

Year 13, Issue 4

November 4, 2015

ODYSSEY ORACLE

NIGHT OF THE LIVING HUMANITIES



In this Oracle . . .

Night of the Living Humanities.....	1
Channeling Frederick Douglass	3
Finding Plato's Cave Today	9
Love Lessons	19
Uprooting the Hurt Tree with Dr. Beverly Hutcherson	24
Bryan Stevenson's Just Mercy	28
The Courage to Consult Counselors...33	
Finding a Voice	34
Mesmerized by Music	37



Emily Auerbach, Project Director; Oracle Editor
Kevin Mullen, Writing Instructor; Oracle Editor
Beth McMahon, Oracle Designer

eauerbach@dcs.wisc.edu
kmullen@dcs.wisc.edu

262-3733 or 712-6321
572-6730

www.odyssey.wisc.edu



CHANNELING FREDERICK DOUGLASS

It is 1852, and escaped slave Frederick Douglass has just read an editorial stating that slaves cannot dream of liberty because it is "a conception which belongs so naturally to the white man." The editorial 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:



You benevolent, kind soul, what do you know of slavery? You must be deaf, disturbed, and dumb. Why would I not dream of liberty? For years I was beaten, battered, and burned by whips, starved, scarred, and shunned for the color of my skin. You know nothing of this life, that of a slave; you are an ignorant and idiotic imbecile. I dare you to live as a slave for a day, let alone a week, and I ask, what will your tone be as a slave?

This will never fall upon you because you are a white man. You know your family, knew how old you were at all times. Your life was never in question or pieced together in fragments, watching your peers and family whipped, wounded, and wiped out. You, sir, are a coward, hiding behind your words, none of which are true. **(Steve Jones)**



My heart burned my ribs when I read this. I ran away from a far away place without food or water. The feeling of strangeness is my friend and moves around me. And you tell me that I do not dream of liberty! My tears are with me, my pain is with me, my sorrow is with me, but they did not stop me from being free. My liberty loves me

and I give it my entire being. Cannot you see they have got it wrong? It is not real. This is not how it should be. As long as my eyes see the world, I will never be a slave again. Those who argue that slaves should not have liberty are ignorant and crazy.

I promise you that the new generation is going to tear up the word slavery from its root and put liberty there instead. They will never bow down to anyone. Since you have not been a slave before, you cannot imagine how it feels to be a slave. At a young age I saw slaves being beaten, bled, and killed in front of my eyes. But trust me, that is not going to happen again. God has created us equally, and we will show you that one day. **(Umaima Mohammed Saed)**



When did you start to enslave people, since God has created them free? Ah, your chains have bloodied my wrists and your whips have broken my back. Know that if a wound begins to recover, another wound creeps up from memory. And then the light is an omen of the sunrise and the dawn is towering over like a blaze.

Perhaps one day our fates will cross when our desire to meet is strong enough. When will this captivity end? . . . So much hope we had built up around us as slaves. Redolent of

charm like the breeze of the hills, the night came and the night became my only friend. God does not look at your figures nor at your color but at your hearts and accomplishments. The blood is running in my veins, the same blood that is going through your veins. So why should I be a slave and you the master? Take my eyes and look through them, and you will see what happens to the slave. Take my heart and feel from it, and you will feel all the painful things that happen to a slave.
(**Shaimaa Ahmed**)



Upon discovering your passage, I must say, you have disturbed and caused me so much distress, I feel as though you have whipped my mind raw with your poison-laced cow skin, then smothered it with a pail of salt all over to preserve the ignorance you so desperately desire to implant and intend to keep rooted.

When the stars gleam bright and the moon's smile glows, and slumber is calling my restless body, do not you think that I, too, dream of liberty? To be slumbering amongst the stars and moon? That one day, we slaves, too, will soar as high as they do and be regarded with as much beauty as they are? (**Mai Thao**)



I am outraged and appalled by what you had to say. I dream of being free every day and night, lying at night with a coarse blanket, without my mother. I was illiterate – unable to read and write; that was until I wanted more, to learn more. I taught myself the necessary steps to read and write so I can escape slavery.



Sketch by Stanley Sallay, '07

How dare you say God has destined me to slavery, to be a slave! Oh, that is false. You must be destined to slavery as well. . . . God does not like ugly, and this is ugly; slavery is a sin! (**Tasha Thompson**)



I take it that you were once a slave owner since you are speaking to me in a slave owner's opinion. You are limiting the mind of a human being based on color and not the God given potential, which is equality. Not only are you challenging me as a man, but you also are challenging God's gift to humans. This Christian slavery gives me freedom, not the value that others put on me and the others that thought this way. As the saying goes, you give an inch and you take a mile. (**Betty Emmanuel**)

Let's start by defining dangerous, which is quite the contradiction when leaving the mouth of one who lives beneath the surface of pale-colored skin. Dangerous, to be simply put, means able or likely to inflict injury. Is this



not the definition of the only way known to keep someone enslaved? Is it not dangerous to repeatedly whip one against their own will, until flesh dripped from one's very bones? . . . For decades my people and I have been led astray.

Withheld from everyday common sense knowledge, we were physically, mentally and emotionally beaten down for even mentioning the thought of one day learning to read and write. . . . We went through years and years of injustice, abuse, neglect and much more unpalatable behavior, working in the harshest environments and given a week's supply of necessities meant to last a year. I, being someone who lived through the extremities, am even more taken aback at being called DANGEROUS. . . . The whites live in fear that one day we will rise and reach our peaks of knowledge and power and economic rank, thus leaving the white race equal or below us slaves/ blacks. Now that you can call dangerous. **(Joseph Young)**



It is hard to believe that you, who claim to be educated, you, who know the dehumanizing circumstances in which all the slaves live, you, who identify the pain and sorrow that slavery causes to all, can describe the life of slaves as a beautiful and enjoyable thing. . . . Do you think being owned, being treated as property, forced to work and being punished without valid reason, is a delightful life? Moreover, you declare, "Christian slavery...is the brightest sunbeam which Omniscience has destined for his existence." I totally disagree; you and I know that slavery is not God's decision. As humans, we should all have the same opportunities to live in a free environment where we can make decisions in our own judgment. We should not be categorized for skin color; rather, we should be treated as equal,

helping each other to become one nation without injustice. If you really think God prepared this life for us, I challenge you to have your children live in our situation, deprived of the opportunity to be free, forced to live without parents at a very young age, kept in captivity just like animals or even worse, excluded from basic human needs (food, clothing, beds), and being tortured and whipped with no acceptable reason. Experiencing the humiliation and the misfortune of being slaves will make you stop writing nonsense. **(Guadalupe Tinajero)**



Is a human being, a child of God, not deserving of free will and independence? If a person born ignorant, kept segregated and isolated to a way of life does not have an opportunity to make those decisions on their own, then there is not much else that can make a person feel they have purpose or will to live. . . . With freedom I felt like a caterpillar just emerging from a cocoon as a beautiful free butterfly on the first day of spring. **(Ashley Wills)**



What a happy life as a slave: you get beaten for no reason, you see your family being beaten for no reason, and you live like an animal for no reason. What reason are we living for today? . . . God has given us a heart to love each other. You made up a word "slave" and put every black person in it. You broke their hearts, but they still love when it's broken. . . . Do you think God is happy when he sees us unhappy? Have you heard a song from a slave that is coming out from the heart? Rocks heard it, but you did not. Slavery is going to end because we want to end it. Replace your heart with a rock and you would know how we are unhappy. **(Mustafa Mohammed Saed)**



Who would not dream of freedom while living in chains? Chains not only control our bodies, but our minds have become trapped as well. According to the holy book, "Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the

glory of God" (Romans 15:7). Now tell me, brother, for what necessity is there to continue such a hateful war amongst those who are our neighbors? My people and I are very much capable of holding the same, or even more, knowledge as you. It is you who are fearful of us slaves holding such knowledge of our own. For you all know that with this knowledge comes the freedom we deserve, the same freedom you hold within your privileged white skin. You all believed to make us your fools by controlling our every move and forbidding us to receive an education. Yet you were all so wrong, so very wrong. . . . With our knowledge we have awakened the men within us and questioned our names as slaves.

How dare you say that we enjoy our lives as slaves? What enjoyment could be found in daily whippings without any reason, much less any remorse? Our backs have been whipped, leaving our skin completely raw and dripping of blood. You have the blessing to know your family, yet I do not. . . .

(Marisela Tellez)

Your statement is completely false, and you are in desperate need of the truth. You see, the black man who is enslaved is still a man. He is no less a man than you are, and slavery



takes away his freedom, a God given right to all men. I, Frederick Douglass, ask you, how can a slave be a man if he doesn't have his freedom, and if he does not have his freedom how can he be happy and "bask" in the sun?

How can a man come close to happiness when he is taken away from his mother, at birth, and his mother taken away from him? The love the white man was given at birth from his mother, you could agree, is irreplaceable, but I can testify that I was never given the right to love my mother and my mother never given the right to love me. . . . Is it logical to say that the color of the black man's skin is a blanket against the bitter forces of nature, the pain endured when brutally beaten, resulting in blood that spills in a never ending nightmare, but your white skin needs the warmth from arms of a mother, a blanket, and love? Is it right?! How can there be two perceptions of happiness and

freedom and there be only one man? I speak as a man who wishes to know his age, his mother, his father, and his purpose and as a man who can read and write, and who is conscious of how cruel slavery is. Slavery does not let the black man eat, sleep, bathe, dress, laugh, cry, and live more decently than a useless animal can! Is this happiness? I, Frederick Douglass, in my years of not knowing how slavery worked, but knowing exactly the way it made me feel, became "disturbed" and tormented with the knowledge I now possess that slavery is evil and that a slave lives not "basking" in the sun, but burning in hell. . . . **(Karina Herrejon)**





Your baseless assumptions lean towards illogical conformity. Your claims form no clear meaning on any so called "points" regarding the Negro's desire to be rid of the harsh reality of slavery and his constant prayers to God to be removed from the ties that bind him. Does not any man, woman, or child dream of long life and prosperity for our families? We dream of days free of daily violence and abuse that is inflicted upon us by the Overseer for the slightest infraction, only to see those convoluted words sent to our Master as fast as the crow flies. Then we cower and wait for additional torment to be exacted upon us by his speculative lies. Liberty and Freedom are choices. With slavery, there are no choices and there is no independence; there is only despair and misguided truth.

Your claim that the Negro basks in the sun and is happy as a slave is objective stupidity. The Negro child does not bask in the idea of sleeping naked and without cover on the cold wet concrete, nor does any member look forward to going to sleep without a proper meal. It was not basking when I worked all day in the fields or when my neighbor washed and hung my Master's clothes without breaking under the sweltering summer sun. Your God may not know or comprehend what sacrificial love is, but mine does! And that does not include slavery. (**Kelly Dixon**)



I refer to the harsh words that you had the audacity to write, referring to, and in a sense, speaking for every Negro, when it is clear that you have not taken the time to either interview, or actually place yourself figuratively inside the shoes of the enslaved Negro.

It seems to me that you speak from a place of hatred; your views are biased, prejudiced, and narrow minded. Negroes, or any other races,

should not be limited from reaching their full potential. Liberty has no color or creed, for it is defined as the state of being free! Nowhere in the definition does it make a stipulation of race, or who in fact is eligible for it. For as soon as a human being is old enough to grasp the concept of crawling, we all try to get away, to explore the unknown; we all chase our portion of liberty. So if an infant can grasp the concept of liberty, then how can you stand so firmly on your ideals that the Negro cannot?

. . . I dream of liberty every single day of my life and have ever since I learned how to crawl and explore. Slavery has done nothing but broken me down mentally and physically; there is no enjoyment in being enslaved or being considered property. Can you imagine the tables being turned around? Where would you have been in life? How would you view yourself? Or would you even have the strength to do so?

. . . I pray you one day learn to see me as I see myself, and that is not as a piece of property or a slave, but as God's child. He loves you just as much as He loves me. God bless. (**Jelissa Williams**)



To say my people didn't dream of free will or determinism is ignorance. . . . I am a Christian of Christ, not a Christian of the land. Just like my people, I did not know I was a slave until I found out I could not do the things I

wanted. For now, I am a free man. I am a believer. I now have the knowledge to make a difference.

You have absolutely no right to judge our pain, our sadness, or our hopelessness. You are the fortunate one. You are aware of the pain and suffering we endured generation after generation. We have no happiness or no chance in the independence we declare. The most

powerful thing to value is wisdom. Is that why you are afraid of the knowledge I attain? A wise man cannot be fooled. I am the voice that my people do not have. I am extremely furious after reading those words. I have a burning, blazing, and fiery sensation, as if we are aware of and content with our involuntarily restricted freedom. No child is born in slavery.

(Jayvonna Flemming)



The time for expostulation, education, and elucidation is over. For who am I to attempt to teach those who are responsible for this model of servitude and subjugation, "*Christian Slavery?*"

. . . It is all I can do to choke back the bile of my righteous indignation. This holy rage has caught fire inside me. There was a time this white-hot rage of realization threatened to consume me, my gentle friends. All that would have been left as proof of my existence here in this earthly realm would have been a few handfuls of ashes to scatter across a land that I did not belong to; a land saturated with the blood that has run like rivers down our backs ever since that day they plucked us away from our homes...

The dawning of that realization birthed an agony in my soul that was more exquisite than any pain inflicted upon this body or had I witnessed in another's. The hope of being Free was as distant and abstract as a fairytale told to children. But in order to rise up from

that bitter bed of despondency, I had to find a reason for my Being and then the *stratagems* for the strength and fortitude I would surely need for my sojourn here.

These villainous, vile, and vicious idiots built *God* into their justification for "Christian slavery." They obviously could not have known *Whose* power and might they attempted to harness in order to soothe their already smoldering souls. So to you I pose this question: HOW CAN A MAN BESTOW OR WITHHOLD THAT WHICH IS NOT HIS TO GIVE IN THE FIRST PLACE?

Armed with this knowledge firmly wedged in my soul, I laugh at those "most wicked of men" who have attempted to keep beings created by God, the very God they extoll and exalt, at a station more lowly than any beast of the land. . . . What is Freedom? To many that would be as absurd as asking of a blind man what are the colors in the sky. How could he know if he had never seen it? I will tell why: **Freedom Is**. This *knowing* is like our expectation that the sun will replace the moon each morning and warm us with its ray of light. It is like the ebb and flow of the tide that is moved

by an unseen hand...

Freedom is. It is an "inalienable" Force that is in our beginnings and our ends and our *all up in the middles*! And our oppressors are either naïve and simple-minded or they embody hearts that are black and wicked if they believe that we, *The People of the Darker Hue*, can be denied what is our Divine birthright! . . . Bondage is no longer our inevitable ordinance! Freedom's "force" has prevailed! (Lisa Partee)



Steve Jones dressed as Frederick Douglass

FINDING PLATO'S CAVE TODAY

I think I have been living in caves for a long time. The first cave I lived in is the lack of education; I felt incomplete. I knew that something needed to be done. When I came to the United States, I decided to get out of those caves. Poverty was another cave that I wanted to escape. This cave did not let me move. I started working as an unskilled worker; rather than going out of that cave, I felt like I was going even farther in. My desire to get out of my caves seemed out of my hands until I decided to improve my education. That was the first time I felt that I had taken a peek out of the cave, and I loved it. I know it is really hard to get out. However, every day I saw myself less tied to the cave. Now that I know how it looks outside the cave, I am sure I will never go back. **(Guadalupe Tinajero)**

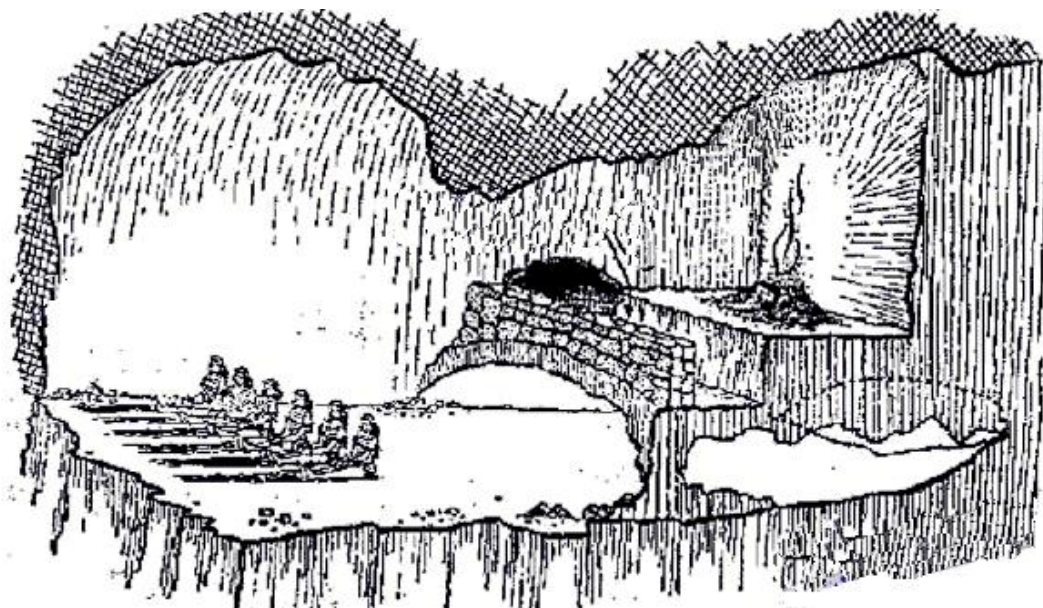
Three years ago, I lost my first apartment which put my daughter and me homeless. I felt like my life began to get darker and darker by the day. We were bouncing from home to home, sleeping on others' floors. After so long I decided to move to South Bend, Indiana, to start all over with my baby's father's mom and three kids. Things were starting to come together until extra altercations got to happening, so I packed up and came back to Madison, WI.

I then applied for the shelter, and it took three months for a room to come available. When I moved all our things in this room, there were two beds and plain white walls with a door to go through to someone else's

room. I instantly unpacked and made it comfortable for Harmony and me. I was only in this "cave" for another month. I got a call this year that I was approved for a two bedroom apartment on the east side of Madison. I was excited and ready to start my life over. **(Katia Robinson)**

My cave is depression/lack of self-worth. I have been trapped in this cave for many years, and it stems from being abandoned as a child, not having consistent stability in housing and love. I have been in and out of foster care since I was born, and I have never been able to get comfortable anywhere, not even my birth home. I don't know my birth mother, and I was abused sexually and mentally, so my trust with others and myself is very difficult.

I have been cave-minded to think that if my own mother and father didn't love me, why would anyone else love me? I am 'caved' to receiving love and compliments. I feel worthless and sorry many nights in depression, as if I am never good enough for anyone, or as if I am not a good mother to my daughter. Sometimes I doubt myself and think that I will never be anything because I was told this many times in life. **(Brandice Hatcher)**



I am going to talk about my own experience in being in a cave. When I was a teenager, I was rebellious. At the time, I was going through so much and had been through so much for my age. I was in residential treatment when I was about 14 years old. No one knew what I was going through during this time; but being away from my family, being 45 minutes away, and having to eat, sleep, wake up, watch TV, and shower on someone else's time, felt like I was in a cave.

Going to school down a flight of stairs in the basement, receiving \$30 a month for a clothing allowance, doing activities on the unit, not really getting out to meet other kids, except when you went home on a home visit really got old after a while. If I worked my way up on the levels, then I got more freedom, and it didn't feel as if I was in a cave. (**Tasha Thompson**)

Back in Malaysia, I wasn't treated like others, especially when they knew that I'm Iraqi and a refugee. Iraq is known as a rich country, but now it's upside down. When I was a refugee I felt like I was in a cave, less opportunities and happiness. But my family made it easier for me, and I felt hopeful. They didn't let me feel lonely or sad.

I'm out of the first cave, but I'm in a new cave now that provides things that I've been dreaming about, and sometimes I feel sad for other refugees. If I could help them I would be so happy. What would make me feel happy is if I could see them happy in this cave by coming up with

plans to help. I'm getting better and better, and my goal is to be a person that others can rely on. (**Mustafa Mohammed Saed**)

My whole life has been a cave, not because I am ignorant to things or that I only see my own shadow. It is because I feel like others are in a cave and sometimes these people are in positions to help people in numerous ways but don't because of the caves they live in within themselves. I have so many ideas, inventions, contributions, and thoughts to better the community. However, the system the government created to keep brown-skinned, specifically African American persons, enslaved is detrimental. Every day I come out of my home and I am reminded of this. There are always two or three raids done, or I come out and see police officers suiting up to do a raid. I want to own businesses but lack investors because of my bad credit and lack of money. The pursuit to obtain it and keep it is like waiting for good health insurance. This is my cave. (**Shayba Pierce**)



My experience is what I called addiction to failure. I was trapped for a very long time; for years I feared success or what that looks like. As a child my life was filled with chaos and dark times. It's a shame when you had more bad times than good.

I never put a ton of effort into succeeding; I know I am bound to fail and I can feel it. Throughout my life I suffered deep depression and put up a brick wall that was impossible to break down. When I had my first child, my beautiful daughter, I saw that wall slowly falling apart, slowly caving in. My daughter was hope; she was that reason for me to succeed and to gain knowledge to teach her, help her grow, and avoid the fear of not succeeding.

The moment when I looked into my baby's eyes I knew right then I can do whatever I put my mind to; that feeling was everything. That feeling was power over breaking my addiction of feeling lost and incapable. That feeling was light—a light I finally saw shining within a feeling I haven't felt in a long time. The darkness started to fade away, and my future looked bright. I knew success wouldn't happen right away but would gradually develop over time. And time was exactly what I needed since I'd just become a new mom.

The darkness tore me down and I constantly feared succeeding, but my daughter's beautiful smile, my mini me, this precious gift that was placed in my life, brought me light, and that conquers any fear.
(Jayvonna Flemming)



I don't know if this is an example of an allegory of the cave, but February 2010 was the year I felt like I was in a cave. My third born child passed away of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). I felt like my whole world came crashing down.

There's no cause for SIDS. It's something that can happen to children aged two years old and younger. With that being said, that made it even harder. Just to know it just happened wasn't a good enough reason at that time. But I also know I'm not supposed to question God's decision. Warning comes before destruction; well, I had no warning. He had been crawling since Thanksgiving, and pulling up on things by New Year's. With that being said, he had just discovered what the body could do.

The night before my son's passing, he was stuck under me. I still remember the smell of baby magic lotion. I remember putting him to sleep. He had on a "my 1st birthday" sleeper. I can't stop the tears as I write. I love this little kid so much; he's a part of my every-day life. At meal times when we pray over our food, my kids involve him. When we get in the car, we pray. It's now been six years and I just put my foot out of the cave.

I was in this world alone even though I had other children. I find myself to be very over protective with my children. They don't spend the night out without me. I get up in the middle of the night twice every night. It's been six years since I got used to this habit. . . .
(Bettye Emmanuel)

The first time I arrived in Wisconsin on 02/05/2014 everything was for me unclear and new. I was confused and shocked. I was at home and looking at the big world from my small window. I knew how to speak English, but I couldn't understand people...

That window didn't show me a lot. I was scared to explore what was in the outside. Day after day nothing happened. I felt myself like a bird stuck in a cage of metal...

One day I decided to leave home and go outside to see what I would discover. When I went outside, things were bad and good. That made me learn a lot. I wondered if it was going to stay the same. Now there is new door open to me called Odyssey. It is filled with discoveries. This new experience will help me build my future. I will try to do my best and benefit from the advantages that will be provided for me in the class. **(Shaimaa Ahmed)**

This reminds me of the year my child's father and I separated. I was about 28 years old and she was 2.5/3 years of age. I kept trying to keep it together, thinking to myself how badly I wanted her to be a product of a two-parent home, and how important it was for her to see me in the light of being that 'old school,' traditional mom.

Time and time again, I would have bouts of depression and feelings of loneliness, but I wasn't alone, and I wasn't sad or depressed when I was alone. Funny how the irony reveals itself. I often felt shocked, let down, and



oppressed, like there could be a way out, but was that door knob okay for me to even touch, not to mention turn the knob? I was fearful and comfortable, yet miserable.

It's amazing how we find comfort in our everyday lives, to the point we fear discomfort for change. I packed up a couple of bags and went home to my family to get their opinions. What a mistake that was. My mom kept saying she didn't understand why I would wait until after the baby to leave him. My best friend kept saying she just hoped my plan didn't backfire on me, when I felt it already had.

Once I gathered that my family would be of little assistance, I packed up my bags once again. Only this time, I took my sister with me and brought her back to be of some support to me. I didn't know what to do about the situation, so I just kept on praying. The day finally came when I got my paycheck. I asked her dad what we were going to do about the bills before I left to go shopping, in case he needed any help from me. He replied, "Can you pay 'em?" and my reply was, "Can you leave?" He said yes, and the rest was history. It was as if the Lord said, "I told you so. If you just trust in me and step a little closer to the light, I will shine on you!" **(Nickitia Cooper)**

As a middle schooler, I was always trapped in my own thoughts and ideas as far as finding the best way to relate to my peers. At times I thought I was the unintentional outcast. Others knew that I was nice and could be trusted, but that was never enough to make it to the popular side. Instead I made my own way, at that early age, to

satisfy no one else but myself. **(Kelly Dixon)**
I have spent years in mental and psychological caves, trapped by my own insecurities. I have endured pain, torture, poverty and abuse because I had been inundated with the programming to “just get along,” “don’t make waves,” “till death do you part,” “respect your elders,” and more. I was trapped in these caves of the mind and darkness of the spirit because I simply didn’t know better.

What’s worse is that I was afraid of this truth: the illusions I had carefully constructed to shield me from grim reality were *not* true, and the scary monsters *were real*.

It took me many years and lots of hard times before the blinders I wore finally fell away. I (finally) saw my caves for what they were and then worked to free myself. I am still trying, and I have accomplished a lot. Now, at least, I know there is more out there for me, and I am ready to go forth into the light and discover it all. If I attain my goal of getting the degrees necessary, perhaps I can one day go back into the caves for others and share what I’ve learned by teaching them. **(Raven Fabal)**

I have been in a cave, and sometimes I think it’s because of my lack of self-confidence. I’m always thinking about what people will think about me—if I’m going to be accepted, if people will like me. I’m afraid to fail, and sometimes I prefer not to take the risk and stay in that cave. I need to learn how to express myself, ask questions, and say openly when there is something that I don’t understand; to be able to stand by what I believe and not be afraid. **(Karina Gomez)**

I feel like I was in a cave before I was able to read. I could not read at grade level until I was a

freshman in high school. Our education system is very depressing. I took a class that helped me read at grade level within a matter of months. When I started reading a book every day, I realized that I was not stupid and that I was capable of understanding concepts.

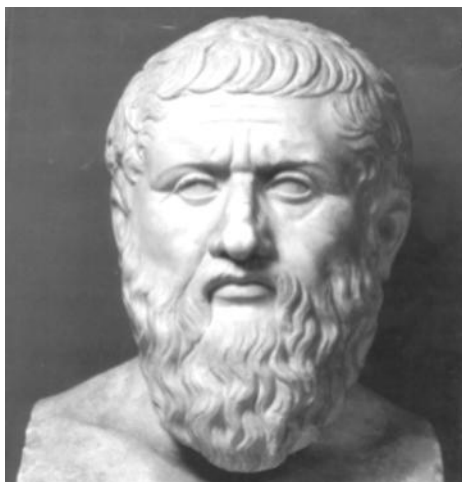
I understand now that if I had not learned how to read I could have been manipulated to a greater extent than I am now. I would not understand what is wrong with reality TV, Donald Trump, and the meat industry, to name a few. I would not know what to think about the refugees in Syria or be able to state that I think white supremacy is real. I would not be able to read anything and critically think.

I know that I’m not an excellent reader and that I sometimes do not comprehend things, but because I know how to read I can think for myself, and I can acknowledge that I need help in these areas.

I feel that many people misuse technology. We are constantly connected to our phones and fail to realize that we are disconnecting from the world and from our humanity. We care more about what we wear, what we buy and what celebrities are doing than about people who are homeless. I think this is similar to TV, but you know you are able to create a life for yourself without worry and without consequences—where your discomfort, anger, knowledge and

satisfaction is shared through a Facebook status; where your Facebook “likes” concern you more than drinking water.

I can spend many hours on the internet, but it is hard to spend one hour with a significant other. There is something extremely wrong with that. **(Karina Herrejon)**



I used to live in a cave of close-minded people in the south. I have met people like this often, where they just believed what they're told or, if you believe different than they do, you're wrong. They become angry, and lose sight of objectivity. They can't continue the conversation in a calm manner once a different perspective is proposed that's not theirs. **(Steven Jones)**

My first thought was prison inmates. I have family members that don't know any other way of life. But the more I think about the Allegory of the Cave, it seems that living the street life paints a better picture. I grew up between the gang and drug infested streets of Chicago's west side and LeClaire Courts housing projects. I can remember being as young as seven years old when I knew I was seeing a drug deal transpire. Years later, the children of those dealers I saw were now repeating the same acts. My guess is that those children were never exposed to anything they viewed as an alternative.

The west side is where my grandmother lived. At one point in time her neighborhood was what a community used to be. Everyone knew each other and their children. They also disciplined as a community. I'm not sure at what point the heavy drug use and sales took over. Once they did, the community began to crumble. Warring over street corners became common. From that moment, things would never be the same again. I still know people who have never left the west side of Chicago and don't plan to either. The same with drug dealers: they don't accept that there are other ways to put food on the table. And these people teach their children these same things by exposing them to other situations. **(Tory Latham)**

For me Iraq was like a cave because there I could not go out from my house due to the bombs. My family did not let me to go out to play because they felt scared that someone would kidnap me. My life was just like a bird living in a gold cage. I used to be a very shy person. When I saw people around me, I could not speak in public because I did not know how to communicate with others. Even when I went to school I did not speak with anyone or have friends.

After we left Iraq, we went to Malaysia. There we studied at home because they asked for a huge fee for schooling, which we did not have. My life was like prison there, too. But after four years, we found a center for refugee students. Then I started to go there every day, and I made my first friend there. I used to be very shy around him, but he was very nice and helped me to not be shy around others. Also he told me how to speak in English. I will not forget him because he is the one who helped me to communicate with others without feeling shy. He made me strong. **(Umiama Mohammed Saed)**



There are times while on this journey that I stop and take some time to look back over the places I have been and just reflect. It is interesting because I think that I have lived just long enough to appreciate the fact that time has given me a gift called *perspective*. . . .

I, today, can look back and clearly see how even in the most painful times, the insane times and lonely times and the abused times and the addicted times and the homeless times...God and the entire Universe were working together and conspiring, just for me, to one day gift me with the Purpose and Clarity and Significance and, most importantly, Freedom that my very soul has groaned and moaned for since the *beginning*.

Now I am able to lift my head and divest myself of any shame or guilt because I understand that every single thing I have done, both good and bad, was so very necessary! For whatever reason, no matter how sloppy and ugly and awkward they may have seemed to those looking in from the outside, they were from a divine lesson plan that was created just for me. So now, I don't just have a basic rudimentary understanding of that which I speak of. No, I have an ***inner-standing*** that runs through every fiber of my being, and I can never un-know what I know. No longer do I have to say that certain concepts or Truths I speak of have simply *enchanted* me while I journeyed here in this world. No, I now know beyond knowing, I am being ***transformed*** by the Truths my God has allowed me to see. . . .

The spirit inside of me has grown so much bigger that it can no longer exist in the cramped spaces of other people's opinions or even my memories of who I used to be.

This is my story of leaving the "cave." It is how I learned to cling to that which is immutable... and it's how *The Supreme Effort of Being...* came to be. That was my Journey; leaving the "cave" and learning to stand in the intensity of the "sunshine" and being awake and present in my life. **(Lisa Partee)**

Yes I've been in a cave, a cave of domestic violence. At age 17, I felt trapped because he was the first man I truly loved. He taught me everything about how to be a lady, but not the things I needed in order to survive without him. First off I was blinded by love, and I couldn't see past him. I thought there was no life without him and that his abuse was showing me how much he loved me. Then it was the fact that he took care of me financially. He paid all the bills, I didn't even know how to get and fill out a money order. . . . Leaving him was not an option. I didn't know, nor care to know, that I could have taught myself or asked questions or learned; I didn't know nor wish to know that I could live and survive without him. Nor did I know that I was indeed a prisoner of his, both mentally and physically. **(Arkeshia Sallay)**



I've fallen into the "comfort zone" in life too many times. You think you are at the peak of life, and for me something unexpected happens. In retrospect, I regret not opening up my mind more and giving situations more insight. I personally feel a lot of us are in a cave. I listen to my family and friends explain to me their struggles. Sometimes I ask myself, why not turn around and simply exit, leave, or end that situation?

One of the rockiest situations in my life was dealing with my mom's abuse. I continuously told myself that she was angry and high, so it was a mistake. She is my mother, she loves me, and she would never hurt me. The abuse got worse when I started high school. I was bullied and dealt with racism on a daily basis. I remember going home crying to my mom, but all she did was laugh as I poured out my soul to her. Again, I felt we had a "normal" mother and daughter relationship. Every day, I denied my pain and suffering. I remained silent and distant from everyone I knew. Life didn't change for me until I turned 18 and was on my way to graduating high school. I got into contact with my friend Kaitlin, who told me, "No, Kala, it's abuse." When I got my diploma, I moved out of my mom's house. Katlin's dad took me in. **(Kala Taylor)**



I lived in a cave of fear. Many of the decisions I made and ideas I had about myself or the world around me rested upon fear-based thinking and emotion.

Somewhere in my early development, I adopted the toxic habit of placing a high value on social acceptance and was overly concerned with what people thought of me. There were times when this fear would manifest itself as a self-imposed silence where I would not advocate for my own well-being or basic necessity of respect, while other times this fear motivated me to act in desperation and take risks.

I was under the illusion that rejection would somehow starve me of something vital. I believed that it was important to be liked, to be accommodating, agreeable, docile, and inferior. Being unapologetically bold, resilient, controversial, opinionated, and commanding were elements I possessed in my true character, but I had no experience exercising those muscles. It was like having powerful tools and no permit to use them.

A series of realizations brought me to see that I had the authority to issue the permit to use those tools and many others. I had to become willing to have difficult conversations and potentially lose friends. I had to release myself from the prison of external validation and approval.

Some of the reactions were difficult for me; I was depicted as being self-absorbed, attention-seeking or thinking that I am better than others, for simply refusing to be disregarded. Understanding more about the illusions and close examination

of my own truths led me to shed many things about my speech, deeds, and thinking; particularly the way that I view the world around me and the explanations for what I observe.

Fearing that which is unknown can be a defense mechanism or a way to keep us safe, but it also is a sure way to build walls—cave walls. The actions (or lack thereof) are counter intuitive when we abandon fear, but it is replaced with an opportunity for growth when we trust ourselves enough to forge a new trust and use our intuition for advancement rather than self-preservation in this sense.

The new, improved version is an ever-evolving me, but I readily assess everything with a fear-filter by asking myself a series of critical questions. Why am I doing this (or not doing this)? Why do I believe this? If at the root is fear, I dissect it. Is this substantiated reason for concern or fear based on ignorance? Being honest and weighing how I come to my

conclusions has been beneficial when I must use my voice for justice, fairness, healing, and progress. Sometimes there is even a laughing matter that I must set free.

Descending into the cave of where I once was is a good exercise from time to time because it keeps me humble and is a constant reminder to help others escape. **(Tamara Thompson Moore)**

Poverty is another cave that's hard to escape. There are not enough jobs offering good pay, and if they are, you need all types of degrees as well as continuation of education. In order to get the required education, you must pay. How can you spend money you don't necessarily have to make the money you need to survive this life? Government assistance doesn't really help either. As long as you're down and out, the assistance is somewhat beneficial, but as soon as you start to rise up and make a better living, you get knocked back down with all the different expenses: car



payment, insurance, rent, childcare, medical bills, food, clothing, etc. The government assistance becomes a hindrance on an individual's motivation to want to continue to improve their life.

I will use myself for example. I receive child care help, food help, and medical help. I get the full help if my job hours are low, but it doesn't help me with rent. Keeping low job hours to maintain the lowest cost in childcare, highest help on food cost and no co-pays to visit the doctor brings me behind in rent, whereas if I'm working two jobs and making a good amount of money, I'm paying more out of pocket to cover childcare to work, the cost of food, my rent, and the monthly premiums to go see a doctor. You'd think GA (government assistance) is more helpful than not, but as a mother it's bringing me down. It's like the more I make the more I struggle. The less I make, the more assistance I receive, but I'm still struggling; either way this isn't a win-win situation! **(Jelissa Williams)**

I would describe my married life as living in a cave. I stayed home to save money on day care. Since I don't have a degree and had a low wage job, it wouldn't pay for me to go to work to pay for daycare and have someone else raise my child. In order to make ends meet, my then-husband worked for my dad, Starbucks, and a fine dining restaurant. This gave us little time together. I found myself feeling lonely and exhausted with depression and anxiety. He didn't understand this and was always crabby when we were together from working while I stayed home and "did nothing all day." But he really didn't realize how much I actually did. This put an immense strain on our relationship. He started not coming home after work and made friends with odd people. I saw him drifting away.

I decided I was going to go to school so I could get myself out of the crap shoot I put myself in to add to my independence. He made me feel like it wasn't an option; we had no money, time or resources. He really wanted to keep me under his foot, so I had no choice but to live under him. We were only married for four years, and I asked for a divorce. I wanted out of that relationship and a chance to find myself again and be my own boss. Let me tell you, it's never felt so good to get the hell out of that cave. **(Ashley Wills)**

My relationship at one point in time felt like a deep dark cave. I was stuck between not wanting to move on due to an unexpected pregnancy, and moving on after I was a victim of infidelity. I knew I could have a possibility of turning things in my favor, building our relationship, and gaining back trust through having a son. . . . I've been able to see all the joy having a son brings me, yet the drama from problems that were unsolved still lingers and sometimes shows its face. **(Joseph Young)**



LOVE LESSONS

What is it that makes their love so golden? . . . My parents' marriage reminds me of the description in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre: 'I know what it is to live entirely for and with what I love best on earth. I hold myself supremely blest—blest beyond what language can express; because I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine. We talk, I believe, all day long.'—Emily Auerbach, "Like wedding cake 50 years ago, couple's love seems a gift to savor," Wisconsin State Journal, June 18, 2000

I find it very interesting and beautiful that Robert and Wanda Auerbach's wedding only cost \$500. That's so amazing: there's no price on real love. That shows the dedication and pureness of love for another; \$500 is easily just a wedding cake today. I absolutely love the romance, how Robert wrote Wanda a love letter when he was the one facing heart surgery. I thought that was so sentimental and reassuring to his wife that he loves her. I love how their marriage thrived on equality and respect.

Just reading their story as a person who has never been married gives you hope, and it's truly golden. They were a team. They constantly interacted with each other and showed compassion towards each other. It's the little things that count, like how Robert brought Wanda coffee in bed in the mornings or how they worked on crossword puzzles together at night. I can feel the strength of their bond when reading the details. Their marriage is exactly the type of marriage I hope to have, where we are not stressing over finances but are just enjoying each other's presence and keeping that candle lit for years and years to come. They were best friends, companions, united together through love. **(Jayvonna Flemming)**



As I was reading this, I got goose bumps, chills. This sounds like it would be from a movie or in a book. I got a lot from this article.

This is an article of true love and happiness. It was the real thing: they made each other happy, despite the differences and what people thought. Regardless, they did what they wanted to do, and that was them being with one another – being happy. They never lost

“that touch” – they still continued learning and growing together as one. They didn't stop doing what they did to get each other. They loved each other and were happy. They took their vows as real. It was to the heart, till death do us part. True love! **(Tasha Thompson)**

A few lessons that I took away from this article were that when love hits, it's not just from your heart, but it is also from your mind. We never give ourselves the chance to explore what could be because of fear of the unknown, shyness, or just general insecurities that can keep a person down. For many, moving on your emotions is easier said than done, and I have had my own share of disappointments. After the tears have dried, the one thing that keeps me going is that there is still more than one fish in the sea; we just haven't found the end of each other's fishing line. Love is not judgmental. It makes even the hardest

candy coating soft and mushy. Love reminds us to take chances, even when the gurgling sound in the very pit of our stomach is saying, “Run for the hills!” Some ties that bind a good marriage are honesty, communication and never parting ways angry. It is being able to look in the eyes of your “Life Partner in Crime” and knowing exactly why you didn’t run off with the postman when you had the chance. Being in love and even finding it means not listening to the false perceptions of others. When the butterflies in your stomach are sending smoke signals to your feet, act on what will be and not what could’ve been. **(Kelly Dixon)**

I think marriage works as long as there is genuine and selfless love and when there is communication and respect. **(Karina Gómez)**

Against all odds, true love persists. When you truly and unconditionally love someone, you love everything about them—the good, the bad, the ugly, and anything in between. Whatever the situation, whatever your surrounding, you have your love for one another, and it will see you through. **(Arkeshia Sallay)**

Marriage is a lot of work and sacrifice, but it’s worth it in the end. It’s about being with someone who sees the good, bad, and ugly of you. When you think of the future, he or she is in it. It’s about seeing that special someone as your true equal. My parents’ marriage was a disaster. As a kid, I wondered why they got married in the first place. It damaged me a lot. For the longest time, I made the decision not to marry or fall for anyone. I am grateful that I changed my mind. **(Kala Taylor)**

Marriage is about two people coming together and putting effort into their relationship. You do not need the approval of anyone else to marry the one you love. When you

don’t know how to communicate with your partner, the marriage won’t work out. Communication is the key to a successful and fulfilling marriage. **(Guadalupe Tinajero)**

I’ve never been married before, but I plan to some day. From what I’ve observed in my short 24 years of life, marriage isn’t something to play with. It’s far from easy. It takes hard work, patience, trust, loyalty, communication, dedication, unconditional love, and two individuals who really want to be together.

Marriage is all about give and take. You have to be open-minded and willing to compromise. Be willing to let your guard down, and be mature enough to admit when you are wrong. In marriage, it takes teamwork. It’s a partnership, where you shouldn’t feel alone. **(Jelissa Williams)**

I feel like in a marriage you should keep it alive, like going on dates and communicating with one another. I think marriage doesn’t work for some because they just do it because other people are or for all the wrong reasons. **(Jalisa Galvin)**

I think we make our relationship as good as we can make it if we put effort and love into it. This doesn’t mean we settle for what we think is enough, but that we search for our happiness. There have to be rules both partners abide by. Love isn’t just a feeling; it is actions. There has to be respect and equality, like Emily said there was in her parents’ marriage. Each partner has to complement one another. I think marriage only works if you are there in the toughest moments for the person you care about. Of course you’re going to be there in the most blissful moments, but will you be there when you are most needed? **(Karina Herrejon)**



Commitment and loyalty are all you need to have love and to keep it going, not listening to what others think. Just following what makes you and your partner happy is all that matters. Finding true love is rare and should be appreciated because it's not easy to come by. **(Steven Jones)**

After reading this article, it is obvious this couple loved each other so deeply and genuinely. They compromised and welcomed each other's religious values in order to share their differences on their special day. And this alone sometimes can be a deal breaker for others; however, it only made them stronger. Sometimes we need to listen with our heart and not just our ears, like these soul mates have done. The Auerbachs fought for their love during a hard time when a family's background defined an individual and what their future was to be. They were each other's true soul mates and fulfilled the definition of the word love.

I personally believe that relationships and marriages have changed so much throughout the years. Relationships had more worth, inspiration, and success than what they do today. I think this has a lot to do with social media among other things, like the loss of morals and values we once knew that defined marriage. I believe that the key points to a successful marriage are honesty, loyalty, and most of all respect.

I look up to my parents and wish to have the type of marriage they hold one day with my soul mate. They have taught my siblings and me these key points and constantly remind us in case we forget. Our family has always emphasized the important role of respect in a relationship no matter how joking or serious the matter. And after learning from my own experiences, I can say they were right. It is complicated to get the respect back once it is lost. For a marriage to work, there has to



be an effort made from both sides. I personally have seen when one person puts 110% in their marriage while the other barely puts 50% from their part. And this is what later on creates tension, disrespect, power, resentment, and, worst of all, another failed marriage. **(Marisela Tellez)**

Emily, I like the way you said, "no task was 'women's work.'" No bank ever would be allowed to speak to the 'head of the household'." I, too, firmly believe in equality and

respect amongst those we intend to hold dear to us.

I wish I could speak so highly of my parents' love and marriage, but unfortunately it's far from the warmth you had growing up. As far back as I could remember, my dad had always been a part-time parent. Honestly, I didn't even know he fathered me but that I just call him *txiv* (dad). I seriously thought that was just his name and didn't associate *txiv* with someone who biologically was my other creator. Anyway, due to my parents' broken marriage, I have a hard time believing in eternal marriage. Of course, I would like to settle down one day, and I believe in discovering unconditional love, but I have a hard time believing in marriage. I have a fear that it may not last as long as I'd like it to and, when that happens, things will be easier to just pack up and leave as opposed to having to go through a long process of a legal divorce. I do hope one day someone can change my perspective about marriage. **(Mai Thao)**

The lessons I took away from this beautiful article from the *Wisconsin State Journal* is to base your marriage on your beliefs together. That would be the center, and all else will fall into place. Money and power aren't the glue that keeps a couple together; it's working together through any struggle as equals and respecting one another. It's

finding the laughter and charm in someone and helping them to be successful with each other.

The ideas I had for a marriage that will not last is striving to keep up with the Joneses—constantly striving to live to work instead of working to live, saying hurtful things to your spouse to keep them low and under your foot because they can't do better or be better, and not keeping the Lord the center of your relationship. Without the Lord, worldly things become the center. **(Ashley Wills)**

I think love is the most important for marriage. I have been married since I was 21 years old, and I still love my husband as he does me. My husband loved me the first time when he looked into my eyes. He always told me, "I saw something in your eyes that attracted me and told me this girl will live with me all the rest of my life."

During our marriage we faced a lot of problems, but nothing stopped our love. We should forgive the person we love and accept the defects he or she may have. Love is life, and without love we cannot live. **(Shaimaa Ahmed)**

Love is a special gift. Love is above any difficulties. Love is happiness. If we want to live happily, we need to use our heart. My parents got married, and love didn't leave them. They share love with us, too; that's why I'm happy. My mom's smile comes out of her heart and enters my heart, and my heart dances. **(Mustafa Mohammed Saed)**

I learned from this article that love and care are really important to have a successful marriage. I am not married yet, but I always ask my family how they got married and loved each other.

One day my grandmother told me her story of how she got married to my grandfather. She said one

day my uncle's friend came to visit him; then he saw my grandmother there. From the first time he saw her, he fell in love with her. My grandmother was only 19 years old, and she was the only girl in her family. When she got married, her mother lived with her for two months because she could not live without her.

After four years of marriage, the war started between Iraq and Iran. My grandfather got taken captive for eight years in Iran. In that time my grandfather used to send her love letters. She is a very strong and honest person. When my grandfather left, she was pregnant, but that did not stop her from working hard, caring for their children, and building a house by herself. When my grandfather returned home, he was surprised by what my grandmother did for him, and that made him love her more. They cannot live without each other because they complete each other. They have been married for 40 years and still love each other.



I wish to get married to someone who loves me. When I get old I will tell my children and my grandchildren about my marriage. **(Umaima Mohammed Saed)**

One of the questions I ask guys when trying to get to know them is "Will you bring me coffee in the mornings?" I find it to be so endearing. This article opened my eyes to just how superficial and phony people are in relationships today. It seems as if people are more in love with the idea of being in a relationship as opposed to being in love with the person. **(Nickitia Cooper)**

True love really does exist. To my mind, the makings of a successful marriage are much of what the Auerbachs had – common interests, humor, friendship, trust and love. With these things, many adversities can be overcome and hardships weathered. **(Raven Fabal)**

Love is most powerful when odds of the world are against it. Marriage is best when two people have different lives but share the same dream. Even through all the obstacles of their love, they made it until death did them part in the flesh, but the love is forever.

I feel marriage is not an equal balance, as at different times someone will have to bear more to keep it going. With a marriage I feel you have to find your friend in that person, not someone to complete you or make you happy; that's your own job. You have to have patience, thick skin, respect, self-worth, and love. Bring yourself, not who you feel they want you to be. Take every second, minute, hour, day, week, month, and year as it is the last, and, if it ends, you know your love is real. Yes, there will be problems and arguments, but it's all about coming back together and making the love stronger than yesterday. (**Brandice Hatcher**)

I love this story. I'm destined to have my marriage as long as theirs did. One of my favorite two parts was that Emily's mother was "most overjoyed to discover" the love letter [after the fire]. My husband writes me poems and small stories and always has flowers. Every time I read them, I get the feeling of warm water to the body. My heart beats faster, and I feel loved. The other part I loved was "I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine. We talk, I believe, all day long." My husband was heaven sent. We think the same and have the same desires. If I'm thinking it, he will say it. It was love at first sight. I wouldn't change him for anything in the world. (**Bettye Emmanuel**)

I believe marriage is not only a delicate thing but also sacred, I believe when you marry someone it is because you truly love that person and want to spend all your life with them. I believe for my wedding I want

it to be perfect, and that doesn't mean a big ceremony or expensive dress. It is about the men and women who are uniting their lives on one beautiful day. I have always wanted a fairy tale wedding, but it is about how you make it that for you. (**Luna Santos**)

Wow! That is the first thing that comes to mind when I read this article. 62 years of love is a remarkable feat. I can tell from pictures that their happiness was contagious and real. Emily is proof of that! Making a marriage work is really that, work! I believe it takes sacrifices, communication, trust, and patience.

Some of the things that can hurt and/or destroy a marriage are fear, infidelity, and previous bad experiences. The sacrifices are sometimes the most difficult part—giving up single thinking, appreciating differences in communication styles, and trusting one another. I think having patience for each other is highly underrated. Without those things marriages are open to infidelity, which, in my opinion, is caused by fear—fear of losing your identity or the freedom you once knew. Prior experiences sometimes aren't healed and carry over into your new life. Marriages are many times misunderstood and done for the wrong reasons as well. Unless you are 100% sure, wait! It's never too late. (**Tory Latham**)



UPROOTING THE HURT TREE SESSION

WITH DR. BEVERLY HUTCHERSON

Sitting at my kitchen table reflecting on Beverly Hutcherson's empowerment class and letting her notes resonate in my being, I am so blessed to be in the Odyssey Project. I feel like I was planted here for a reason. These reasons are to take full advantage of opportunities just like Beverly's class. As I grow older, I feel like God makes purpose out of tragedy. If it weren't for Beverly's life events that led her to us, what else could it be? I think every parent needs help because we're all rookies.

I took every bit of Beverly's advice and have been conscious of it and practicing it daily. She brought to light great observations and points that make you want to be a better person and parent. She said it starts with you and the person you want to create yourself to be to reflect on your children. I hope that I'm able to go to her other classes; I really took away a lot from it. **(Ashley Wills)**



This was a parent empowerment session causing one to ponder and look within. Beverly A. Hutcherson did a superb job at provoking me to question myself and to really look into my history of parenting my daughter and receiving parenting from my mother.

We all want to believe we're doing the parent thing the right way, but who is to say? Dr. Hutcherson has a very common tone when getting her points across, and her delivery was quite relatable. She awakened us by asking questions

such as, "what is your current belief system about yourself and life?" or "how am I consuming the energy of the world—is it negative or positive?"

She seems to have quite the elementary style of breaking her subject down. She investigates self-awareness and has you look at yourself as a person before a parent. I find myself paying attention to how I talk and relate to myself since I attended this session. Overall, Dr. Hutcherson has definitely found purpose in her pain or negative experiences. Her willingness to sacrifice her future aspirations in order to allow her son a better childhood than she had is something I admire.

Some things I took note of and that stood out for me were:

- I, myself, have said to my daughter, "My mom isn't as bad to me, as my grandma was to her." Beverly's session enlightened me as to why I said that. I think it was because I wanted to justify my mom's abuse in order to keep my daughter loving my mom (profound for me).
- Words are powerful!
- Your words become your child's inner voice.
- Opened my eyes to the fact that I learned to accept the love my mom knew how to give.
- Everything you take in has an impact.

I could go on and on, but I have other homework to do. Truly, I enjoyed the session and am looking forward to the next one. Thanks, Ms. Emily Auerbach.
(Nickitia Cooper)



This workshop was a really great experience for me; it really changed my parenting choices. It opened my mind and made me realize a lot of things I thought I was doing right I was actually doing wrong. It made me feel horrible as a parent when I realized everything I thought I was doing right was terribly wrong.

She first spoke about doing things differently and taking the initiative to change. You have to be willing to change. A lot of our parenting options are what we were taught rather than what is right or wrong. It is what we know. I have a three-year-old daughter and a one-year-old son. She was talking about how a child's mind is like a sponge. I couldn't help to think about my children, like how my daughter imitates me putting on my lip gloss or when I yell out of frustration, my son is picking up a lot of those bad habits. I realize that this change to become a better parent will be very hard for me.

Even when I went home and tried to work on a few things, I still found myself tumbling back into my old habits. I want nothing more than to see



my children succeed and grow into beautiful men and women, but I do know it starts with me. I'm their first teacher, and it starts at home. It was so tense hearing about Beverly's past and how much abuse she suffered



from her mom, and how her mom thought her parenting was ok. I know a lot of times it is hard to converge into learning something differently, especially parenting; no one likes to think they are a bad parent. You only teach what you know or what is being taught to you. I am willing to seek different views and different options of positive parenting. I can't wait until the next workshop, and hopefully there are no interruptions this time.
(Jayvonna Flemming)

I attended Beverly

Hutcherson's parenting/empowerment class on Monday. The workshop was very nice, powerful, and helpful. Beverly is a very strong woman, and I am proud of her. I liked when she said that she continued her education, even though she had a hard childhood. She taught me that the ones who work hard on education are going to be very strong and open minded like her.

She also gave me some advice that is going to help me to be a good parent in the future. For example, she taught me how to communicate with my children by giving them positive thoughts and by making them feel that they are the best.

I would like to be like her when I become a mother, but the difference is going to be that I would never have sex before marriage, and I would never get married at a young age. I would do my best to choose the right husband that is going to help me teach our children in a good way. I want to be like my mom and dad. Children need to have a mom and dad that are complete.

I can feel how hard it is for her to be responsible for her child alone. Getting married and having kids is a very big responsibility, and it needs to be at the right time and involve using our heart and mind at the same time.

One of my dreams for the future is to do a workshop like the one Beverly did to talk about hope and never giving up. I had a lot of experiences in my life that I would like to share with others. Last week I read the book *The Latehomecomer* by Kao Kalia Yang. She was born as a Hmong refugee, and when she came to the U.S., she became a public speaker talking about her life. When I looked at Beverly Hutcherson and Kao Kalia Yang, I wished to be strong like them one day. **(Umaima Mohammed Saed)**

This workshop was interesting; it is for parents, but I will also be a parent one day. I learned a lot about children and how they should be raised. I learned that parents should be patient with their children. Kids like to ask questions, and parents should try their best to answer them. Parents need to know that their actions are being watched, so they need to be more cautious. Kids are like seeds, and we need to try our best to provide them with what they need to grow. I think Beverly Hutcherson is a great person. She did a great job teaching and informing us. I still remember everything she said. **(Mustafa Mohammed Saed)**



I attended the workshop with Beverly A. Hutcherson. She covered many topics about how to prepare to raise our children in the right ways. She said, "One cannot be prepared for something while secretly believing it will never happen." She also let us ask ourselves many questions and try to answer these questions. She made me think about my current belief system about life and myself. Really I learned a lot, and she was like a mirror for me to show me everything I cannot see alone.

I have feedback. First of all, I felt her words were directed to only African Americans while she had been talking to the public. Secondly, she couldn't control her emotions when the Latino man was talking. Otherwise, she is a strong woman who has struggled to prove herself. She has learned from her parents' mistakes, and she never backed down and will never do so. In the future, I would have more time to share our experience and to give everyone the chance to talk. I think that would be helpful. **(Shaimaa Ahmed)**

In her parenting class, Beverly talked about parenting strategies to educate our children and talk wisely to them. She also talked about the wrong beliefs that parents use to discipline their children.

First she talked about her life experience and shared some of her sad childhood memories. She talked about the wrong disciplines her mom used to change their behaviors. She stated that as

parents, we lack knowledge on how to discipline our children. The consequences can impact our children's behaviors. She points out the importance of knowing the selection of words that we can use when addressing our children. For instance, she talked about her son asking questions about his father; she said that we should be very careful with the answer we are going to respond with. The response is a key point to the children's future behaviors. She also gave reasons as to why many times parents



abuse their children. “It is not that they don’t love you,” she said, “it is that they want to prevent you from being a criminal and having an immoral future.” Their lack of knowledge about forms of discipline made them susceptible to perform this type of abuse.

In addition, she talked about the importance of recognizing who we are and how we talk about ourselves in front of our children. She said that we are mirrors for our children, so their future will be reflective of our behaviors. She suggested that in order to raise healthy children, we should talk mostly about our positive traits. Another important point she brought up was that we need to teach our children that they are not minorities or black or Latino. We need to end those categorizations that make our children think that they are not equal to others. She taught us that we need to stand up for our children and not let society tell our children who they will grow to be, even if they lived in poverty or have parents who are not educated.
(Guadalupe Tinajero)

On October 19th, I attended a “*Parent Empowerment Series*” hosted by Beverly A. Hutcherson. It is a three part series. Part 1 was called *Up Rooting the Hurt Tree: An Investigation towards Self Awareness*.

Beverly started the session out with three questions that she wanted us to ask ourselves: What do you hope to gain from this experience? What state of mind do you have to be in to achieve this goal? What type of atmosphere will we need to activate for you to achieve this goal? This was to get us questioning if we felt this was for us and to make everyone comfortable about sharing if they felt the need. She then had us

repeat a few affirmations like: I am enough, I love myself, I am loved by others, I am a good parent, I am becoming a better parent, I am worthy of love and success. This was to give us a positive experience. She then began telling us a little about herself and where she came from. She does not look like from where she had come from.

Beverly A. Hutcherson is a scientist, a single parent, and a cancer survivor. Beverly learned at an early age that her mother could not beat daddy, so mama would beat the kids as a release. Beverly also learned that her mother was only loving her the best way that she knew how. Beverly’s mother’s answer to the treatment was that she could do to her as her mother has done to her. Beverly thought about this and wanted more for her son.

Words are powerful and become the inner voice to your child—Beverly A. Hutcherson

Question: “How do you address your child when you are sad, happy, upset?” Beverly asked. That led in to questions about how you treat yourself. “What is your current belief system? Define yourself: Who are you?” she said. Remove words like “can’t” and phrases like “it’s hard.” Never let others speak negatively in your life. Be bold and stop them when they start.

You have to be taught to be second-class. You are not born that way—Lena Horne
(Rosalyn Richmond)



BRYAN STEVENSON'S JUST MERCY: UW'S GO BIG READ SELECTION

When I began reading this book, I had little or no interest in it. I tend to read light fiction in the evenings so that I can turn my mind off and get to sleep. Serious stories and non-fiction were right out! So I was very surprised when, after two or three pages of *Just Mercy*, I found myself wondering about what happened next. Soon, I had abandoned my nice, light and humorous bedtime book in favor of *Just Mercy*.

The author has a way of writing that pulled me into the story along with him, making me feel the same anger, bewilderment, and indignity at the conditions he began to see within the criminal justice system. I believe that all but the very rich and privileged people have, at one time or another, felt the sting of prejudice, the weary dogged determination to set something right, or even just fear of the unknown that Stevenson felt at different times throughout this book. Somehow, many people from all walks of life just "get it." I certainly did. So, feeling this personal connection, I read on.

When I was through with the first part of the book and Bryan was beginning to form the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama, I went with him. The people he met were all too familiar. I've met ignorant, prejudiced white men like those who lied and then kept on lying to cover their attempts to pin a murder on Walter McMillian, even given the complete lack of evidence! Oh yes,

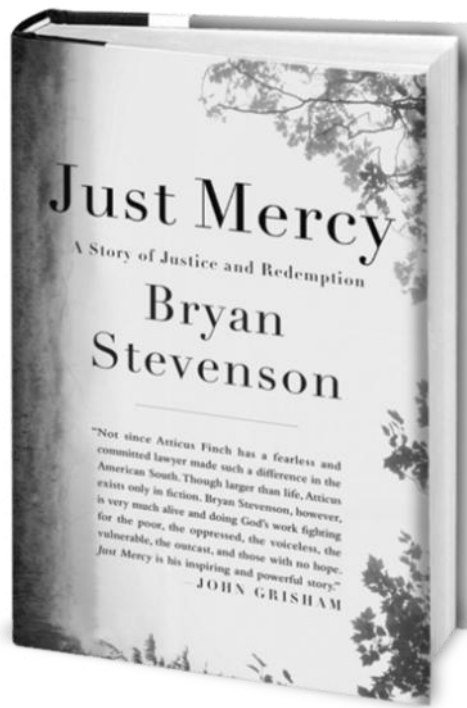
I have met them before. How I loathe this kind of good ole boy mentality! I am ashamed to share even a small part of my racial heritage with such scum.

But Bryan also brought me to meet Walter McMillian's friends and family. Drinking a glass of cold, sweet tea with Walter's family felt like going

home again, to be with my own grandmother. To hear their stories of how they had been affected by the railroading of Walter McMillian was heartbreaking to me, and I wished I could bring some small bit of comfort to those people and people like them.

When Bryan spoke about Antonia Nunez and other young teens who had been sentenced to die in prison, I felt the disbelief and anger at the injustice of it. And in 2009, when Bryan Stevenson argued in the United States Supreme Court that sentencing young teens to die in prison is cruel

and unusual punishment, I was there, in my mind's eye, fighting alongside him, because any one of those teens could have been my brother, my son or daughter, my kin! While there is little doubt that most of these people were not model citizens, there should never be any doubt that they were and are people; people as deserving of representation, consideration and yes, I'll say it – just mercy! In 2010, when the Supreme Court struck down life-without-parole sentences for children convicted of non-homicide offenses, it was a victory for us all.



I could not put this book down until the very end, which I read three times. I loved Mr. Stevenson's after court encounter with the old lady who referred to herself and to him as "stone catchers." She explained that "stone catching" was a kind of reference to the old parable, "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." In that story, a woman accused of adultery was brought before Jesus, and the crowd wanted to stone her; Jesus told the crowd "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." In talking to Bryan Stevenson, she said, "All those young children being thrown away like they're not even human, people shooting each other, hurting each other like they just don't care." She continued, "I don't know, it's a lot of pain. I decided that I was supposed to be here to catch some of the stones that people cast at each other."

Bryan Stevenson had used that same parable when speaking at a church meeting to help explain what he and EJI do, telling his audience that today, our self-righteousness, our fear, and our anger have caused even Christians to hurl stones at the people who fall down, even when we know we should forgive or show compassion. "I told the congregation that we simply can't watch that happen," Stevenson said, "We have to be stone catchers, too."

I found this book to be powerful, enlightening, and infuriating. And even though it sometimes made me cry and despise the oppressors of the weak, the unrepresented, and the young and mentally challenged, it also gave me hope. For while I knew that many of the gross injustices detailed in this book still exist today, and likely



many more that haven't even been brought to light yet, I am comforted that people like Bryan Stevenson and the dedicated staff of EJI are out there and will continue to catch stones – for all of us. . . .

Thank you, Odyssey Project, for introducing me to this book. It's one I will never forget. (**Raven Fabal**)

I thought I was early for the October 26 talk that Bryan Stevenson would offer, but on my arrival I noticed that the parking lot near the place was packed, so I had a hard time finding a place to park. Then when we got to the room all the places were occupied, so we had to go to the building across the street to see him via live stream.

He started talking a bit about himself, where he grew up, his time in school, and the funniest was when he talked about his time in college. The talk started very pleasant, although the audio was a little low and I could hardly hear. Gradually the noises around me were declining and I was able to concentrate and be more attentive on what he meant. The facts of which he spoke were impressive; one of the things I remember the most was the knowledge that one in three African Americans and one in six Latinos will go to jail for life. The saddest thing, though, is knowing that they may be innocent people who were in the wrong situation at the wrong time. It was interesting to hear each of the experiences he has had for the past 30 years in his career, and he shared some with us. I like to have people like him who want to see change in this world. The more we educate ourselves about the issues and

issues in general, the more we can prepared. Sometimes the lack of education makes people vulnerable, and this is when injustices occur.
(**Karina Gómez**)

I read chapter one of *Just Mercy*. It's a very sad and insightful chapter, touching on interracial history. It's so sad that so much of that still goes on today; even though so much progress has been made, we still have lots of ground to cover. Even after slavery ended, a law was still in place forbidding interracial interaction called miscegenation. The chapter also touches on being wrongly accused because of the color of your skin.
(**Steven Jones**)

I have always worried about the real security of prison and jail; I mean not for the inmates to escape but for themselves when they are behind bars. As for a transgender woman, there is no law that they can put women in a male jail. There has been many cases of Trans-girls being put in the opposite gender jail. Also there is no continuation of hormone therapy for those who had been taking their treatment and then, when in jail, they refuse to give them that right. That's just one of a million little things that people decide to ignore or not make a stand for, since when someone has done something wrong according to the crowd's eyes, they lose all the rights.

I love how Stevenson speaks about how vividly he remembers how he promised three things to his grandma: 1. To love his mom. 2. To do the right thing. 3. To never drink. I also firmly believe that we could change the incarceration system and our penalties for someone who will end up in prison or jail.



As Stevenson said, we all are contributing to more endless punishments for small errors that could be avoided if our poor communities would have better education structures. We all are humans who make mistakes. Those mistakes do not make us bad people, but people who made wrong choices. I will end by saying this phrase, which I believe to my core: "If you are free of sin, throw the first rock then." (**Luna Santos**)

I found Mr. Stevenson's talk to be extremely captivating and enlightening. I did not realize that he was a professor at the New York University School of Law. However, that should not have been much of a surprise because of listening to someone as well spoken and as well versed as he is. When Mr. Stevenson spoke of the conversation he had with his "Mama," it reminded me of some similar stories that my mother told me while she was growing up in rural Virginia in the late forties and fifties. It also brought back a few stored memories of my own when I was young and impressionable, yet trying to be crafty and listen to the forbidden conversations of grown folks, on how things "used to be" and how "they could be" for my up and coming generation.

Mr. Stevenson speaks of things that are forever true in many communities; that there is a despair and hopelessness that is often hard to get around. I see that, regardless of your social status. I do agree with him that if you can create the right kind of identity in people, you can move or motivate them to do things that initially may not make any sense but will shine light on a new possibility. I often refer to something like that as an awakening. Often, my own "light bulb" doesn't go off when it should, and it is hard to know that I can move

forward through an abundance of struggles, especially when I feel the hurdles are too high to cross; such as, getting through a job interview, collecting my thoughts for a writing class, or something as nerve-wracking as asking someone out on a date. It is all achievable; we just need to let that inner voice out.

This talk reminded me of my time in Austin, TX. Like many of the elders in Mr. Stevenson's community that have approached him and described their Era of Terror, being in Austin was the same experience for me. There were no lynchings going on in the sense of what my ancestors went through, but we did share one unique commonality, which was being a minority in a predominately white area where they choose to run their lives based on the fear of the unknown. Seeing a kid from the north come to the south speaking "Yankee talk" was so different; it meant making my daily life a daily challenge. Just like many of the situations that are outlined in *Just Mercy*, "We cannot be fully human until we pay attention to suffering."

He goes on to reference how wealth shapes outcomes. That reminds me of the Texas teen (Ethan Couch) who won his initial case because he suffered from "affluenza," being too rich. Yet the United States is the only country that sentences children as young as thirteen years old to die in prison. I am thankful that there are people/activists/motivators like Bryan Stevenson. It is clear that the points that he makes in this talk are not only for the injustices that afflict African-

Americans in this country. As an activist, he also works for those that clearly do not have a voice or even the means to succeed in their own situation.

With the support that we are all entitled to, many would not have to fear the unknown. We would not have to assume or presume. We could keep our eyes on the prize and hold on. We could all know that there is justice for all classes. The politics of punishment may never be balanced any time soon. As Mr. Stevenson stated in the end, we need to do more to help people that are victimized by crime, not do less. When penalties

are extreme for low-level crimes like bicycle theft, we increase recidivism rates and taxpayer burdens. **(Kelly Dixon)**



Bryan Stevenson's talk about "Just Mercy" was as moving as his book. He seemed every bit genuine, and as he spoke, I could visualize him writing a continuation of his book.

Although I arrived on time, the room where he was speaking and the overflow room were full and I had to watch him speak from a television screen in a room full of noisy people. The audio sound was terrible, but I tried my best to listen to every

word he had to say. A few things that he said, I won't forget and this is one of them: "You have to go through uncomfortable things to get some justice." As soon as he said these words, I knew it sounded like the truth. Most of the people I went to high school with and most of the people that I've met at Madison College say that they are liberals, but what does that really mean? Many white young Americans in Madison, WI say they are different from their parents because they are liberals who have friends of color, but have they ever been outside their comfort zone to see what obstacles their friends of color go through?

In high school I had a really close friend who was white; we took choir together and we enjoyed singing every low and high-pitched note, even if we weren't the best. We really didn't know each other; all we really talked about was choir and how great our choir teacher was. As the year progressed, we became good friends and would go to a coffee shop to have lunch. She would ask me questions about my culture and, to my surprise, she didn't know much about me or people like me, people of color. There were huge differences in our lives, and it made me uncomfortable. I'm not sure if it made her uncomfortable, but knowing that she had someone to clean her house when I lived in a one-room apartment made me uncomfortable. It wasn't the fact that she had a house and I didn't because I know we had no control over that; but having to share this information made me comfortable. She was surprised when I told her I couldn't work in the United States legally. There were so many things I knew about undocumented people, but she didn't know much about undocumented people. I didn't want to make her feel uncomfortable when I told her that I couldn't work in the country that I had been living in since I was three months old or the fact that my parents didn't have a penny for me to go to school. Yet, I really wanted her to know; I really wanted her to have this information, for whatever reason.

I now realize that even if it was uncomfortable and even if she was uncomfortable, she just had to hear the truth. It wasn't about me or her; it was about the millions of undocumented people with few opportunities. It would have been comfortable and fun to talk about our choir teacher's style and his amazing vocal ability or the popular television series "Pretty Little Liars"

instead of our differences and the feeling of uneasiness that came along with it; but now I know that I wanted her to care about people like me even if that meant having to make her and myself uncomfortable. I thought that her knowing would make a small difference.

Bryan Stevenson also said that this country, for some reason, wants to hurt the people that have been hurt the most. I also find this as truth. Every time there is someone in my community who goes to jail, they are the most broken people. I remember that most kids who went to the principal's office in elementary school were kids of color. I know for a fact that it wasn't because they were kids of color but because they were poor kids who lived in abusive homes or who had parents that, no matter how much they cared for them, didn't find it easy to care for them. Schools forgive these kids, but they don't need forgiveness; they need help, love and support. Society thinks that these kids just need timeouts or detention, and they expect them to grow up just fine. As soon as something goes wrong, they aren't forgiven; they are forgotten about and abused some more. **(Karina Herrejon)**



THE COURAGE TO CONSULT COUNSELORS



For my extra activity, I decided to follow up with a career counselor at UW. I was able to meet with Matt Greenberg, who is an advisor for special student admissions and academic services. Matt does not specialize in transfer

student admissions; nonetheless, he was helpful enough to point me in the right direction to get things going. Since I am looking to go into the field of nursing, he mentioned getting in contact with the office of admissions as well as the school of nursing to understand the process further. He also provided me with a link for financial assistance and scholarships for students, which we had discussed during our meeting.

Later on in the week, I set up two more meetings to meet with an advisor at the UW office of transfer admissions as well as the UW nursing school. I first met with the office of transfer admissions to get more of an idea of what they look for in students looking to apply and transfer. She mentioned the high expectations they have for students' GPAs and transcripts when applying. In all honesty, I kind of felt like I was back to square one after leaving that meeting and after speaking to that advisor. She just kind of seemed rude and quick to cut a student off without suggesting other options. I didn't feel as if she took much into consideration regarding how someone might feel when you say your high school grades aren't good enough. Maybe if she would have used different wording during our meeting, I wouldn't have left feeling like my hope was lost for good.

Surprisingly, things turned out better than expected after I met with Ilsa May, who is the director of undergraduate admissions and advising for the UW School of Nursing. She was

extremely helpful and pleasant towards my father and me. She answered all of our questions and concerns and explained every detail for applying to the school of nursing. I really appreciated how she was able to suggest other options for me to pursue my career. For example, she suggested completing my Associates Degree in nursing through MATC and then applying for the BSN@Home program at UW to expand my education and receive a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing through online courses. I felt this would be the best option for me because I would be able to save money and time since the UW Nursing program only has open enrollment once a year. This route would also give me a chance to improve my GPA and demonstrate my capability as well as my determination to earn a degree from UW Madison.

After feeling overwhelmed from a long day of meetings, I definitely felt more at ease and found motivation to keep moving forward in my education. In a way, I feel regretful of not pursuing my career earlier when I had the chance, but at the same time I don't because I feel like right now is the right time for me to fully dedicate myself to studying and finishing my career. I want to make my son proud one day and show him what his single mother is capable of and much more. **(Marisela Tellez-Giron)**



During my meeting, in just a short time I have discovered that I am not fully over the hurt of my childhood; the harsh situation that I was unwillingly placed in with no form of protection or guidance. I still feel some dislike towards my birth mother for selfishly

putting her kids in harm, mainly leaving me to endure abandonment, pain, fever, loneliness, and

cruelty. I feel she should have died before I was born or even before she had kids at all. I have learned that so much of my past is unclear and vague because I have adapted to push the past so far back in my mind and replace reality with fictional stories. Sometimes I am not able to distinguish the realness of my past.

I do not hold the knack to recognize love because my first love source did not provide it. I have an imagination that love has this feeling like touching a rock; I should be able to hold, touch, and feel the act of love. I relate love as a rush or a pushing and pulling act with someone, meaning I want love so bad from others that I tend to fall for the hurt, as it was replaced for love as a child.

I also discovered that I have trust issues; I do not

believe in words from one's mouth, and I am quick to give up on a situation at the first sign of wrongdoing. I have guarded myself like a bomb shelter so that no one can hurt me anymore, so this does not allow me to receive love. I am not fully in love or accepting of my own self. Because of my past, on the outside looking in, one will see a boost of confidence, a smile and love; but within I feel worthless and unloved. I seek hidden acceptance from others as the view of myself sometimes can impact my feelings. On the flip side, I have a dark side that has a "I do not care" attitude where I can become very cold hearted and come off as mean.

I will be going to more sessions as we also figure I may suffer from depression and anxiety. (**Brandice Hatcher**)

FINDING A VOICE

OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH!!!

Am I My Sister's Keeper? By Lisa Partee

I remember a woman crying alone in a dark room. Over and over again, she replayed the day in her head. How had it gotten so bad? How had she ended up in this lonely, hurtful place?

She remembered getting up that morning, determined that today would be a good day. She had gone to the kitchen to make breakfast. He asked for the first beer. She smiled. She cracked the eggs and started the coffee. She heard another beer being opened. She wanted the breakfast to be extra nice so she decided (she didn't ask) to chop up some ham, onion, and to add a little cheese. She could hear the beginnings of a mood change in the other room, but she was determined to make a really good breakfast. Funny, making breakfast never used to make her so nervous...another beer was opened.

With the food finally finished, she carefully began to place the food on the plate. Why were her hands shaking? "You really are stupid!" she laughed to herself. Finally, the food was placed just right on the plate; it looked pleasing and appetizing. As she turned to take the plate to her mate, something inside of her already knew that this could go bad at any moment. As she graciously presented the meal, he looked down at it and said, "I don't eat food that was prepared with an attitude." She did not know it at that moment, but there was a part of her that was still very much alive and still did not quite know how to just "be quiet." "I didn't have an attitude," she protested. Before she could understand what was happening, the plate was slapped out of her hands and food splattered all over her and the floor. What happened next are merely ugly, hurtful, and shaming details that shaped and consumed her life for the next three years. Anybody that has ever had an experience like that could probably pick the story up from there and continue the story line without missing a beat.

That woman was me. I never dreamed that one's soul could be so eroded by another's persistent and consistent and creative methods of cruelty. By the time I was rescued from that "relationship," I was very much like a refugee; a prisoner of war. I no longer trusted my skills, abilities, perceptions, judgments...I trusted nothing about myself. But thankfully, I was safe. I was safe enough to learn how to live again. And as the healing started, I became safe enough to understand and accept my role in my being hit, hurt, and humiliated on a daily basis.

For me, this period of my life didn't just happen. Looking back, I can clearly see the path to that place had been plainly laid out, as it is for many young girls. I believe it starts very early as we learn to "be nice" and "act like a lady!" We learn to quiet that primal nudge, as I like to call it. We shush that internal, intuitive voice that tells us when we are hurting, unhappy, or merely uncomfortable. So, understanding that, I understood that it was a process getting to the point of being a victim of domestic violence—and it was going to be a hell of a process getting and staying Free.

So, what now is my responsibility? Am I my sister's keeper? To the latter question, I give a loud, unladylike and resounding, "HELL YEAH!" I am my sister's keeper! If I say that I was rescued from that small dark existence and I have learned some lessons that I believe have given me Clarity, Purpose, and Significance, how dare I place that Light "under a bushel?" And I firmly believe that once we begin to experience the joy of falling in Love with ourselves, we are obligated to reach out to our daughters, sisters, mothers, and friends and say, "Please allow me to Love you as you start this wonderful journey to Loving yourself!" And I feel the need to pointedly say

that I am not talking about loving our outsides or appearances. I am talking about getting really brave and bracing ourselves and facing ourselves. We have to reach way, way down deep to those tender, hurt, and haunted places that we barely acknowledge to ourselves—much less to anyone else. Yes, I am my sister's keeper.

So how will this work? I would be lying if I said that I had all of the answers. But I do know a few things...I know that the broken, fearful, whatever the f***

place inside the abuser is really no match for the Light in my eyes. This Light sees and immediately understands that his punches and cruel words are no match for the Power that I now embody! I now intimately understand that "love is NEVER better than the lover!" Hurt people give hurt love and broken people give broken love... I also know that while I may not say a word (not yet) I will make my presence known. Yep—I am looking. I'm right here. I see my sister's bruises and I hear her cry when she thinks no one hears her.



I see how carefully she walks, hoping not to be noticed. And I am going to make sure that she sees me! She will see me reaching out when she is ready—with no judgments or condemnation. I understand. It is not my immediate concern how she ended up here. I need for her to know that once she cries out from the very bottom of her soul. "NO MORE!" the entire universe will conspire to set about making her FREE!

I could talk for days about Grace and Mercy and growing up—and out! Yep, the journey to BECOMING is not for the faint of heart. I am learning how to get very still and very, very quiet...so quiet that I hear my own Voice whispering and telling me all the things that I have forgotten along the way...

So yes, I am my sister's keeper! And what an honor that is!

My Journey, My Odyssey**By Jelissa Williams**

Here I am...
Still standing
Finally given a voice, when so long
I felt I was without one
Shunned by society for choices I made
Two children, and all alone in a cold world,
Struggling to make the grade
Words leap from the page and help me escape
The pains of my reality
This Odyssey honestly helps me mentally fly away,
To a destination where my goals are accomplished
I am important
Still sifting and sorting, through the wreckage
Of what was my life
If I work hard
I do believe, that I can achieve
My dreams that seem close
But are yet so far away
Definitely isn't easy
At times I want to quit
But I cannot forget...
The two pairs of eyes that are watching my every move
I may trip, may stumble, might even fall
But my feet remain planted on solid ground
As I push one foot forward
I refuse to look back
Head held high
I look to the sky
I got this!
It starts deep within the realms of my
Subconscious
It's only the beginning
Thanking those for wishing me luck
An oracle for my children
They'll know
MOMMY NEVER GAVE UP!

This program has been a wonderful experience thus far. There have been so many eye openers, and the atmosphere within the classroom is beyond wonderful. There have been new and exciting opportunities not only for myself, but my boys. I am ready for this journey—full speed ahead. I turn away from all things that may distract me.

I say, don't spend every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every week worrying about things that don't contribute to your growth and personal wellbeing. Life is about elevating and moving on to the next phase, finding yourself as well as striving to be better than the person you were yesterday. I observe those around me. If, year after year, you are stuck in the same situation, concerning yourself with things that don't add value to your life, I must leave you behind. You should be able to look back and KNOW you made progress. It's like driving a car in

reverse! ...
Where are you going if you insist on looking in the rearview mirror?
Nowhere! Life is meant to push forward, not backwards.



MESMERIZED BY MUSIC



Listening to Mr. Auerbach play makes me homesick for my father. My father was a keyboardist and accordion player, and he usually played jazz. Music, for me, carries emotion—I cannot imagine

living without music. I've said before that I'd rather go blind than deaf because at least if blind, I would still have music to bring me light, color, joy, tears, and happiness; that would be enough to get me through whatever hardships I might have to bear. I hear the beautiful music in this room, and I am transported beyond just the mundane aspects of everyday life—for the time when the music is playing, I am the music and I am happy. The melody infuses my soul with emotion. Be it joy or sorrow, it's all good. (**Raven Fabal**)



Music is the fluid that quenches the thirst of my consciousness. The rhythmic and intelligent sounds music makes creates the framework of my mood, and other times it is the catalyst that changes it. I love jazz music more than my other favorites, which are blues, soul, R&B, and reggae music. I love to combine old and new, like Thelonius Monk and Gregory Porter. The musicians are vivid, bold, daring, and endlessly energetic, and the vocals capture every emotion, from raw to sentimental. Without music, my life would be at risk of blending into the surrounding noise, cries, disorganization, and chaos. When I decide to listen to John Coltrane, I am steady. When I play Bob Marley, I am enlightened. When I listen to Isaac Hayes, I feel everything

permeate into my thoughts and create the inspiring energy to relate to him, anyone, something. Music is infinite, and so are musicians. We are so fortunate to bear witness to one another's creative excellence. (**Tamara Thompson Moore**)



I love music; music has played a very big part of my life. Life is like music. It can be melodious and sweet or dark and depressing. Some people's lives are all blues. However, I would like to think of myself when

compared to music as bittersweet. The tune of my music used to be blues because that's what was in my heart. Now I sing to a different tune: good R&B, or think Nina Simone meets John Legend. Without music I would be lost in the chaos called life. I display my feelings by what I listen to,

and also it's how I find the words to sing (voice) my story. It helps me after a long day; it soothes and caresses me after heartbreak and wipes my weeping tears. It helps me to be comfortable in my own skin, and the gospels relieve me from my past sins. Music makes me happy and helps me to rejoice. (**Shayba Pierce**)



Music can put me in a good or bad mood, depending on the sound or the lyrics. Mostly it puts me in a good mood all the time, and it helps me to relax and forget a little bit about daily stressors and problems. It cheers me up when I feel down, but also keeps me happy if I'm happy.

"Music is the fluid that quenches the thirst of my consciousness."

I like to listen to music from the 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's, and 90's. Old music is so beautiful, romantic, and means so much; it has beautiful sounds and all the words are right.

I like mostly romantic, pop, and *ranchero* (*mariachi*), but I also like the music I listened to when I was a kid. My parents would put the radio on in the mornings while they prepared to go to work. When I listen to it now, I know the lyrics and some of them are funny and nonsense, but I like them. Also, I listen to the music I heard when I was a teenager because it brings good memories back of days when I had no worries and everything was so easy. I would put on the radio, and when a song came on that I liked, I recorded it so that I could listen to it over and over. They were mostly songs about love and the boys I liked. It was also so much fun to get together with friends and listen and cry over some of the songs together.

I remember the first song in English I loved. It was "My Heart Will Go On." I asked my friend to translate it for me because it sounded so beautiful, and I wanted to know what it meant.

Later I fell in love with the Backstreet Boys' music, even though I didn't know what they were singing about (now I have an idea).

My family and friends make fun of me because I like country music.

The other day I was listening to a CD from a 90's group and my daughter said it was old, old music. (**Karina Gomez**)



I listen to lots of different music, R&B and hip/hop/rap being the most frequently played. The reason for so much variety is so I can be met where I'm at emotionally and mentally. For example, I listen to something like Jill Scott when I want to calm down. I listen to some hardcore rap if I need some motivation. Lately I've been setting my iPod to shuffle. That is because my expression has been free. My favorite artists usually speak to me through their music. (**Tory Latham**)



Music makes me relaxed and happy. When I feel stressed, I turn to music and listen. I like slow songs to let me fly and imagine. Also I like romantic poems with piano. My life without music would be dark and without flavor. For me music is sweetness, flowers, colors, and hope for life. The music we have today is wonderful and makes me sleepy after all the hard work I've done today. Music makes me feel very light with a quiet heartbeat. (**Shaimaa Ahmed**)





I listen to all kinds of music: country, jazz, pop, oldies, and classic rock. Usually I put on whatever kind of music that entertains my mood at a given time. My dad loves music. I grew up with my father and he

would quiz me on his favorite artists or songs when they would come on the radio.

Oftentimes I find myself tuning into a song because it immediately brings back a memory of a good time in my life. I feel that music strikes a certain chord in the brain that can take you back, so to speak.

"Music is my freedom, my escape."

Life would be so dull without music. It brings out emotions and goose bumps, and it talks so deeply to your soul. I find myself tuning in to the Christian station, and every single time it's like the music is sending me a message that was completely intended for me to hear. Without music in my life, I'm not sure what kind of heart I would have. I love the melodies and truths it brings to me. **(Ashley Wills)**

Music is essential in a human being. Music brings happiness. I listen to different types of music, mostly romantic. When I feel sad, I listen to music. When I am happy, I listen to music. Even when I am angry, I listen to music. Music can change people's feelings. One must find the tone of music according to the mood a person is in. My life without music would be boring. I need music to dance, to sing, and to spend happy times with my children. Nothing is better than music. Music brings joy to our lives. **(Guadalupe Tinajero)**



Different music allows me to feel different ways. When I least expect it, I can get hit with a wave of emotions if I listen to music that takes me back to a distant memory that's not healthy for me to recall. Music

can also electrify me, making me feel inspired and untouchable. Music seriously heals the soul. I oftentimes confuse my coworkers (on purpose) with my energetic vibe and positive attitude, making them wonder what had happened prior to work.

Well, it was definitely not the coffee. It was because I have listened to good ass music on the way to work. **(Mai Thao)**



I like to listen to a variety of music, from R&B to country and everything in between. I use music as a way to change my mood and also to express whatever emotion/mood I'm in. Music is my freedom, my

escape when I need to clear my mind. My life without music would be so boring and quiet. What would I listen to when I need to get housework done? Or what would become of me if I didn't have that one special song to dance with my father on my wedding day? Music has created an extra effect on memories I have, both good and bad. For example, there is one particular song from the country singer Shania Twain which I always remember dancing to with my dad when I was little. **(Marisela Tellez)**

Music gave me the biggest connection I have with my dad. If he didn't listen while I talked, I was sure he would listen while I sang. My mom in the morning would whistle whatever tune my dad was playing on his guitar. It was



Breathing now, I thank that man and his love in the corner for just letting me get better...by sharing their love with me. (**Lisa Partee**)



like we took turns making every word and sound into a conversation. You see, my dad can't listen to seriousness, but he can listen to a joke or two and make his guitar laugh. Every string was heavy against his

thumb. and at times it seemed like it disappeared. I would spin around for minutes, my mom would laugh so loud, and my dad played faster. I would spin faster. He may not listen to every word or hold every detail, but he always listens to me sing. I know he loves me when we sing songs for God. We sing for him, but I know he sometimes strums for me. (**Karina Herrejon**)



I don't know many things, but I do know that when I walked in here this evening, I really wasn't breathing. But as I sat and slowly began to fancy the man and his "love" as they talked and laughed together, over in the corner, you

could tell that that man had his love and it did not matter who stared openly at their smiles, laughter, concern for the other...no. Love was love. When it was good and pure, well, it healed the souls of all who drank of it.



Music means a lot to me. When I hear music, I feel that it's taking me to a different place, especially when I close my eyes. When I open my eyes I find myself in the same place. I like relaxed music; it makes me feel

relaxed. If the music is happy, I will be even happier, but when it's sad, I'm even sadder. Without music, I wouldn't feel the taste of sadness and happiness. (**Mustafa Mohammed Saed**)



I like to listen to music that has feeling. I always listen to slow music because it makes me feel relaxed. It takes me somewhere really far. It makes me feel that everything is all right, and I do not need to be stressed. Also I

use music to dance to when I feel happy. I show my happiness through my dancing. When I was in Iraq, my uncle used to tell me to dance for him while he listened to music to give him nice emotions/feelings. Music is my life. Without music I wouldn't be able to dance. J (**Umaima Mohammed Saed**)



Music is the start and end of my day. I have love for many types of music, yet I play a lot of church tunes. The music today was educational yet moving. I could not only hear what he was playing but also felt the rhyme

and beats. Some music gives you a sad mood; other times it makes you pat your feet. Other songs put you in a calm spirit. Music to me is needed. It can change any situation. (**Rosalyn Richmond**)



I love R&B music. It calms me when I am going through hard times. It eases my mind. I have to listen to music. When I can, it makes time go faster for me. It makes me feel happy when I listen to music. **(Jalisa Galvin)**



Music does a lot for me; it's a therapeutic release. It calms me when I'm angry, it wakes me when I am sleepy, motivates me when I work out, and it cleanses my soul when I feel overwhelmed, sad, or lost. It does all kinds of things for me depending on what and when I listen to it. When I listen to rap, R&B, house music, some rock, and some country, I'm all ears. **(Arkeshia Sallay)**



Music is my life, music is my life, music brings joy and roar. Hip hop, R&B, and house music are what I listen to. Music is my motivation. Without music my life would be a tornado storm. **(Katia Robinson)**



I listen to all kinds of music, but my favorite is gospel, that old down-south, spiritual gospel where you get chills in your body when you hear the first note or words. The music takes you to a place of ease where you have blocked the world out and have begun to release the pain and joy of your worries. You reflect on the good God has done for you—gracefulness. Gospel music makes my soul tingle; it brings out my sorrows when I feel I am at the greatest place. Gospel music is a way to give thanks and praise to God. It can also put you in a good place where you smile, clap your hands, stomp your feet, and move your body. Without music I can say my life would have a lot of boring moments. **(Brandice Hatcher)**

Every day that I wake up, I feel as though there is a



beat or instrumental somewhere out in the world that perfectly incorporates itself into the day that I'm going to have. The lyrics that would be added to it would include the events from my day, thoughts that sped through my mind, and things that I saw, food I ate, and people I interacted with. I make the best music when the content of it only includes things that are 100% authentic. I only feel or hear music that I can relate to. **(Joe Young)**



While the music is playing, it's soothing and calming. I listen to a lot of old school dusties, R&B, rap/hip hop, juking music, house music, jazz, etc. I'm passionately and deeply affected by music. Music can change my day and how I respond to the events of the day. I'm a person who keeps the last song heard in the car playing in my head all day. I try to keep that party going in my head until I return home. My life would be somber and dead without music. Life without music to me is like sex without the orgasm. I love it when music does it to me in my earhole! **(Nickitia Cooper)**



Music is healing. It releases the stress in my life. It's so temporary, yet the sound lasts forever. Music is memories, excitement, tears and joy. Music is my savior. It relaxes my mind. Music is yoga. Music is life from a child now an adult. It's always a part of me. **(Jayvonna Flemming)**



Music means the WORLD to me. It is a way to express and release emotions. I'm into Blues, R&B and hip hop. It can carry a message that is relative to real life situations. I use music when I want to get out and just go into my own world. So with that being said, I guess I use music as my meditation. **(Bettye Emmanuel)**



Music is my gateway. It is my outlet, my stress reliever, and my imagination builder. On bad days, I can fly out to Billy Idol's "White Wedding" and on softer days can, and will, listen to Old School

Motown all the way to "Drops of Jupiter." There was a time when a rotten seed was planted in my mind. I was told I could only listen to "your people's music," whatever that is. I love it ALL— a capella, rock, country, and more. My life would not be complete if I had no music choices. How else could we pass down magical memorable moments if we had no music? **(Kelly Dixon)**



I usually listen to any kind of music, but mostly sad music. When I hear sad songs, I can

change both ways, from being sad to happy and happy to sad. When I'm energetic, I listen to rock (Cranberries). When I'm happy it

usually ends up in musicals or happy Christmas music. I usually go for piano music and classics when I want to sleep or be serene. **(Luna Santos)**

"Music has saved my life."



Music is my soulmate. I love my boo Eric, but music is my soulmate. Music has seen every side of me. I can go from Scream Breaking Benjamin to the dance craze that is Disclosure. I can relax and unwind with Maxwell.

Music has felt every emotion I've ever had so far in life. It's seen my tears, it's laughed with me ("September" by Earth, Wind and Fire is the happiest song ever, LOL!) It was there for me when I asked it to be. Music was always there to motivate me, to remind me that violence only makes things worse. When I had painful, big decisions to make, music broke it down and helped

me see the small, then big, picture. At work it helps me tune out the dark, annoying, shadowy atmosphere that is my job. Music keeps me pushing that cart.

People say I'm great at taking a song and putting my words to it. I tend to stay on beat throughout. I don't think about it; I feel it. I feel the music coming through my mind, coming from my lips, the tears coming from my eyes when I cry. Music has saved my life; it will forever be my soulmate. **(Kala Taylor)**



Some say I have an old soul, listening to music that came out before my time—a little bit of Mary J Blige, Barry White, Evelyn King, Teena Maxie, Jade, Stevie Wonder, Thane, just

to name a few. Music tells a story, whether it stems from pain, love, or anger. Music speaks for me when I just don't know in what way to express myself. That sense of release is what I crave. You can always tell what kind of mood I'm in based on my music selection. Music gives my life some sort of meaning. It helps me calm down when I feel like the walls are caving in on me. **(Jelissa Williams)**





Music to me is healing, relaxation, a stress reliever. The kind of music I listen to tells a lot about me. It tells a story. I enjoy country music. That's something I listen to the majority of the time.

Plus, country music is something I grew up on. But I enjoy different genres of music, from Kenny Rodgers to Kevin Gates. Without music, I'm not sure where my life would be. Music keeps me calm, it relaxes me, and it gives me my time to shine, without being judged. I can listen to my music and chill. The first time I heard anything but country music, I was 13 years old. The first song was "I Miss You" by Aaliyah. I was in my bedroom, lying on the bed. Other than that, I was taken away from home at 12, so country music was always my escape. Hell, music was and still is my escape. **(Tasha Thompson)**

World without Music

By Steve Jones



The world without music would sadden me
The world with music has helped me grow to be
The world without music, don't you see
how it saddens me
From Coldplay to Sipknot to Usher and Queen
Bee
not much music escapes me
the upbeat and mellow
whether played on a cello
or by a fellow
won't you see
can't you see
The world without music
most certainly saddens me.

The Odyssey Project Non-Blues by Raven Fabal



I was raised up with nothing; I've never had a thing.
I was raised up with nothing; I have never had a thing.
Every time that I had something, it got stolen by my no account kin.
I've been pushed around till I thought that I would die.
I've been pushed around till I thought that I would die.
I've had no time for education, but now I'm gonna try.
(Bridge)
I've got an itch for education!
I've found new dedication!
No more mental sedation, it's true!
My curiosity is burning,
And now I'm happy learning,
And I'm here to tell you the news!
My brain is out of hibernation,
I've begun my transformation,
Opportunity's here and I call it
"The Odyssey Project non-blues!"
I used to feel just pain and misery.
To get up in the mornings seemed like futility
I never dared to hope that I would ever be set free.
But now I've discovered so many things new to me.
It's like I've found a light now and I can finally see
That I've been chained up my mind and new knowledge
has brought me the key.
(Bridge 2)
Sometimes I still get frightened,
Anxiety is heightened,
But somehow the outlook's brightened for me.
And I'm starting to believe in
In all I can achieve in
This journey - my own Odyssey
I've got the will and now the power
This is my zero hour
And nothing's going to stop
And nothing's going to stop
"The Odyssey Project non-blues!"

Odyssey Songs from Odyssey Junior Grades 6-12

Odyssey Odyssey

We go to Odyssey
Got something on my brain
That's what Anthony says
That's what Anthony says
I got creativity
To create identity
And build community
That's what Anthony says



I keep improving

I keep improving
Speak out loud keep moving
It's like I got these goals in my mind
Saying try my best each time

Odyssey's Gonna Write Write Write

Cause Odyssey Junior's gonna write write write
And the Odyssey's gonna speak speak speak
And I'm just gonna improve
Odyssey
Odyssey has goals goals goals
And is gonna create create create
Odyssey is a community
Odyssey Odyssey



We Never Miss a Class

We never miss a class
Odyssey's a blast
We are learning while we laugh
We write so many papers
And watch for paper graders
It's not that hard a task
It's not that hard a task
We keep on writing
'Cause learning is exciting



Eduoard Manet, *The Fifer*; Archibald John Motley, Jr., *Nightlife*;
Pablo Picasso, *The Old Guitarist*; Alfred Gockel, *Full Swing*



Andrew Atroshenko, *The Passion of Music*; Auguste Renoir, *Young Girls at the Piano*;
Romare Bearden, *Jammin' at the Savoy*



Pablo Picasso, *Three Musicians*; Adolphe Lesrel, *The Musicians*;
Johannes Vermeer, *The Concert*; Romare Bearden, *Three Folk Musicians*



Michelangelo Caravaggio, *The Musicians*; Juan Gris, *Violin and Guitar*;
Pablo Picasso, *Mandolin and Guitar*