

ODYSSEY ORACLE

ODYSSEY CLASS OF 2015



In this Oracle . . .

Odyssey Class of 2015	1
Embarking on an Odyssey	3
Finding Plato's Cave Today	6
What's in a Name?	10
Wandering with William Wordsworth	11
Considering "The Circuit"	12
Noticing Nature	15
Discovering William Blake	20



EMBARKING ON AN ODYSSEY



This class is an odyssey for me because I am ready for a journey, a start to a new plan in my life, and there are going to be many findings along the way. Just like going on a trip and hoping to make it there safely, I am not sure of what bumps I may have to

cross to get there. **(Tenishia Bland)**



It's a journey to help us find our way. This class will be an odyssey for me because it will expose me to new things that will be resources to help guide me to the path that's right for me. **(Lakoyé Buford)**



We have just started a long journey, and we wonder where it might take us and how it might change our lives.

(Margarita Cid Luna)



Everyone is here on a journey, and this program is the beginning. This class will be an odyssey for me because it's preparing me for what lies ahead of me. It's a project and must be completed, which is a new journey in my life. **(Michelle Conley)**



The class will be an odyssey to me based on the new material I will learn and readings I wouldn't even consider reading if I wasn't a part of the Odyssey Program.

(Derek Dodd)



I think it is called the Odyssey Project to help people like me that have been wandering after so many defeats in life to find a change in how we think and how we learn—to make a change for the better. **(Melissa Dominguez)**



This is going to be a long, mysterious journey for everyone in the class and the teachers and alumni with us in class. It may be hard, but I'm ready to learn, grow, explore, change, and accomplish whatever hardships and joys are presented to me. **(Myisha Ellis)**



The Odyssey Project is a life journey, and I have to reflect on my life and the choices I made up till this point. I also have to think about what I want out of life and what I need to be able to get there. **(Kelly Hayes)**



I believe Odyssey was chosen because of the obstacles and things I will go through while on this learning journey. I believe that the program was designed for those with more barriers than the average student so each student is on their own odyssey. **(Jessi Hodges)**



We all have had obstacles in our lives that we've had to overcome. It's a part of life. But for us to finally come full circle and take our lives back into our own hands by returning to school is awesome. **(DeAngelo Hood)**



We all have dreams, and we all have goals. We all bring something different to the table. This world is cold and dark. We can lose sight of the journey ahead. We don't know what the future holds, but if we don't give ourselves options and allow ourselves to grow, we won't have a future. This

class will be life changing and is a piece of this road on our journey to success and economic wellbeing. **(Prodajaé Huntley)**



The Odyssey Project is a life changing opportunity. It's a 30-week journey of growth— educationally, emotionally, mentally, and personally. This class is more than an educational opportunity for me. It's an opportunity to grow mentally and socially. My odyssey began when my daughter Journee was born. This class is the next step to opening my eyes to the world and making it better for me and for her. (**Latesha Jackson**)



The Odyssey Project . . . gives wandering people the chance to make change. In this program they give you the fortune of courage, wisdom, and belief in yourself. The class will be an odyssey for me because I have an artistic skill and a great passion for learning. Now that I have the right mindset and people that will help me dig all those ideas out from within, I am ready for a brighter future. Odyssey is my starting point. (**Nitia Johnson**)



I think it's called the Odyssey Project because a lot of people from different cultures, lifestyles, and struggles participate—people who are not afraid to take a step and fight in a journey, a new journey with a lot of new things. They are ready for a big change in their lives. (**Brenda Juarez Cruz**)



We are all going through this great journey, and there are always going to be obstacles . . . to get to have a second chance. I have had so many fortunate and unfortunate things that I have been through since I moved to the U.S. The choices I've made in life that put me in terrible situations, judiciously and spiritually, have altered my moral compass in the worst direction. But the fortunate thing in my life, although not planned, is my daughter Charlotte. It was another bump in the journey that is my life, but the most

blessed obstacle I could have ever asked for. (**Dorothy Katana**)



It's going to be a long journey. We'll wander through different topics and gain knowledge along the way. For me, this course will be a journey of adolescence. (**Matthew Kruger**)



This course will take you above and beyond, and also doing and completing this course will have you going places. This class is an odyssey for me because I have done a lot of wandering, searching for my true calling. Also, this class I know will have me going places and doing great things. (**Joseph Lentz**)



Calling this course the Odyssey Project is quite clever and most likely right on key. This course as a whole, I'm sure, is quite a journey or "odyssey" for everyone involved, including staff. This will be an odyssey for me because the course is a journey itself. I believe that what I put into it will dictate what I get out of it or my future. (**Ashley Linjer**)



For many of the students the course will be a "long eventful journey." We will all learn many new skills and information about ourselves and other students. We'll be on a journey to change our lives as well as enhance the lives of others around us. (**Patricia McKnight**)



It is a long journey that is going to be marked by obstacles. This class is going to be an odyssey because I know I will have to overcome a lot of challenges. I am starting a journey of being honest, and I have no idea what this program holds for me. (**Heydy Pichardo Reyes**)



It's for people who had some trials in life and haven't finished school or been to school in a while.
(**Mikiea Price**)



In Homer's "Odyssey," Odysseus goes through a journey filled with obstacles and problem-solving situations, yet he still made it through. I think our program is called the Odyssey Project because in order to complete it, we need to overcome many obstacles. As adults, life has happened to us, and we realize that, suddenly, it is harder to accomplish goals relating to our academic enrichment. (**Sahira Rocillo Ramírez**)



I found out in just my first week of class that this will prove to be a long, eventful, and very exhausting journey. But a worthwhile journey it will be. This is my second time doing this assignment because I lost the first one in appdata/temp file. Dumb computer? I have to blame someone, right? Well, after I called Mrs. Auerbach and cried, I got to typing again. Yes, this is going to be a journey for me. (**Lenora Rodin**)



It means a fight to achieve something, no matter how long it takes to achieve it, and going on an unknown adventure filled with adversity. It is an odyssey for me because I don't know what awaits me, what kind of challenges I will meet. There is much to study, explore and read. There will be times I feel I CAN'T DO IT, but I know I can. (**Natalia M. Rodríguez Miramontes**)

Odysseus was on a journey after the ten-year Trojan War determined to make it home. We signed up for this class to take the journey to find our way home—home being our true selves. We may



go through the struggle (like the Trojan War), but staying focused on where we want to be will give us the strength we need to get through. (**Shaneika Sanders**)



I think this course is called Odyssey because it will teach us a lot. It will change our lives in a good way and will be a fortune for us all. (**Veronica Tinajero**)



This is the first step towards a change that will change how we see our future and ourselves. I think this class will be an odyssey for me for it will be a journey for me to discover what everyone else sees in me. (**Nissa Uriostegui**)



For many it will be a new and different journey for all; it will challenge the students in ways that they never have been in the past. This program for me is part of my Odyssey because coming home from prison is the beginning of my odyssey to a better life and my education. (**Christopher Villalpando**)



The project is a journey that can possibly have many fortunate changes. It's an odyssey for me because I am eager to complete the program. First I need to take the journey of change. (**Janina White**)



We are going to have experiences and hardships, and it's going to be a long journey. I know I'm going to have hardships and it's going to take a long process. I'm going to have my ups and downs, and this will be my journey. (**Brandi Whitlock**)

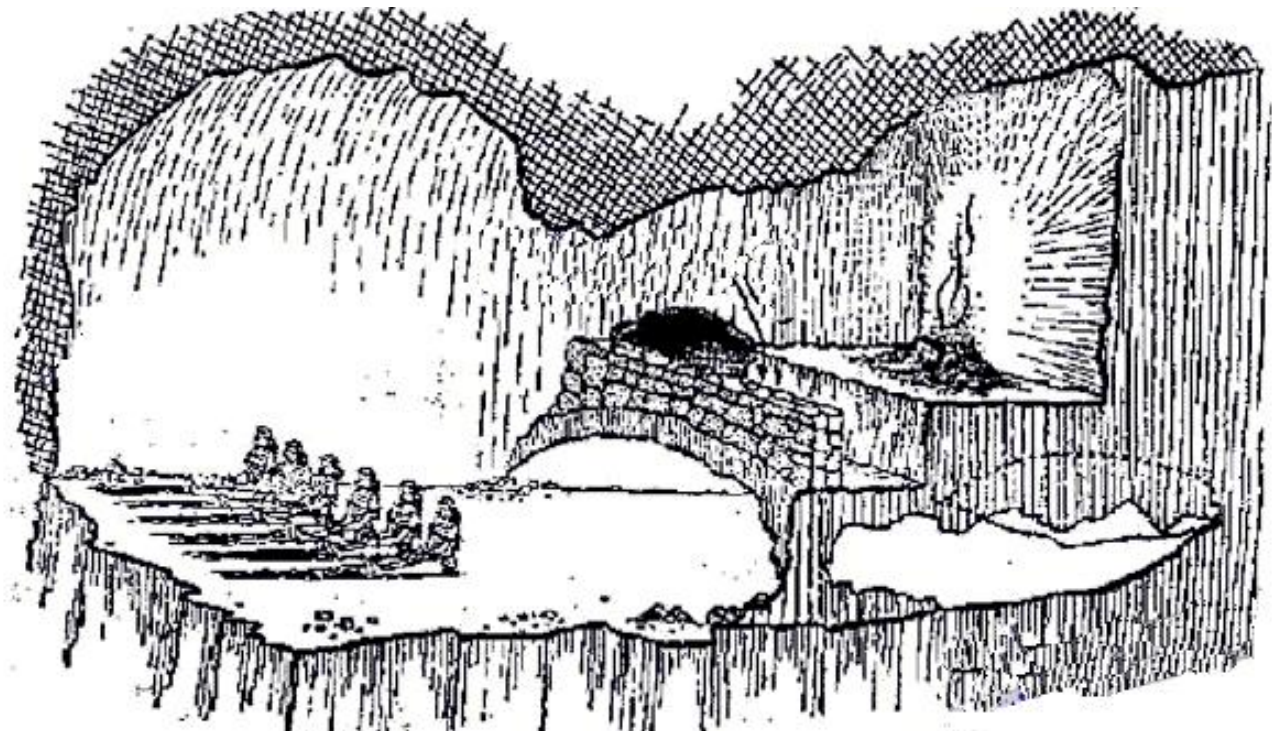
FINDING PLATO'S CAVE TODAY

As a child I was born into a cave of alcoholism, dysfunction, and poverty, as are so many children of all races and nationalities due to no fault of their own. As a teen I was in a cave of low self-esteem looking for love but only finding sex, which led to a pregnancy at the age of 15. As a young adult my cave became drugs and alcohol to cope with the despair and hopelessness that I felt. . . . I see the Odyssey Project as the front of the cave with the light. The prisoners are still chained, but they are being slowly turned to the light. The light is the truth, which can be very painful. **(Lenora Rodin)**

There was a time I was running the streets from dusk till dawn. Chasing money was my only concern, and that immediate gratification of getting that next dollar was the only thing that mattered. As I grew a little older, that was when it became more apparent to me that that was all I cared about. In retrospect, I put my lifestyle in front of everything, and in

turn I jeopardized my life and my relationship with my daughter. I see around me daily the same wheel of life that I've been through—same thing, different faces, all living in a cave staying away from the light of a better life; all heading for one direction—to prison or an early death. . . . **(Christopher Villalpando)**

In the beginning of 2007, I was on top of the world. I found out I was pregnant with twins, and I was happy to see my little brother going to school. But then in August it all started crumbling. My brother was arrested that month, while I was stuck on bed rest in the hospital. Two weeks later I had an emergency C-section. I lost one baby and had another in the NICU. All the love and joy that I had came to a bitter end. I felt like somebody had killed me on that operating table and put me in that cave of depression. Everything I did or saw would turn into a river of tears. . . . **(Nissa Uriostegui)**



I have had experiences in a cave. When I was 16 I was raped by a good friend of mine, somebody I trusted. After that I drew into a cave. When I wasn't at school, I usually went straight home. I was in my room ALL day. When I say ALL day I mean it. . . . Even when I went to school, I still took my cave with me. I always had my hoodie covering my whole head as well as the majority of my face. I didn't talk or respond to people. I couldn't wait to rush home and go to my room. **(Nitia Johnson)**

I would've considered my marriage to be a cave because slowly but surely my husband isolated me from my family and friends. He would only try to make me believe that he was all I had. I trusted him to be that, not realizing that it was causing damage to me mentally and emotionally. He always told me that I couldn't talk to anyone like my mom or friends about problems that I had within our marriage. . . . He treated me like I was his maid and not good for anything, like I was worthless. I started to believe that because I had no one to tell me anything different. . . . He got arrested for beating me up and throwing me through our patio window. I didn't want to call the police because I was distraught and thought we could work through our problems. My neighbor called the police and sat with me until they got there. I believe if she didn't, he would've killed me. **(Myisha Ellis)**

I've been in a cave of image growing up, thinking keeping up with certain fads was important—the car we drove, the house we lived in. . . . The caves I observe around me today are addiction, lack of fathers in their children's lives, the incarceration status of men of color,



the ungodly ways of the Department of Corrections and its workers, who think they are above society, the pains of women incarcerated, the cries of young teens raising themselves, etc. **(Derek Dodd)**

I felt like I was in a cave nine years ago when I was in jail. I was caved in with nowhere to turn. I feel like all of the prisons are caves around me today. **(Tenishia Bland)**

I used to be in a cave back when I was a kid. My father used to beat my mom and me. Instead of trying to seek for help, I acted like it was not happening, like everything was fine, when I knew my mother was suffering. I was so scared of my dad and what might happen if I said anything. I stayed in the cave for a very long time. **(Margarita Cid Luna)**

I've found myself feeling like I'm in a cave with the things I've been through. . . . All I want to do is crawl into bed and sleep the day away.

But all I have to do is look into my kids' eyes, and I know that there are many reasons for me to leave those feelings behind and sometimes thrown away—if not for me than for my children. I want my kids to look at me and be proud of their mom. **(Melissa Dominguez)**

I started drinking and smoking weed at the age of 14, and I was led to believe it was okay because I was able to sit there and smoke and drink with my grandmother. Back then I thought that I was hot stuff because what my friends had to sneak and do, I was able to do freely in my home and it was provided for me. Because of this, I missed a lot of school, just sitting at home smoking and playing video games. Instead of my grandmother being that parental figure in my life that I really needed at the time, she chose to try and be more of a friend. . . . I still had three younger sisters to look after since all the adults in our lives had checked out. One major cave that I feel that I'm still stuck in today is that I always put everyone else's feelings before my own. . . . I could be completely miserable on the inside, but I will always have a smile on my face. . . . **(DeAngelo Hood)**

I was a heroin addict, and heroin is a physical addiction. I believed for a long time that I really needed to continue to get high—get that “next fix”—so I wouldn't be sick. The truth is all I needed to do was get clean and never use again, and I would not get sick in the first place. The addiction was more in my mind than in my body. **(Patricia McKnight)**

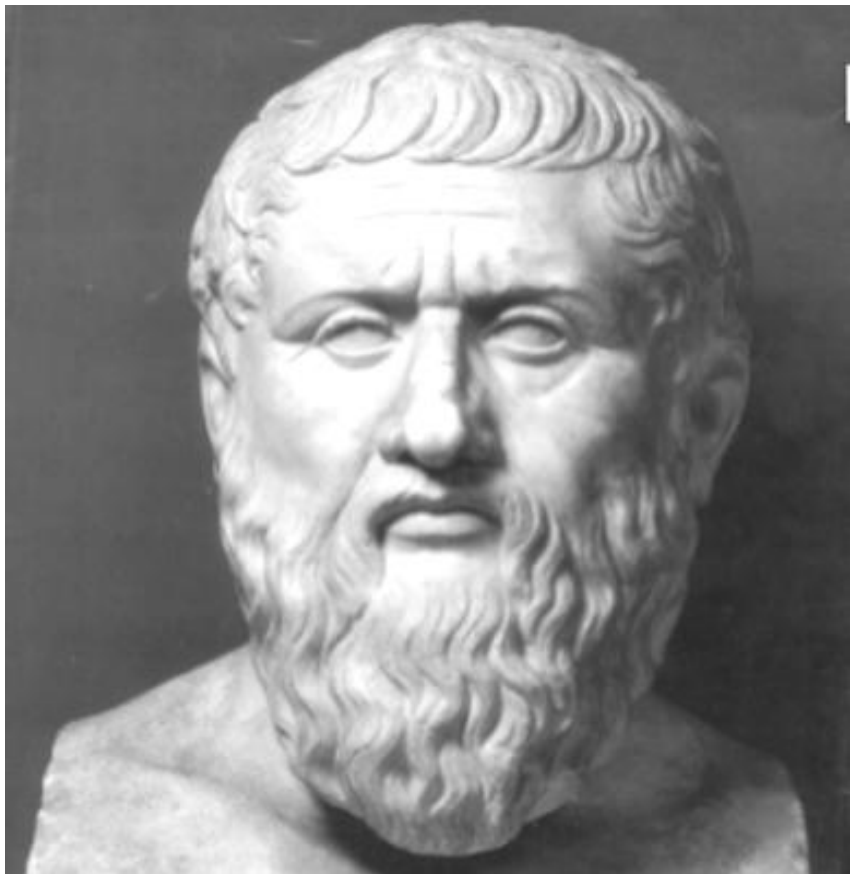
I feel like being on welfare is like being in a cave. It never allows you to grow. You get so accustomed to being sheltered or living with low standards that you are afraid to grow and step outside your comfort zone. . . . When you try to grow, they cut

you, and you don't have a clue what to do next because that's all you knew, so you go back to what you know. **(Mikiea Price)**

I tend to visit the insecurity cave quite often about the way I look. . . . I can be very dark and deep, a bit possessive, too scared sometimes. . . . **(Sahira Rocillo Ramírez)**

We have become very susceptible to being tricked by social media, television, radio, and other media. They fill us with information and ideas. We see images, products in which we believe and trust. Is everything real? We are satisfied with the information that we receive without investigating if it is reliable. Only knowledge can liberate us and allow us to get out of the dark cave. **(Natalia M. Rodríguez Miramontes)**

I'm in a cave now. I only get to share my feelings when I write poems or music, and lately I haven't even done that much. I'm fueled with anger at all the lies I've been told and being mistreated by



those I love. I have major trust issues, and all of these things have made me shut down. . . I walk around accepting that I am unloved, unnoticed, and underappreciated. I walk alone. I look around and all I see is a cold and lonely world. Our children are officially blinded by “reality” TV. Our elders are on drugs or in jail or shut down emotionally. . . I used to feel strong, but after so many doors shutting in my face, I’ve started to live like I believe I’m unworthy of joy. . . The worst part about my cave is . . I put myself there. (**Shaneika Sanders**)

I think I was in a cave when I first came to this country and had to go to high school. I did not know any English. I remember I used to get very nervous just walking in the school hallways thinking that somebody was going to ask me something and I was not going to understand what they said. Also I was very nervous when I was going to get on the bus because I was afraid that the bus driver would ask me something. After many years of studying, I do not get that feeling anymore. (**Veronica Tinajero**)

I think I was in a cave being in a relationship with my kids’ father. The relationship wasn’t good. I wasn’t happy, and he was a cheater. The actual cave was his money. He took care of me and the kids financially, so I stayed. When I realized the money wasn’t worth my happiness, I left, found a job, and took care of my kids. (**Janina White**)

A lot of members of my family have gambling addictions. Instead of working their way out of poverty, they place even more financial burdens upon themselves by giving up their last dollar. Not too many people in my family have advanced education, so they are stuck in poverty. I am in the cave of poverty that is difficult to overcome. Working doesn’t seem to

advance me in life, only paying the bills and taking care of my basic needs. (**Lakoyé Buford**)

I was in a cave after two of my friends died in a car accident. I started just by isolating myself from people and activities in school and outside school. The only thing I would do is watch movies and be in the room all day until it was time to go to sleep. The way I was thinking was that being alone is better so if someone I know dies I won’t feel pain or sadness anymore. . . I was trying to stop living in reality because it was too painful, so I would rather imagine or dream things that weren’t real. It was a bad way to be in a cave, but gladly I got out of that. What helped me was going to talk with my psychologist because she made me see the light, the reality, and how to see real life in a positive way. (**Brenda Juarez Cruz**)



Racism is a cave. To me it is a sad, hurtful part of history that stays alive today on life support. I believe ignorance is the machine. . . All we need is to unplug the damn machine and learn we are the seed. The moment we don’t hydrate, ignorance withers and racism dies! (**Jessi Hodges**)

WHAT'S IN A NAME?



Being another Michelle, I am my mother's offspring. Finding out she gave it to me was a beautiful thing. I asked her why and before she could even respond, I knew it was because she loved me. Now I know that's her name it's even more special to me. My middle name comes from my favorite

cousin, and I took my dad's last name. And that makes me one big bundle of joy, a.k.a the family tree.

The difference it has made to me is that when I had to pick my own child's name out, it was very important to me. **(Michelle Conley)**



Matt. Until recently, I never realized how common of a name I have. Someone asked me once what it was like to meet people with the same name. I never thought it was weird or different. It just was. Not many people's names come up as often as mine. So I guess it is common as well as unique.

Thomas. Thomas is my dad's first name. Had I been born a girl, my middle name would've been Christine, my mother's first name.

Kruger. I'm not sure where the name was picked up at. My dad told me once that either his grandpa or great-grandpa came to America from Norway through Ellis Island. His name was Johnny Johnson (pronounced Yohnny Yohnson).

Having the Kruger name was rough as a kid. "Are you related to Freddy?" I'd be rich if I had a nickel for every time I heard that. At some point I started responding with, "I haven't heard that one before." **(Matthew Kruger)**



Since I could always remember, my name has been a big deal for me. My first name, Nitia, was an idea from my mom's friend in college. She then thought Symone was cute and seemed to match with Nitia perfectly. The last name Johnson was inherited from our great grandfather. My name

makes me happy. I always get compliments like "Oh, that's beautiful" when I tell someone my name. I have never met anyone with the same name. I think it's original and pure.

(Nitia Johnson)



My name is Kelly Santana Hayes. I asked my mom how she picked my name. My uncle was Kelly and he was killed in Chicago. Then my mom liked the guitar player Carlos Santana. But I have my mom's last name—I asked her why I didn't have my father's last name and she simply said "Hayes sounded better."

But to be named after my uncle means a lot to me. I just wish I could have met him. **(Kelly Hayes)**



Brenda, that's my name. It means "sword" and is of Old Norse origin. My family is a strong, protective, and supportive family. They're hard workers and like to be independent. What I am trying to say is that my family is very protective of their things. My name can re-

late to them and me because I always protect my loved ones without questioning myself, like a sword is used to protect and defend others. Strong weapon—I now like my name because that's exactly how I am. It goes with my personality. **(Brenda Juarez Cruz)**

WANDERING WITH WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

My Heart Leaps Up

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky.
So was it when my life began,
So is it now I am a man,
So be it when I shall grow old
Or let me die!
The child is father of the man,
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

The poem “My Heart Leaps Up” by Wordsworth really gets your thoughts going. I believe he was saying you can’t be a whole person without cherishing and accepting your inner child. When I say inner child, I mean imagination, actually noticing the little things like nature and a rainbow. **(Nitia Johnson)**

What seemed clear to me in the poem “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” is William Wordsworth passing through this beautiful crowd of golden daffodils and not really knowing that it would make him wealthy and happy when he’s sad. He would always remember this memory.
(Mikiea Price)



I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils; . . .
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance . . .
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had
brought. . . .
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

CONSIDERING “THE CIRCUIT”

What I found inspiring about Francisco Jiménez’s background is no matter what the conditions were in his life, he still never gave up. He was always eager to learn and was always open to soak in whatever he could learn in the time he had. I can relate to his biography because I am a mother of eleven children. No matter how hard it gets, I am eager to keep my family together by all means. My American Dream is to own a house one day to get my family out of the circuit—to find a place that we can call home and be at peace. I also want to teach my children no matter how hard it gets, keep pushing until you get where you want to be. (**Tineshia Bland**)

I admire those parents who look for a better future for their children. Jiménez was only four years old when his family migrated without papers to California, hoping to leave behind their life of poverty. Francisco went to work in the fields at age six, but he always knew education would be his salvation. . . . I am a migrant. I came to this country looking for an opportunity to improve my life and pursue education. (**Natalia M. Rodríguez Miramontes**)

Jiménez was faced with many obstacles and never gave up. Every time something got in his way, he found another path to take, just like a circuit. I can relate to Jiménez’s biography because I was constantly homeless from fifth grade through high school, but I always did my best and went above and beyond in school. Even if I came late, I made sure to always put my best foot forward. It almost seemed like every year we were living in motels or sleeping in a car, and it would hurt so bad that I would cry on the way to school. But I doused my face and dried my tears up because I knew that one day this would all be over. So I focused on the things that made me

happy because my struggle was all the motivation I needed. (**Michelle Conley**)

I find Francisco Jiménez’s whole life inspiring for the fact he came from a lot of hardship and never gave up. I personally can’t relate, but I know my mother has a similar story. My mother’s father was in the army so they constantly were moving to different states. That made it hard for her to adapt to different schools. (**Joseph Lentz**)

I found out that Jiménez was a migrant worker just like Panchito, working in the fields and moving. Yes, my life is very much like Jiménez’s. We came to this country from Mexico. My mom wanted a better life for me and my brothers. It was very scary coming here not knowing English. (**Margarita Cid Luna**)

I moved a lot growing up, so I know what it is like to just begin to settle in and then have to pack up again—to find routine in chaos. (**Ashley Linjer**)

The ending of the story tells that the family has to move again to find more work. What’s painful is the family has to move place to place to find work. The children missed a stable education, and the two oldest also had to give up their childhood to help the family make ends meet. Panchito struggled to learn English because of the frequent moving. It was a never-ending cycle. . . . What’s so inspiring about Jiménez’s background was that he came from nothing and excelled academically, getting a Master’s and Ph.D. in Latin American literature and becoming a professor at a university. I can relate to not having much, especially financially, like Jiménez and lacking self confidence in school. (**Lakoyé Buford**)

I can relate. My dad was a Marine, so for the first five years of my life we moved a lot. Then my parents separated when I was five years old. We moved to Puerto Rico and lived there for three years. After that we moved back and forth from Puerto Rico to Chicago. Finally when I was 12 years old we stopped moving and were stable for a while. As a child who moved around a lot, I know how hard it can be to start over again and again in a new place, new school, new surroundings. It gets harder and harder as an adolescent to make new friends and adapt. (**Melissa Dominguez**)

Jiménez came from being poor and not knowing much English. He had a passion for learning, and he wanted better for himself and family. He wanted to change the world and conquer all of his fears. I can relate to his pain of being poor and wanting better for himself and family. I want the same for myself and family. He didn't give up even when he was doubted, and I want to have the same strength he has. (**Myisha Ellis**)

I find it inspiring that even though he did not have a stable life or school, he kept studying and became a teacher at a university. I relate to him in his first experience in school. Mine was very traumatic, too, because I couldn't speak any English. (**Veronica Tinajero**)

How I relate to his biography is I was adopted, and the caregiver was more concerned about not providing her taxes than my education. Now at 28 I feel like Jiménez—back in school, afraid of failure, not at grade level because I never went to college. I don't know what to expect but am determined that I will succeed and make the best out of it. I find that I

keep asking God to grant me serenity (power) because he knows I'm a smart young lady that faced a lot of challenges, but in spite of that there's still hope. (**Mikiea Price**)

The ending was painful for the readers because he got a new best friend—his teacher—that was teaching him how to read on his lunch break, and his teacher had introduced him to a new instrument that he will teach him how to play. He was so happy he couldn't wait to tell his parents until he saw that he was moving. . . . I like that Jiménez's father taught him that we are all the same in the eyes of our creator. My mother taught me the same thing. Just because I was in Special Ed didn't mean anything! I was still a normal person, just learned differently. I still struggle with being embarrassed about it, but I refuse to let that hold me back. (**Brandi Whitlock**)

I find their determination to have a better life inspiring. They go through a lot to cross the border, and to them it's all worth it. I can relate to feeling awkward in class being the only black kid sometimes and feeling afraid. (**Janina White**)



For someone to overcome poverty in such circumstances is a hero. Moreover, for a boy to become a man with a Ph.D. with minimal school is extraordinary. It shows how far dedication and sacrifice can take you. For Francisco to get back in school after all that and to take it that far is beyond amazing. I can relate to his situation with obstacles in his life that keep him from school because I've had my own roadblocks that hindered my education.

(Christopher Villalpando)



Everything about Francisco Jiménez's life is completely relatable to my story; I find it very encouraging how after so many struggles in his life's odyssey, he came through and made it all the way out until he became a successful writer and professor at the University of Santa Clara. He overcame his struggle until he became who he wanted to be. **(Sahira Rocillo Ramírez)**

I find his whole background inspiring. He was determined to make it. On page 97 he said, "When you get tired from squatting, you can pick on your knees." Wow! That lets me know that no matter how far that you go down, you can still find a way. **(Lenora Rodin)**

He came from a family that had values. His family was hard working. They also were a close family. Francisco Jiménez did not give up on his dreams and was focused on achieving a higher education. I can relate to him because I came here from a different country and at this moment I am pursuing a higher education and a better future. **(Heydy Pichardo Reyes)**

After finally getting to a place where he was happy and getting to enjoy his new surroundings,

he had to move again. The definition of a circuit is "a boundary around an enclosed space," so it fits the title perfectly. I can relate to his story because I moved in with my grandmother around the age of 13. At that age, I had a general sense of responsibility. **(DeAngelo Hood)**

With the Jiménez family, it was like they always had to work but also worry about racism and not getting kicked out at any moment. I can relate with him in coming to a different place with a different lan-

guage and habits. It's not easy to be in a school without being able to communicate with others because you don't know English. **(Brenda Juarez Cruz)**

The ending crushed me. . . . After reading Francisco's biography, I was inspired by his background. I could relate to moving a lot and having an unstable family. I also grew up poor but found riches in learning. **(Nitia Johnson)**

Even though they were unstable and always had to move, he never gave up on his education. I can sort of relate because it seems like once I have something positive going for myself, something almost always comes up where I have to stop, give up, or start over. **(Latesha Jackson)**

This story brought to reality that not everyone has a great life. At some point we have been unstable or had some sort of educational challenge. I know I have. **(Prodajaé Huntley)**

Francisco Jiménez motivated himself to learn in a world of work. He was passionate about knowledge. My life in the system is similar to the circuit, and I am definitely self-motivated to end the cycle. **(Jessi Hodges)**

NOTICING NATURE

Smelling the smell of burnt leaves on a crispy fall day, I know fall is here. I am walking through the green damp grass, my shoes crunching on the leaves that fell from a half-naked tree. Fall is here! The leaves are red, burnt orange, wine-colored. My love for fall puts a warm smile on my face. I love when the sun shines bright on Saturday morning, bringing a little fall warmth in the air until the golden sunset brings the cool fall breeze to the evening. Fall is here.

(Brandi Whitlock)

I remember the first time I saw the ocean. I was on a week trip to Virginia with my mentor Michelle. The cold water ran through my bare feet along with the sand. I remember being so happy; like a kid in a candy store. There I was, a girl who barely left Wisconsin, on a beautiful beach filled with sand, cool looking rocks, facing the ocean. The birds were the background music. **(Lakoyé Buford)**

Since I was a little girl, I have never been a fan of nature because of bugs. Once when I was a young girl, my family and I went to the neighborhood pool. There was a bee floating around in the water and it stung me! It burned so bad and I think the chlorine made it burn more. Ever since then, I've been terrified of bees.

(Latesha Jackson)



For a few years I was in California up north in the valley, past the Bay area. I was sent there to a medium federal prison, and, even though I was not entirely in nature, I was in the middle of the desert. I remember waking up every morning around 5:30 am to get ready for the first move of the day, and at this time I would go out to the yard and go for a morning run. I would do this Monday to Friday religiously. It's always dark outside in the middle



of the night. Surrounding the barbed wire fence you could sometimes see eyes from the coyotes and you would always hear the loud cries they make to communicate with one another. The air was thin and always cold that early in the morning. I would stretch and then start to run. After about a mile you could see the sun beginning to rise above the mountain peak. It's so quiet that all you hear is your every breath and foot step that crunches on the rocky, sandy ground beneath your feet, as the sun rises in its different colors, from orange to yellow. It's so comforting, even being locked in a cage. The sky is so clear and the two colors are so vibrant that it's more beautiful than the sunrise on the ocean.

(Christopher Villalpando)

I was running through the Arboretum, the trees green and tall, birds tweeting and bikers going by, running through a path where you might see a turtle crossing or wild turkeys walking with their babies. You can smell the lake and see the water shining. **(Margarita Cid Luna)**

Standing in the grass at church one Sunday afternoon listening to the beautiful presence of God, crickets, cars passing by, lawnmowers cutting grass, people walking and jogging, I stare into the sky feeling God's presence. I'm trying to picture his awesome presence in the sky, visualizing the coming of Jesus Christ, admiring the beautiful Sunday afternoon, as to me Sunday is the most beautiful day of the week. There is a strong presence of God's creation, and the weather is always beautiful. **(Derek Dodd)**

When riding over the Mississippi River I could feel the rhythm of the waves through the wind. The width was as wide as my heart, filling with amazement and excitement. So beautiful does the sun glare from the greenish blue tent. Extending from one state to another is how I feel as I gaze at its view from a distance. **(Prodajaé Huntley)**

I love the sound of water as it hits against the rocks of Lake Shore Drive—splash, splash, splash, with the evening moonlight glistening upon it. Oh, how I could nestle under a blanket on its shore and smell the many different aromatic aromas that flow so freely in the air. While lying on its shore, I can actually taste the musty excretions from the depth of its floor. Oh, how I love the sound of water.

(Lenora Rodin)

Ice and white snow covered the streets, the temperature below zero degrees. I pack my bags and hit the road, once I made it there, what a sight to behold. The crystal blue wa-



ters and sand on the beach, the sun was beaming and there was actually heat, as I sat in my chair enjoying my drink, feeling the coarse, warm sand beneath my feet. I gaze at the ocean and what do I see? Two beautiful dolphins leaping to greet. I'm simply in awe, 'cause this is so new to me. See, living in Wisconsin you don't see these things. A whole week it's time to retreat, can't wait to return to Folley Beach.

(DeAngelo Hood)



I remember lying out on my trampoline looking into the sky, seeing the stars and the moon clearly. The stars were twinkling and I could see birds flying across the moon—a flock migrating north. Summer was just beginning. I felt the crisp night air flowing against my arms and legs, through my hair and the small, tiny holes of the trampoline. The warmth still lay on the earth from the summer day that just left, and the deep dark midnight blue sky was flawless, without a cloud. Seeing the lights flash from

the airport and the cornfield sway from the mild breeze, hearing the trees rustle in the wind and seeing the street lights flickering from the trees and catching a shadow, the quiet neighborhood at peace, crickets chirping, I am thinking about how my next school year is going to be, but before that how much fun I'm going to have this summer.

(Myisha Ellis)



I sit by the lake as it glitters and gleams. The smell of fish gives my nose a sting as the wind blows and the fish flop, the water crashes upon the rocks. I take a stroll down a dirt road, a scent of sweet perfume from a field of red, white, and blue flowers; oh, how beautiful it is when they bloom. The sun sets and darkness falls. I gaze upon beautiful stars and I see the moon but it's not full, it's giving me a smile and I smile back after a while, thinking about my lifestyle. **(Joseph Lentz)**

Am I a brittle creature
or am I a resilient force?
For I change with the seasons
And the phases of the moon

When the snow starts melting in the spring
And the earth starts to warm up and bloom
I start blossoming too

When the fall arrives and the trees start tearing their leaves
As though it hurts to get bare for the winter
And everything becomes orange
as though remembering how a sunset looked just a few weeks ago
I then fall pensive too

When the winter blasts its furious wind
And the land covers with its white sheet
Then sullen, also sad I become
I admire its beauty like thousands of tiny diamonds
Have been spread by a winter fairy
I think how beautiful are the snowflakes
That weave on each other over the naked trees

Oh, but such joy is the summer to me
I bathe in my father's sun
And I lie down on a pier at the lake to stare at the starry night
I myself become the sun
Making nature bloom
And butterflies flutter their little wings at me
Stopping on the roses and making me smile
(Sahira Rocillo Ramírez)





There was a time when life was free
 When animals and trees meant a lot to me.
 No worries no stresses no responsibility
 Just a seven-year-old girl making friends, a unity.
 Then one day while playing my friends led me to see
 A fence filled with vines which blossomed honeysuckles.

I pulled the middle and revealed honey
 The taste so sweet I got butterflies in my tummy
 I enjoyed a couple more, maybe two or three
 Then I ran home to share the news with my lovely auntie
 I rushed off to bed 'cause in the morning I'd be shouting
 Hooray!
 I couldn't wait to go back to the fence the next day.
(Nitia Johnson)



The cool and crisp wind blows
 Causing more shades of reds, oranges, and yellows to fall,
 Squirrels and chipmunks rustling and hustling to find acorns.
 Moist soil and last mowing of the season fills the air.
 Colors of autumn fill the trees like a paintbrush fills its canvas.
(Nissa Uriostegui)

Nature was my shrink this day.
 I took a walk along a pond and the sound of the birds chirping was the shrink's good advice.
 The silence of the pond was just the shrink listening to me pour out my emotions.
 The smell of the crisp air was the medication that got prescribed.
(Janina White)



DISCOVERING WILLIAM BLAKE

Infant Joy

*"I have no name:
I am but two days old."
What shall I call thee?
"I happy am,
Joy is my name."
Sweet joy befall thee." . . .*

I chose "Infant Joy" for two reasons: one is because I understood it, and the other is because I sit and wonder what made a poet write a poem in the eyes of a newborn! I think that it really touches the points of the greatness and over-joyfulness of what birth is. "I have no name" sticks out to me because how does a two-day-old child not have a name? For months parents are thinking of names for boys and girls! (**Christopher Villalpando**)

Infant Sorrow

*My mother groan'd! my father wept.
Into the dangerous world I leapt:
Helpless, naked, piping loud:
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.
Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my swaddling bands,
Bound and weary I thought best
To sulk upon my mother's breast.*

"Infant Sorrow" describes birth from the infant's view. It tells how weak and dependent they are upon entering this world yet smart enough to know to cling to their mother for comfort and safety. William Blake uses the phrase "into the dangerous world I leapt." This phrase stuck out to me because we are born innocent into a dangerous world. As a child you're not aware of the evil and danger until it is one day shown to you, but we can learn to live peacefully in this dangerous world. (**Latesha Jackson**)

Nurse's Song from Songs of Innocence

*When the voices of children are heard on the green,
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast,
And everything else is still. . . .*

I am one of the, I'm sure, many that doesn't get poetry. However, "Nurse's Song" stuck out to me. It talks about a Nurse watching her children playing. To her, there is nothing more beautiful. Their perspective on life has not yet been tainted. They're in ecstasy. "My heart is at rest within my breast, / And everything else is still." This is a feeling I'm not sure that I can describe. This is the feeling you get when you see something that's beautiful or precious to you. When you see this something, nothing else matters. (**Matthew Kruger**)

On Another's Sorrow

*Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too? . . .
And can he who smiles on all
Hear the wren with sorrows small . . .
And not sit beside the nest,
Pouring pity in their breast? . . .
Think not thou canst weep a tear,
And thy maker is not near. . . .*

The poem that moved me was "On Another's Sorrow." This clearly was a spiritual poem of God's presence. "And can he who smiles on all" was the phrase that jumped out at me. This phrase affected me in a way that lets me know God is love, joy, peace, and strength. God is always near. (**Derek Dodd**)

We as humans have become so numb and immune to pain that we can hear our fellow man cry and weep and walk past them with no remorse. So in "On Another's Sorrow" when it says, "Think not thou canst weep a tear, and thy maker is not near," it made me feel like he's saying we're never alone. When we cry and hurt, HE's next to us weeping as well, and if we allow HIM to, HE can bring us HIS joy. No human smiles on all. We love one and hate the other. But GOD created us all, so HE sees things differently. This affected me because as you grow and do some self-reflection, you begin to lose friends and that's lonely. Knowing your creator/maker is with you brings you comfort. (**Shaneika Sanders**)

The Lamb

*Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee? . . .
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek & he is mild;
He became a little child. . . .*

"The Lamb" interested me. It appears to be a child speaking. I'm guessing his curiosity has him asking questions about where the lamb came from, who designed the wool for clothing. The phrase that stands out is "for he calls himself a lamb." It, to me, shows the child answering his own question and identifying Jesus as the creator. (Jessi Hodges)



My Pretty Rose Tree

*. . . But my Rose turn'd away with jealousy,
And her thorns were my only delight.*

The image that comes to my head after reading "My Pretty Rose Tree" is a woman in a jealous rage. What I understood is that he let a good relationship go, and when his current significant one found out, she was jealous. Their relationship went bad because all she had to give was hate. (Heydy Pichardo Reyes)



