy in one’s demise. **(Avé Thorpe)**



Sketch by Stanley Sallay, Odyssey '07

I am a human AND I am a Negro. When I am sad I cry, and when I am happy I laugh, just like you. My blood is red, and I dream of liberty. How dare you think when we bask in the sunshine we are happy? Is this a joke? Imagine being born and your mother taken away from you before you turned a year old and sold to the best buyer. Imagine seeing your mother about four or five times during your life and only at night. Imagine at daybreak your mother is gone and you do not really know when you will see her again. How would you feel if you were beaten for no reason at all? **(Ngina Ali)**

Was it God’s plan to keep slaves in darkness and pay for knowledge with pain of the flesh? You said it is the brightest sunbeam which Omniscience has destined for slaves’ existence. Is it Christian or morally acceptable to separate a child from his mother? Imagine meeting your mother only a few times in your life. I never met my mother in the light of day. I learned about her death without ever saying goodbye. We bask in the sunshine “happily” because it is one of the few things no one can take away from us. **(Sukai Yarbo)**

What happiness are you seeing? Are you mistaking your happiness with that of us Negroes? You deny us from our rights, you make us live in fear. You try to make us live without knowledge. We sing hymns with pride because it inspires us that we’ll be saved, we’ll be equal one day, and that will be the day our happiness is true. We’ll bask in the sunshine and be truly happy; if this freedom shall not come, we’ll follow the Big Dipper towards freedom. We shall come! **(Kendra Atkinson)**

**Sincerely,
Frederick Douglass**

ALUMNI CORNER



Seeking Shelter in Madison

by Jelissa Edwards '16

This essay was written and read-aloud last summer for a webinar by Forward Community Investments, a non-profit that works to create more equity in our community. This fall, it was performed again for the YWCA Racial Justice Summit.

All I have ever wanted in life was to ensure that my sons are raised in the best environment—one that is safe, where I would not have to constantly worry about us being targeted.

Finding proper housing that will accept a single black woman with two young children is extremely hard. I have been turned down so many times, solely because of the pigment of my skin and where I come from. It's like no one wants to consistently give us hard working, single mothers of color a fighting chance. Instead, we must jump through hoops to obtain what any decent, upstanding citizen of Madison should be entitled to, which is equality, fairness, and equal treatment.

I can recall one time when I was without a stable home for two months. My children and I were forced to sleep on the floor of my friend's apartment. I was working over 80 hours a week, every single week, saving every penny that I earned so that I could afford a residence for my family.

Once I managed to do the research and configure the numbers in my head, I had managed to save enough money that would allow me to pay my security deposit and at least two months of rent in advance. I began applying for apartments all over the city, though mainly in areas I felt my children would be safe and have a chance to prosper.

After putting in numerous applications, I was finally given a few callbacks. There was one place in particular, located in Sun Prairie, that I was especially excited about.

The supervisor wanted to meet me the following Monday so that we could do a walk-through and go over the specifics. I was so happy that I was literally floating on air, until I went into work the next day and was told I would not be able to take that Monday off. I went into panic mode because I needed this place and my time was running out. I had already wrapped my heart around getting approved for the place.

The next day, I called the supervisor back and told her that I would not be able to make it that particular Monday, but that I could send my cousin over for the walk-through. She said that would be fine.



That Monday came and my cousin went in my place. When the meeting had concluded, my cousin stated that the supervisor told her that she was sure I would get the apartment. She said that I had met all of her qualifications and the fact that I was able to pay for a few months in advance showed that I was serious about obtaining that residence.

I received a call two days later from the property manager, and she asked me if we could meet face-to-face. That Friday I was free, and she agreed to meet me at 3 PM.

The first thing she did when she opened the door and I extended my hand was frown up her face and say, "Your cousin.....uhm, is that really your cousin? How is it that you are, ya know, a woman of color?"

My stomach dropped, and I immediately felt sick. She then looked down upon my two children and said, "There aren't any of them around here, so they wouldn't have much fun. You will probably feel better in an urban area." Then she slammed the door in my face.

I broke down in front of the door with my arms wrapped around my children. I will never forget that day for as long as I live. I had never felt so hopeless and so worthless.

The Courage to Write **by Lucia Chikowero '14**

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 off 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.

