

ODYSSEY ORACLE CONQUERING CAMPUS



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Visiting Union South to get UW ID cards was a refreshing and exciting moment. After we exited the bus, we entered the dimly lit student area. There was a bright light shining through an open door. I had already sorted through all of my cards in my wallet for my plastic ID. I entered the brightly lit room and was greeted by an employee in a bright red shirt. I stepped in front of a sea green photo background and smiled as the camera flash temporarily blinded me. I returned to the waiting area and was surrounded by laughter and endless chatter. After waiting for what felt like a lifetime, I brushed against a classmate's shoulder to retrieve my ID card. The card was warm in my palm as it had just been freshly printed. I beamed as I realized I was now an official student of the university.

As soon as the shiny gold gates rose at the Chazen, I knew my classmates and I were in for a special treat. After a short introduction, we shuffled into two groups. We casually strolled through the showrooms, moving from one time period to the next. Walls were filled with colorful colonial portraits, ancient artifacts carefully placed in flawless glass cases, and marble white statues that towered over us. (**Cherri Sorrells**)

The bus ride was very memorable and was a nice



time for everyone to bond. Everyone was laughing with each other, taking pictures, and getting along. It's like we are a big family. The second most memorable moment was walking around

the amazing art museum, just being able to witness all the vibrant, creative, and unique pieces of art. It was nice how each room led into the next as if almost a timeline. Each room got closer and closer to the modern times until you got upstairs. It was nice to see how art went almost from people to more creative objects as time went on. (**Jessica Tucker**)

Oh, my God, that day made me happy and made me feel like a student. I have not felt like that for a long time. Odyssey gives me hope again; thank you to everyone. The museum was amazing. (**Musab Naji**)



So, our trip last week to the Chazen Museum was almost an indescribable experience for me. Now, I have lived in Madison since 2001 and have never been to the downtown campus area, not to mention the fact that I have never heard of the Chazen Museum, either. This trip opened up a whole new world for me, and I could tell from this experience that I had missed out on so much in life. My favorite part of the museum was the second floor. We saw coins, art, and paintings of the life of Jesus. When I read the Bible, I never envisioned Jesus in color, but this museum brings the story to life and brightens it up a bit. **(Avé Thorpe)**

When we were getting out ID cards at Union South, it made me feel excited because I actually felt like one of the students attending UW there on campus. This experience was an unforgettable moment in my life, since I had had the feeling I would not be able to actually attend UW-Madison. When we attended the Chazen Museum, I liked the fact that the museum was open specially for us in the Odyssey Program. It made me feel like we were important people. Also, one of the cool



things about going to the museum was looking at all of the art, especially the ones from Greece, Egypt and the medieval times. Seeing that art made me emotional (happy and sad) because of the preservation of it and also the beauty of just being a tiny coin from the time of Cleopatra to the painting of just colors mixed together. **(Susana Gomez)**

A memorable moment I had was being able to see different art that I would have never viewed as art and trying to self-think of the meanings of art with something so simple, like a coin or colors. Another memorable moment I had was being able to



consider myself as a UW college student by just receiving an ID. Being on campus meant a lot. There are times when I doubted myself because I didn't get good grades and thought I would never be able to go to a university. Now I have to continue to do my best here, there, everywhere, and in school. I will be finishing my career and graduating at UW because I BELIEVE! **(D'onna Atkinson)**

The natural bonding that happened was amazing to me. I got to have conversations with people I hadn't spoken to. I saw quite a few people's personalities come out. We got to joke and sing like a family. We got a whole museum opened for us after hours, and a lot of us felt like celebrities from that. I felt like I was around my family and we were enjoying each other's company, except no one got into an argument or fight. We became closer by sharing Facebook and Snapchat information. I played mama bear and made sure Maria Cardenas made it home safely, since she left from the museum and didn't ride back with us. **(Victoria Patterson)**

The trip to the Chazen Museum was fun.

There were so many different creations to look at. Some of them stood out more than others. Some of them made you wonder what the artist was thinking or trying to create, like the little red thing where the throat was the mouth. That was pretty freaky looking or scary, whichever you prefer. I noticed that a lot of us were united and enjoying each other's company, cracking jokes, taking pictures, and even singing on the way home. Let's just say love was in the air and in that moment we became one. **(Kyisha Williams)**

I really enjoyed the trip to campus. It gave me an opportunity to interact and get to know my classmates better. I really enjoyed the Chazen Museum of Art the most. It was so interesting to see different forms of art from different time periods. It really showed me the true meaning of art. From the Egyptian time all the way up to

today's modern time, art has come a long way. We saw art in so many different shapes and forms, from coins, vases, and Egyptian statues to the top floor of the Museum, which included a goat tied at the ankles. Different materials were used to make different pieces of art. It was a very great and wonderful experience. I never knew there were so many different kinds of art. **(Carissa Love)**

Once we got inside Union South, I started having marvelous feelings because I was going to take a picture to have my UW-Madison ID card and be one of the students. I was looking around me and I was seeing all of the people happy and smiling like they were welcoming us by greeting us with a smile. When we were at the Chazen Museum, I saw art and pictures that were made hundreds of years ago. They have a great feeling and sense of humanity. There were things that made me amazed, like how these pieces of artwork have been protected and saved for years and years. In addition, these pieces of artwork have stories, and I love things that have lots of stories behind them! **(Ahmad Nahas)**



The most memorable moment was learning about the culture behind the art and how much it was worth. I also found it interesting to learn about why the artists created the art that they did and what it meant to them during that time. Basically, I really enjoyed analyzing the art and putting into our own words what we thought the artist was trying to get across with making the type of art that they did. Not one piece of art in the museum was the same, which is awesome. There was a sculpture on the top floor of the Chazen Museum. It had two sides, which showed two faces, but you really didn't know if it was a man or woman. You didn't know what was going on at all in the sculpture, which made the sculpture even more interesting to look at because you're trying to figure out what made this artist decide to make this piece. **(Simone Bell-Perdue)**

The trip was overall a lifelong dream. I never got to experience what real college life was like. It made me want to push myself even harder. Just the feeling of getting the IDs makes me want to make sure my kids go to college. The Chazen was amazing and unique. I truly learned a lot about art.



The picture of Lucrezia truly was an eye-opener. I researched it and the picture shows how pure a woman's body is or should be seen as. The best part was despite what she went through, Lucretia still wanted to share herself. **(Alyanna Cooper)**

On our trip to Union South, I found the busy atmosphere at that time of night was the most memorable moment. I've never been on any college campus and found myself not wanting to leave. On our trip to the Chazen Museum of Art, the most

memorable thing for me was . . . they even went so far as to create animals with male genitals that were erect. I would never take my children to this museum. **(Johnnie Walton)**



I thoroughly enjoyed the field trip to campus. I must admit that I could've done without the waiting in line at Union South; I detest waiting in lines. I'm trying to work on being more patient. It was cool to get a UW ID, though. I feel very privileged. I now have access to many things that I wouldn't normally have access to. When we got to the Chazen Art Museum, I took immediate inventory of the pieces I could see from the entrance. I didn't really appreciate the earlier work. But once I got to the top floor, I was impressed. Each piece had a unique feel to it. I even took notice of artwork that most would find offensive. For example, . . . with the two male goats I began to question what the artist was trying to convey. My imagination began to go into overdrive. I've always been intrigued by the strange and unusual. **(Spencer Gamble)**

One of the things that I learned that really stuck with me was how the Egyptians didn't focus so much on existence. The contrast between the Greeks and Egyptians in art style showed so much about where their focus was. The Greeks gave so much focus to the body and this world that they even gave their pieces of art a sense of weight, whereas the Egyptians didn't seem to care to stress the details of the physical world. Their art, in general, was flat and 2D. When it was explained to me that their focus was not on this world, it made sense. **(Nathaniel Lake)**

Going downtown to campus to get our IDs was an enthusiastic moment that I will never forget. I've never been to college, so having my UW student ID makes it official. I took selfies with my classmates as we all shared the excitement. The Chazen Museum was amazing. I haven't been to an art museum before, more like the Children's Museum LOL.

Seeing the strange pieces of art has me thinking maybe I can become an artist. I adored the art that was 3D and posing like the snooty rich people in the pictures.

(Asha Green)

The Union South memorable

moment that I will never forget was seeing all of the students in the lobby studying. Before, I would only go to Union South for ice cream, but not that Wednesday. I became a part of the UW student body. Waiting in line for my turn to get my ID was like a dream coming true. It was as if a door of opportunities had

opened. When I stepped up to have my photo taken, I finally realized that I was making history for my kids. My dream is one step closer to the goal. The Chazen Museum of Art most memorable moment for me was when we went on the second floor and I laid eyes on the African mask art. In fact, I took a photo standing beside my favorite exhibit. The large clay, two-faced piece I could really relate to. The second thing that caught my attention was the coin collection, which was on the second floor in the far left corner of the room. **(Lawana Diagne)**



My experience going to campus last week was wonderful. I felt like a little kid going to the store to buy candy. I was so excited when we walked into the building just because I wanted to have my ID card right away so that I could show it to my family. I also enjoyed going to the Chazen Museum and looking at the amazing art. I have

to say that it was my very first time visiting the Chazen Museum. I am very thankful to Gene Phillips and to all of the Odyssey staff for the opportunity to go to campus to get our IDs and also to tour the museum. I would love to go back with my family. I know they'll enjoy it as much as I did. **(Grisel Tapia Claudio)**

I have lived in Madison all my life and have never been to the Chazen Museum. The fact that we had the building to ourselves made me think about the movie "Freedom Writers." It made me think/feel like people like me never get to see the inside of an important place like that. When we first walked in, I felt like a kid in a candy store. I wanted to know and see everything. On the tour, I felt so alone and dumb. I didn't know anything, but when I left, I told myself that I would go back. I also enjoyed getting a UW ID card. it made me feel like I belong to a group. I'm feeling important. **(Shanon Holmes)**



My favorite part of the museum was the top floor and being able to explore it by myself. In addition, my favorite type of art is ceramics and I loved seeing all of the huge sculptures up there made out of clay. I loved imagining how the artist made them and what would have been going through their mind at the time. Getting my ID card made this whole experience seem real to me on another level. Growing up in Madison, all I ever saw when we would take trips downtown would be the massive amounts of students. Seeing them going to and from class added to my dream of someday becoming a UW Madison Badger, and now, thanks to this class, I'm so much closer. **(Maria Dary)**

For me, it was a very nice feeling to be on the UW campus and know that I am a part of the university. I always dreamt that one day it would finally happen. I used to go to the Union Terrace, but I always wondered if someone would tell me that I had to leave because those areas were for students only. Now, I don't have to have that fear anymore. I loved going to the museum. It was so good to understand the art. I was so excited that when I went home, I told my

family everything I learned that night, and even took my son to the museum the next day. I gave him the tour and he was very happy and asked many questions. We had a very good time. My husband is a painter. He was born with that gift and has always been interested in art, so we are planning to go on a date with Mr. Gene Phillips. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**

I felt so excited and happy when I saw many students doing homework or just walking around the Union. For a

moment, I was thinking that I will be back at that place as a UW student. I felt peace when I was inside of that building. I had no idea that those types of art existed. Every picture frame describes something very important, such as emotions and feelings. I wish I had "Saint Peter's Key" in my house. I really enjoyed this field trip. **(José Mendoza)**



It was nice being able to interact with classmates outside of the classroom setting. I had a great conversation with Musab about good tea from his country. Going to the Chazen Museum was great. I especially enjoyed my conversation with Shanon. Shanon wondered why there was not anything in that area that represented black artists or pictures of anything black. I said this was because of the time period, nothing black was being painted and it was all European based. I ended up giving her the name of one of my favorite writers, Derrick Walcott. He is a black Caribbean writer. **(Joy Bally)**



The most memorable moment I think I experienced was when Kevin and I were going through the museum. The group kind of went ahead of us. We were both standing in front of multiple paintings thinking the same exact thing, then we'd look at one another and say what we felt. It was very interesting to see and hear that we both stood there in deep thought thinking the same exact things about four or five paintings we looked at. **(Felica Thomas)**

know each other. I enjoyed walking around the museum and seeing all sorts of pictures. What really caught my attention was the late 1800 pictures. I was in awe when I first saw the pictures. Some pictures were old, but I was still amazed at the pictures and all we saw and learned about at the museum. I really liked the current pictures up on the third floor. I was not expecting that, but it was awesome. Some pictures grabbed my attention and all I could think about was, "I want to know what the artist is telling us." The museum was AWESOME! **(Ngina Ali)**

The most memorable moment from our class trip to Union South was taking pictures with all of my classmates. I really enjoyed that and getting to



I had an amazing time during the field trip with my classmates. I was extremely tired, but I made an effort to put on a smile and enjoy the time we had together. Going to get the IDs was a moment of triumph for me knowing that this was something real. I wasn't alone, so I know everyone else felt as amazing and accomplished as I did in that moment. I immediately sent pictures to my family members so that they would be proud of me as well. We went on to take pictures and I have never felt so at home with a group of strangers that have now become close friends. Even though we made a lot of noise, and we were disruptive at times, I think you guys understood. Going back

to the museum to learn about the art and compare it to what William Blake's art was fun. We got separated into groups and I think that helped since we were really loud at that point. Learning all about the different eras of art and having something to look for in each room made it exciting. Overall, it was a great experience and I look forward to more. **(Maria Cardenas)**

The most memorable moment of this trip was seeing the inside of Union South and also seeing all of the artwork. It was amazing seeing all of the artwork and how people express themselves in different ways. It was neat to look at the coins from back then and from different countries. I wonder what inspired the artist to create the artwork that they did? It was my first time in a museum, and I would love to go again. **(Kendra Atkinson)**

One of the most memorable things was that I was able to get my UW student ID. That for me is important because it makes me think that I'm on the right path towards what I want to accomplish. Seeing all my classmates happy was priceless. I've never been to Union South before, so it was nice to go there. I've been to the Chazen Museum before, but this time it was nice to go because all the art that we saw had a meaning. A picture wasn't just a picture but had meaning. I really enjoyed the field trip and am looking forward to going back soon. **(Belem Calixto)**

Our field trip downtown to visit the art museum as well as get the trusty photo IDs was very rewarding to me. Having the photo proof that I was in fact a student kind of cemented everything inside of me and swept away a lot of



doubt and worry. Every time I look at my card, it's a shining reminder of the opportunity and blessing that I've been given in the form of this program and the people associated with it. The added bonus of riding with everyone on the bus and interacting before and after pictures was a fun experience. The different reactions and conversations helped to tell us all a bit about each other, which is important to building trust.

Seeing the different exhibits available at the Chazen took me on a bit of a ride through time. The room we started in and the Renaissance rooms

seemed so stuffy and boring at first, like there was no pizzazz. It wasn't until we went to the upper modern art floors that I saw the evolution of style and relatability. Even some abstract pieces that at first caught me off guard seemed to speak to something when I pondered enough. It really felt like a place for all types. From the people that appreciate classical religious pieces to someone like me who needs to feel an imprint from the artist, there's something for everyone. **(Anthony Jefferson)**



EMBARKING ON AN ODYSSEY



I think the course is called the Odyssey Project because we are about to take a journey of a lifetime. We are about to be exposed to things we never thought we would learn. . . . Our vocabulary is about to be

expanded by hundreds of words. . . The class is an Odyssey for me because it is a journey that is about to take off, and it's a chance of a lifetime. It's a journey of a lifetime. I'm about to travel to a place that I have never been before. I am READY!! (**Ngina Ali**)



It starts with an adventure of projects, readings, and understandings—eye openers. This is my adventure into finding myself and starting my new chapter in life.

(**D'onna Atkinson**)



I think this is going to be an amazing adventure for everyone. I believe the class will give me a wonderful experience and help me begin my journey to reach my goals. (**Kendra Atkinson**)

It's called the Odyssey Project because it is an



epic journey through literature and life. I hope this class will be a journey for me through which I will expand my mind and expose myself to many different perspectives on life. This is a journey that will open up new

opportunities for me also. (**Joy Bally**)

I believe this course is called the Odyssey Project because it literally changes your life and



teaches you many things you may have not known, also opening the door for many possibilities after the program. I believe me going through this program has and will open my mind up to things I haven't

learned or experienced. It will be a journey, but it will also change me for the better. "Long wandering marked by many changes of fortune": we have this opportunity to change our lives, and most people don't. We should work hard on this journey and never look back, only forward. (**Simone Bell-Perdue**)



I think it's called The Odyssey Project because it's going to be a journey full of adventures. First by just looking at the vocabulary list, for me it's going to be an adventure of learning. Second, in Philosophy I will be learning

the meanings, the truth of things that I didn't even know existed. Third, in History I will be able to understand what and why really happened. Finally, writing and reading are going to be a challenge for me, but I know I will be able to get help when I need it. I'm sure at the end of Odyssey I will understand many, many things I didn't even know existed.

(**Belem Calixto Martinez**)



The course is called Odyssey because it's all a journey for everyone including the instructors. This is going to be an odyssey for me because I'm going to get to learn so much, meet new people, and get my

foot into the door of UW-Madison.

(**Maria Cardenas**)



I think it is called Odyssey Project because we as the students are going on a journey where we are going to gain knowledge and go through different experiences. At the end of our journey or adventures, we will learn what success feels like. **(Alyanna Cooper)**



I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because, much like the warrior in the poem, our journey through this class will also be epic. For me in particular this class will be a test of all my strengths and weaknesses when it comes to literature. **(Maria Dary)**



Odyssey Project perhaps was given this name because of Homer's epic poem, The Odyssey, which told the story of warrior Odysseus' ten-year journey home from Troy. Odyssey has both a literal and figurative meaning—surpassing the usual or ordinary; extended adventurous voyage after many obstacles contributing to failure in one's personal life. Odyssey is an epic journey of myself and 29 other students because it is a continuing education course for adults. **(Lawana Diagne)**



It describes the journey students can expect to travel regarding their education and learning. This class will enhance my

writing skill set to higher levels. I will begin to explore a learning style I haven't yet been exposed to. The possibilities and opportunities of this journey show no bounds at this point. **(Spencer Gamble)**



I think this course is called Odyssey Project because in some way it is a journey that we take on. From it, we learn new things. It maybe even makes us look at things in a different perspective, using the knowledge we get from this new journey in our life as an adult. **(Susana Gomez)**



Odyssey will give us a series of experiences that increase our knowledge and give us a better understanding of the world around us. It's also a journey full of new things to learn and discover through Art, Poetry, Philosophy, History, Writing, and Reading. It will be an odyssey to me because I feel like getting into a ship that I know I will enjoy, but it still will be an adventure with many things to learn and also challenges to face. I'm very grateful to be part of the Odyssey Project. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**





This course is called The Odyssey Project because it is going to be a long, stressful, but exciting and eventful journey for us all. This class may be challenging for me because I have not attended school since I graduated high school in 2009. (I fear that I'm not smart enough.) I am also going through a lot in my personal life with just losing my house, balancing work, kids, and school. I'm ready!
(**Asha Green**)



It's a journey that you must go through alone, overcoming all trials that may come your way. I think it is an odyssey of overcoming one's self. The hardest thing for me is to overcome my own prejudice with myself and others. (**Nathaniel Lake**)



From September to May I am on a journey of my own, and my fortune could very well change several times before the end of the year. I'm hoping it changes from "not bad" to "spectacular" or something like that, honestly.
(**Anthony Jefferson**)



I believe this course is called Odyssey because although we will only be together for a short period of time, we will go through many life challenges together and all come out on top. We all feel broken and not worthy, but I think after this we will feel fresh and unstoppable. This class will prepare me for the next steps into making my dreams my reality. (**Shanon Holmes**)



This is a new start to a wonderful and great journey. I'm so thankful, grateful, and blessed to be a part of the program. This will open so many new doors and opportunities in life. (**Carissa Love**)



I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because it is a journey full of adventure and knowledge for every new student. This class will be an odyssey for me because I will learn about artists, famous writers, and poets. I think this class will be full of fun and surprise.
(**José Mendoza**)



I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because it's filled up with adventures and things that we'll carry with us the rest of our life. I would really say this course will be an odyssey in life of improving and keeping me going forward to pursue my education. (**Ahmad Nahas**)



I think this course is called Odyssey because it's a learning journey. In our culture we have to say "Ask for knowledge from the cradle to the grave."
(**Musab Najib**)



I think this course is called The Odyssey Project because it's an adventure for us and everyone involved. The class will be an odyssey for me because I will understand words better. I will become a better writer and speller. My grammar will improve. I will also learn to be more disciplined. (**Victoria Patterson**)



I think the program is called The Odyssey Project because in a sense, a college education is a long journey of sorts. The end goal of the journey can represent changes in fortune because a college degree can open doors to earn higher salaries than for someone without. The class will be an odyssey for me because in the past I convinced myself that college “wasn’t for me” and that I would not be successful. The Odyssey Program is the first school program I have committed to and have taken seriously. It will be a long, difficult journey, but in the end my fortune will change. (**Cherri Sorrells**)



journey to success for many people in this class. I feel like this class is only the beginning of a successful learning path or journey for myself. (**Jessica Tucker**)



It is called the Odyssey Project because of the journey it has taken to get here and because of the journey it may lead us on. (**Johnnie Walton**)



Odyssey is a journey of events and obstacles that one has overcome. I think this is called The Odyssey Project because we all are on a personal journey trying to fulfill our dreams. (**Kyisha Williams**)



I think this course is called The Odyssey Project because it will be a journey full of adventures and experiences that will give us knowledge and understanding. (**Grisel Tapia Claudio**)



I was ecstatic to be accepted into this class. I was really thrilled to make it instead of waiting another year. I thank God I am in this class! (**Sukai Yarbo**)



Odyssey: Making a change of fortune, making a change to better one’s life, and providing a better life and opportunity. (**Felica Thomas**)



I think that this course may be called Odyssey because it’s going to be a new journey/ adventure for u.

It is going to provide experiences that help us to find ourselves after our own personal wanderings. (**Avé Thorpe**)

This program begins the long



CONNECTING WITH “THE CIRCUIT”

When I opened the door to our shack, I saw that everything we owned was neatly packed in cardboard boxes. —Francisco Jiménez, “The Circuit”

I relate to most of “The Circuit.” I’m an immigrant that tried to make a better life for my children. For many years, I used to do the same routine: work, pay bills, buy food, repeat. I also moved seven times in five years because of the rent increase, sometimes renting apartments in bad condition. I remember when my parents decided to buy a mobile home (trailer). We lived there three years in a bad neighborhood while also searching for jobs. I actually am still in the same situation. Teaching Spanish is a good job because I enjoy what I’m doing, but it is not always sustainable. There are some nights that I can’t sleep because I am thinking about which door I need to knock on to get to work.

Another part that I connect with is about living in poverty because I grew up the same. My father is a hardworking man and very smart, but he only went to school up to third grade. He would work on whatever possible. Sometimes when he didn’t have a job, he would wake up very early and go to the *cental de abastos* (warehouse) where all of the farmers sell their fruits and vegetables. He would offer to help unload the truck and get tips. Or sometimes he would just go to pick up the fruits and vegetables that filled the boxes that nobody wanted anymore. My mother and father would go together and bring back very delicious fruits and vegetables.

We also had a *caracha* (old car). My father learned how to repair cars, and he saved some money to buy a very ugly car that only worked for a short time. My mother also has a lot of talent speaking. I believe she will be a good writer. It is natural for her. She also only studied until third grade. They lived in Madison for ten years and

then went back to Mexico because my grandma was sick. When they tried to come back, they were deported. Immigrant stories are the same but with different people. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**



I can personally relate to this story but also learn something from it. My parents also came from Mexico to the U.S.A. when I was a little girl to have a better and, most importantly, safer life. My experience in school when I was little and not being able to understand English was also similar. But what I learned from this story is that not all immigrant families go through the same struggles. Some can be harsh and others have a nice experience. **(Susana Gomez)**

This story is related to my personal life because, just like Francisco Jiménez, I also had to emigrate looking for a better life. My dream was also to get a higher education. The situation was very hard because I spent most of my time working to provide a good life for my family. Now I have the opportunity to follow my dreams and become an educated person. **(José Mendoza)**

I would say that this story can be related to my personal life in learning the English language and starting as a beginner [as a refugee from Syria] in a new life, with a new language, new people, and new culture. **(Ahmad Nahas)**

The part when he was reading in the class I felt I could relate to because I'm struggling with reading. I'm hoping to improve my reading like him. (**Musab Naji**)

I personally relate to this story because I am from Mexico. I was born in the state of Pueblo. My mom emigrated to this country 20+ years ago just like Panchito's (or Jiménez's) family did. My mom did not know any English, worked two jobs at minimum wage, had no car, and used the metro bus as transportation, even when going to buy groceries. No matter if it was way too hot in the summer, or too cold in the winter, my mom was able to work long hours to save money so I could come to her. It took three long years until that dream came through. In the meantime, I had to live with relatives like aunts, uncles, cousins, and, lastly, with my grandparents. It was very hard because during this time there was no adult that could take responsibility for me.

I remember going by myself to enroll in middle school, just like Panchito, at age 13. This experience has helped me now that I am a mother of three beautiful children to value



all the great things, but mostly all the sacrifices that my mom made for me to offer me a better life and a better future. Now I tell my kids all the advantages of being in this country, a country full of many opportunities and, of course, the value of taking care of nature and water. (**Grisel Tapia Claudio**)

I can relate to moving often throughout my childhood. My parents [from Colombia] weren't migrant workers, but they did the best they could to have good paying jobs and raise us. (**Maria Cardenas**)

When I was younger, my mother sent me to live with my grandma in Mexico. The first few years of my life were spent there. My family was there. But when it was time for me to go to school, they sent me back to Wisconsin and it felt like I, too, had been uprooted. (**Maria Dary**)

I can learn from the end of "The Circuit" because growing up with my mother, I moved a lot. My mother tried transferring my sister and me. It was my last year of high school, and I refused to get a transfer to a new school. I knew all of my teachers and I had friends that I attended school with for the past three years. So I sacrificed by getting up extra early to stay in school with my friends. It was the best decision that I made. (**Ngina Ali**)

I knew how to read in English, but I struggled with reading in general, like pronouncing words. In first grade I was diagnosed with a learning disability and had to go to speech and language classes. It was hard staying up late just to do what seemed simple to others, but it was hard work for me. I kept reading and eventually got better at it. (**Simone Bell-Perdue**)

The part of the story that I can relate to the most is when he is finally comfortable, settled, and adapting, and then all of a sudden things change. As a child I moved from school to school when I was most comfortable. I would be making new friends and starting to fit in, but then all of a sudden we'd have to move due to different circumstances. I have now made a vow to my children that they will not have to experience moving from place to place and changing schools. No matter what your situation may be, come out on top and make the best of all of your experiences. Everything that you go through is a learning experience. **(Asha Green)**

I can learn that everyone has a unique story, and it's worth getting to know that person before passing judgment of any sort. I also can relate to the moving around a lot due to me being in group homes and foster care. **(Shanon Holmes)**

I can personally relate because in my childhood we moved around a lot. My mother was a single mother. When we moved, she managed to keep us in the same school. **(Alyanna Cooper)**

I moved around a lot as a child so I can relate to him. Every time he got used to things and people and a routine, they would pick up and move. This was the same as my childhood. **(Victoria Patterson)**

I feel like the part of the story that I can relate to the most would be the moving around. My mom and I moved around a lot when I was



growing up. She was trying to gain stability as a single mother, and my children and I moved around a lot as well. **(Avé Thorpe)**

I moved a lot as a kid and I had to work for my grandfather on his farm until the age of 13. **(Johnnie Walton)**

I can relate to the story because I also moved a lot as a child between Madison and Chicago, and I hated it. Every time we

moved I cried. The last time was the worst because I was leaving my childhood friends who I grew up with to come here. It was right before my eighth grade luncheon and graduation, and I missed it. As a kid I remember wishing Madison and Chicago were next door neighbors because I have family and friends in both areas. I just hated being separated from them. I think all the moving back and forth made me HATE saying goodbye because it was always the hardest part for me. Maybe it was easier for the boy in "The Circuit" because he never actually said goodbye. **(Kyisha Williams)**



RESPONDING TO ROMANTIC POETRY: WILLIAM BLAKE AND WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

WILLIAM BLAKE

"On Another's Sorrow"
from *Songs of Innocence*

*Can I see another's woe
And not be in sorrow too?
Can I see another's grief
And not seek for kind relief? . . .*

In this poem Blake expresses the importance of having empathy and compassion for people and life. Blake points things out that I would have never noticed beforehand. In this poem, Blake makes you go back to a moment in your life where you have seen a child or someone else crying. It makes me want to be more aware of my surroundings and have compassion and empathy. **(Asha Green)**

This poem moved and disturbed me. It made me think about the world today. I loved some of the lines. "Can I see another's grief / and not seek for kind relief?" says, "Can I see another person in hurt or pain and not offer help or words of encouragement?" It's like when I'm driving with my kids and see homeless people with signs. I always give food or a few bucks. **(Victoria Patterson)**

The poem that interested/moved me the most was "On Another's Sorrow." It caught my attention because it had a biblical tone. The poem somewhat described the empathy that Christ has towards us. I was most moved in the fact that the poem reminds me of the things that I've learned in church about how Jesus purposefully endured pain in order to relate to

us, and then comfort us. **(Avé Thorpe)**

I am this poem in my soul. To feel sorrow or even have time to think of another makes you feel better. It takes your mind off of yourself and ends your misery for a time. To be on the receiving end of sorrow is appreciated. **(Johnnie Walton)**

This poem stands out to me because I am a person who feels other people's pain. If there is a problem I will try to fix it. I believe everybody should have empathy towards other people's situations because the tables could always turn. We as people need reassurance that we are not alone and that things will get better. **(Kyisha Williams)**



"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. . . .*

"Nurse's Song" spoke to me because I used to work with kids in a nursery and it made me feel joyful when I heard the laughing of children in the green. During my childhood, I also used to play outdoors and stay out late playing with my cousins, enjoying the stars and the moonlight until we felt very tired and decided to go inside to sleep. Our mothers were serious about closing the door until the next day. (Marisol Gonzalez)

"Nurse's Song"from *Songs of Experience*

*. . . Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dew of the night arise;
Your spring and your day are wasted in play,
And your winter and night in disguise.*

I feel like the narrator of this poem is feeling resentful of the children's youth. She seems bitter that the children are carefree and only play all day and night, regardless of the season.

(Maria Dary)

**WILLIAM WORDSWORTH****"My Heart Leaps Up"**

*My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky.
So was it now I am a man,
So be it when I shall grow old
Or let me die!*

Wordsworth expresses the excitement he gets when he sees a rainbow in the sky. Then he goes back and reflects on when his life began to now he is a man. He wants to keep that same feeling for a lifetime. The author wants his heart to leap with excitement when he is a man just as it did before he had grown into a

man. When he grows old, if this excitement is no longer, he would rather perish.

I am definitely able to take some ideas or images from the poem “My Heart Leaps Up” into my life: the joys you get from seeing nature. **(Lawana Diagne)**

In “My Heart Leaps Up,” Wordsworth seems to be saying that without nature, he wouldn’t want to live. If he wasn’t going to be able to see or live around nature, he would rather die. I can relate to William Wordsworth in this poem, but for me instead of nature it would be my family. For me, my family is the most important thing in my life. I wouldn’t care if I live [in poverty] like Panchito from “The Circuit” as long as I have my family close to me. **(Belem Calixto)**

The speaker uses the image of the rainbow in the sky to announce to the reader that he loves nature. He expresses the feeling that comes out of his heart that life without nature would not be worth living. **(Ahmad Nahas)**

“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. . . .
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought. . . .*

From the poem “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,” it’s clear to me that Wordsworth is in love with the flowers and also the surroundings. He is very happy to have experienced that moment in that place. He talks about all the wonders of nature, from a lonely cloud to the ten thousand flowers

dancing in the breeze. He also mentions the valleys, hills, lake, and trees that make you picture a beautiful place. I imagine a different but wonderful experience with my grandma, who used to have a beautiful garden full of flowers of many colors. When I read the poem, it makes me think of my grandma’s garden. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**

“To My Sister”

*It is the first mild day of March
Each minute sweeter than before,
The redbreast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.*

*There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field. . . .*

“There is a blessing in the air.” I love this excerpt, and it jumps right off the page at me because it’s a perfect example of how spring with its sense of beginning makes one feel. When new seasons come, spring in particular, it is like a breath of fresh air, being that you’ve made it through the cold, dark, treacherous winter. **(Avé Thorpe)**



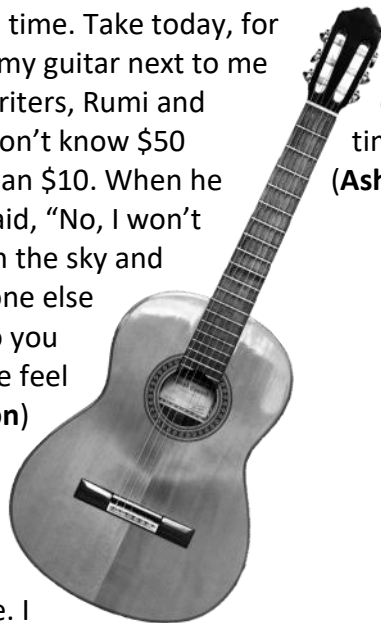
FEELING DIFFERENT, LIKE WILLIAM BLAKE

I feel unlike others all the time. Take today, for example. I woke up with my guitar next to me and two of my favorite writers, Rumi and Hafiz. I gave a girl that I don't know \$50 dollars and a homeless man \$10. When he said, "God bless you," I said, "No, I won't wait for God to drop from the sky and bless me. You and everyone else are here with me now, so you bless me." That makes me feel different. (**Johnnie Walton**)

First off, I have never conformed to social norms or stereotypes. I tend to play my own tune. I like what I like, which in some cases isolates me. I like rock music. Some people criticize me for it. I'm known as the token black guy in a lot of my circles. I can't say I feel out of place, but I'm definitely unlike those around me. People called me "white boy" or "wannabe" when I was younger. But as time has passed, I am more and more comfortable in my own skin. I love being different. If everyone was the same, life would be boring. I am pleased to say throughout my life I use my self-acceptance to help and show support for others. I'm living a life less ordinary. (**Spencer Gamble**)

I feel as though I never fit in with people my age because I have been a mother since I was 13 years old. When getting in a group of young women my age, I always feel like an outcast. My children are older, so when speaking about our children, I say my oldest child is almost 12 years old. Yes, I had my daughter at 13. She was and is my greatest

blessing and has made me the woman I am today. I guess that would also be one of the main reasons I have a hard time fitting in and sometimes relating. (**Asha Green**)



I remember when I first went into foster care. The "mom" of the house took me to church (I had never been before). Right away when I walked through the church doors to the service, everyone turned around. I noticed I was the only black person there. I was scared to breathe, let alone move my feet to a seat. Once service was over, I felt like the whole church watched me until I left. I never told my foster mom. Instead, I ran away! (**Shanon Holmes**)

Within my job role at a shelter, there are not many minorities, and also a lot of the employees are college students with no children. Although I do know that I bring my own set of skills to the job due to my experience, I still feel as if I don't fit in because I am not as educated. (**Avé Thorpe**)



come play in. My mom has always provided for me and spoiled me, so I didn't exactly feel poor. However, on Pizza Hut Day when it seemed that everyone but me was getting seconds, it kind of put the world in a stone cold perspective. It's a chip I reluctantly carry on my shoulder, always second guessing if my color, finances, or background are "good enough" for my surroundings and situation. One day, I hope to feel that everlasting validation that comes with 100% self-acceptance, but the self-doubt is the predominant thought most times. (**Anthony Jefferson**)

I got pregnant at 17 and it was hard to make the right choice. I was so much different than others around me. I now had responsibilities that were unlike those around me. While they were out at parties or school events, I was at work or home with my son. I also was unlike others because while their futures were so planned, my future was uncertain and, no matter what, I was going to have to work harder. I was and still am unlike a lot of people around me. I now have a light at the end of my dark tunnel, thanks to Odyssey. My sons and I will still have to work harder. We will now be driven to success. (**Alyanna Cooper**)

When I transferred to the Verona Area School District, I felt alienated even at such a young age (third grade). It was located in the suburbs with many Caucasian suburban students. On party days or school choir concerts they had two parents that were happy and well-dressed. For me, it was my mom, my biracial brother, and the fact I knew I lived in a neighborhood that my classmates couldn't



It was my first day of school in this country. I remember being nervous because I didn't know any English and, of course, I didn't know anybody. I remember my brother telling me which bus I was supposed to get on. I remember I got lost. I went to the counselor's office, and he helped me get to my next class. At first, I felt like I didn't fit in because of the language barrier, but I adjusted and I got to meet some nice people that helped me through these difficult times. (**Belem Calixto Martinez**)

I felt when I was a kid growing up from about six to ten years old that I did not fit in with kids my age. I was the child of two drug-

addicted parents, my mother telling me, at the age of 12, that she didn't want me. I became pregnant when I was in just eighth grade. I lost my son in March 2016 and feel like I don't fit in because a lot of family and friends can't relate to me and understand what I am going through. It is impossible trying to explain to someone the feeling of having a child that was here one day and gone again, understanding you'll never see him again. **(Felicia Thomas)**

A time in my life when I felt different than those around me was when I came to the United States from Colombia. I was held back for not knowing English and was put into the ESL class where they treated me like I was dumb. Also, being the only girl in the weight room definitely puts you on the spot. Everyone is looking at you and judging you because that's not what a girl is supposed to be doing, but I would rather be different than be stuck doing the same thing. People who tell me that lifting will make me manly make me laugh. I have never felt more free, happy, and strong than I do now. . . **(Maria Cardenas)**



Growing up being biracial, I felt as though I didn't and couldn't find my place as the person I am. I was always trying to find out where I fit in in life. The white kids would tell me, "We aren't playing anything." Then the black kids would say, "You're acting too proper." Finding myself was hard. Always moving around a lot as a child from school to school was hard because there was no stability. I was the new kid always and had to try to fit in. It was hard to make friends because kids were friends since the beginning and I was always the new kid, trying to fit in. **(Carissa Love)**

As a child I moved a lot. I moved four times from a baby until eighth grade. When I finally moved to Madison, I felt like I didn't fit in because everyone had gone to school with each other since elementary school. I was always just the new kid. **(Jessica Tucker)**

I remember being in a classroom, then a teacher saying, "Okay, Simone, you go in the separate room with the other kids." I knew I was different right then and there because I was placed in a room with four other students, labeled in elementary school with a learning disability. I had separate classes I would go to. It didn't start hitting me until I went to middle school. I was embarrassed to read out loud because I didn't know so many words or they were really hard to pronounce. I felt stupid because I could hear people laughing on a word I would mess up on and I would go home and just cry. I didn't give up; I kept reading and reading. Eventually it became easier for me because now I read 500-page

books. I don't have a limit to how much I read like I did before because it was harder for me. I became more confident in myself that I could do it and I knew at that moment I would no longer need to be in a speech and language class. No more doing tests and not knowing what the answers were. The best day of my life was when my teacher said, "We're removing you from special ed speech and language. You don't need it anymore." (**Simone Bell-Perdue**)



When I came out I absolutely did not fit in with my family and some of my friends, so I started to make plans for my new life. My agenda was to play the game my family expected, which was showing I wanted to continue being educated and keeping up appearances. There was also the culture side of my mom's family, which absolutely did not fit with my character. My mom was East Indian (3rd generation), so it was a double whammy when I came out. I understood that I did not fit in. My journey started when I convinced my family to send me to art school in the UK. This was the start of making plans to get away from my parents permanently. Not fitting in with people who are supposed to love you unconditionally was devastating, but I was strong. I love and accept myself for who I am. At that time, with the struggle for acceptance, I soon realized it was my parents' loss.

Something so precious came from them, and they chose to blind themselves with shame; it took over their hearts. (**Joy Bally**)

One of the hardest outsider moments of my life was when I realized I was gay. It felt odd to me, constantly being surrounded by people who were attracted to the opposite sex and I wasn't. I can actually pinpoint the time when I realized I was. I was walking down the hall in high school, first day of freshman year, and I saw this girl. Up until that moment, I had never really felt attracted to anyone. I hadn't really even had the thought

cross my mind that I can remember. But the minute she walked around that corner in the science wing, I felt this feeling in my stomach that I had never felt before, and it terrified me. If I'm being honest, at first I thought that I had maybe gotten the stomach flu from the nasty ass lunches they serve in school. But I was also scared because I realized that at that moment, there was no going back to who I used to be. For the first year I practiced trying to say it to myself in the mirror: "I'm a lesbian. I AM a lesbian." But whenever I tried to tell my mom, the words just never came out. It took me an entire year to finally tell my mom I was gay. I wish I could say I was proud at that

time and ready, but I still felt ashamed. It took me another two years to accept myself and find me a lady. Nine years later, I now have no shame saying I am a lesbian Mexican, and I am proud of it. (**Maria Dary**)



NOTICING NATURE

I was born and grew up in Mexico City with a lot of pollution and people and not much nature, but when we took the train to visit my family in Veracruz, I remember looking out the window and experiencing the



same joy and love for nature [that Wordsworth described]. My hair is dancing in the air with the breeze, and my eyes capture all of the wonderful scenes from the dark night full of little diamonds in the sky, leaving behind the loud and big city with its busy people to the quiet, lonely land, with only the sound of the train's *choo choo* in the night. The moon follows us our way, sometimes playing hide-and-seek with us so we won't get bored.

But in the morning everybody is awake with the *choo choo* and Mr. Rooster's *kikiriki*. The children inside the train ask their mothers if they could play, but the mothers instead tell the children to sleep again because it is too early to play and laugh. . . . The train stops, and the conductor yells "Cordoba!" Some people stay and some people go, but I know it's not our stop. Some vendors get on the train, offering delicious fruits and nuts, tamales, quesadillas, pan dulce, y champurrado.

The conductor announces the train's departure, "All Aboard! Vamanos!" The children want to buy the last treat as vendors keep walking beside the train, hoping for their last sale. The train goes faster, and now it is time to stick our heads out and yell. Now it's time to enjoy the view again



of the beautiful green land, imagining and desiring to soon be sitting under the mango tree eating all the mangoes we can eat, or thinking of the rides we will have to ask to get to the piñal where we will drink all of the juice and eat all of the fruit we will want. I don't want to forget to say that we will swim in the sea. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**

Under the bright lights in the sky, sitting next to the barn in the midst of the dark, I see the fire is blazing high to the sky, I smell the fresh larch



crackling, and I hear the sound of water streaming downhill. The warmth is heartfelt, just like a summer night, indulging in the country yard where we meet. As I gaze into the sky, smiling, I see big bright lights that capture my

heart with delight. **(Lawana Diagne)**

I have beautiful memories of my mom's backyard. If I close my eyes, I see these tall, colorful, bright flowers, fluttering along with the wind. I see a beautiful bright yellow sun. I feel the 70 degree wonderful weather. I wish I could go back to that

time to see it again. I want to feel like being a child again with no worries or responsibilities, just to feel the joy of playing until you got tired before going to bed. And to see my mom again making dinner in our warm lovely house. **(Grisel Tapia Claudio)**

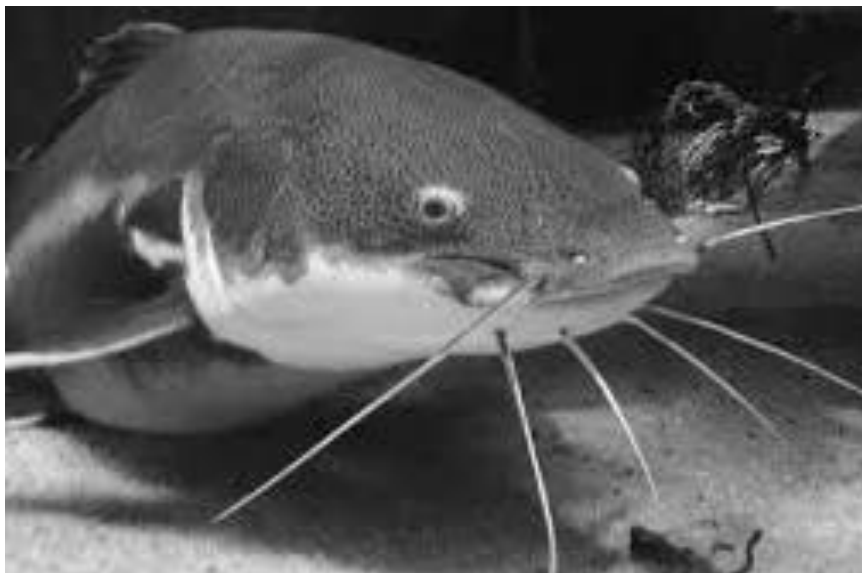
One day I took my best friend to a park that I like to go to. The park has a lake with a waterfall and many different kinds of trees. It was early spring, and everything was beginning to bloom. We walked and talked in the early morning sun with the cool wind brushing our faces. I was taking her to the top of the waterfall so that we could look down on the entire park. We sat on a bench at the very top, and I begin to tell her about the parts of my life that she didn't know. By the time I finished my story, it had started to rain. As we walked back to the car, my friend told me that nature was responding to the pain I felt from living that story and having to tell it. **(Johnnie Walton)**



looked like a Christmas tree. I started to count the stars, but I didn't finish counting. I caught a 46" catfish that pulled my fishing pole like a cow. It was really hard to bring it close and out. After ten rounds of fighting, finally I got it out. I was so happy and excited. I had never seen such a big fish before. I ate the fish the next day, and it was good. I had a good recipe with tomatoes, onions, cilantro, oregano, jalapeño, lemon and whole shrimp. Of course, I didn't forget my cold beer. I love fishing. **(José Mendoza)**



One night I was fishing. It was quiet. I heard some fish splashing in the water. Up in the sky was a full moon. I saw many stars; the sky



Living in the country, driving down the narrow curvy roads, watching the burnt orange, red and dirty-looking green leaves topple from the shedding trees, I smell the cool, crisp autumn air. Enormous tractors roll through the fields, harvesting the last of the crops because winter is near. One of my favorite seasons –Autumn – is here. **(Asha Green)**



I love when it is dark, and I get to gaze at the stars. It's such a beautiful sight. It's very peaceful. I have no worry in the world. I sit and get lost in my thoughts, watching the stars and the water moving in the lake. The sky is gray, and I see few stars. It is a quiet and peaceful place. I walk over to the water and walk in the water. The water is blue, and I smell the fresh air. I am in my own world, and I don't want to leave. When something is bothering me, I just sit down, relax and think of happy thoughts. Sometimes, I think about my loved ones I have lost. It brings tears to my eyes, but they are happy tears. Then I sit and laugh at the special moments we shared together. **(Ngina Ali)**

I love rain. Oddly, so many people run from it or hide from it. I, however, embrace rain. It seems so peaceful and comforting. I love how it hits my skin; I picture a hot skillet when butter touches the surfaces. Rain claims its presence. I love rain because it gives life but at the

same time takes it. Rain is powerful yet respected whenever it comes. It almost demands attention. Most of all, it relaxes me. I would like a hammock with an umbrella to sleep in it. Rain heals things and helps me feel at ease. **(Alyanna Cooper)**

Last weekend, I made a BBQ in my backyard. The meat was fresh, and I put in special spices, so the smell was hooking my kids' noses and bringing them around me. Their stomachs were crying, their eyes were showing surprise, and their saliva dripped. They could feel the taste from only smelling it because the smell was very strong. **(Musab Naji)**



I remember traveling to the Philippines as a child. It was an amazing experience. The wonderful tropical climates brought out such lively, vivid, and beautiful vegetation. My first time going into the ocean was the best. The beautiful sparkling blue waves were crashing into each other. As my feet squeezed in the smooth and silky sand, my uncle walked to the edge of the water and invited me to join. As my feet were immersed in the beautiful, warm, and calming blue water, my uncle splashed me in the face. This is the first time I would taste the salty, nasty, and gritty ocean water. **(Jessica Tucker)**



I walk across Lake Wingra in the wintertime because I want to walk on water. Cold air fills my nose and throat. It nips at my nose as I feel the tickle of snot starting to drip forth. My mind flashes back to my mother telling me to grab a scarf (she knows I stay out late). I lie, say

one is in my backpack, and run out the door. Cold snow seeping into my shoes is bringing my back to reality. I look up and see the sky is clear. "Moon is bright," says my friend Jamie, as if he is echoing my thoughts. "This is heaven," I reply. We walk in silence the rest of the way, silence only broken by the weight of our footsteps on fluffy snow.

I feel completely at ease at night, though it is hard to see sometimes in the darkness. The moon shines bright and gives me energy. I feel like howling at the moon. I enjoy a slight breeze, the sounds of a calm wave on the sea, and the taste of faint raindrops in the midnight sky. In the months of fall, I feel most alive. **(Spencer Gamble)**



Before us is the lakeshore of the Arboretum. Pine trees stand tall against an almost jet black skyline, with too much light from Fish Hatchery. People miss out on so much. I would do anything just to see the stars unrepressed in the night sky. We continue to walk. I start to hear the ice crack underneath us. Perhaps I was not meant to walk on water? We cross the lake and walk on to the arboretum road.

We talk about music and girls, inequality in society, abuse of religion, what we hope to be when we grow up. We take the long way back. I don't feel so lucky to try the lake twice. This night is one of many I would be blessed to have with one of my brothers. When I think of nature, this is one of the first memories that comes to mind.

(Nathaniel Lake)





I remember when I was in high school, and we went on a camping trip. I remember how it felt just to be away from everything in the city and be in quiet space. We went out by the campfire, smelling the firewood, and even when bugs were swarming at us, there still was so much peace, hearing trees sway from side to side.

I felt that kind of feeling when people say they are “one with nature.” I finally knew what that meant. We had no technology that week, too, and for once I was around a group of people, and all we did was joke, laugh, and talk. **(Simone Bell-Perdue)**

Lost in a dark bright forest, hearing the sound of whispers from the running wind, there’s nobody but nature and me conversing. As I wander through the forest, I also hear the crunchy leaves yelling out loud. As I look around, I notice all of the trees shedding their coats of fur, preparing to be covered with the suffering beauty of snow. I love fall. **(D’onna Atkinson)**



At Pewit’s Nest, I leapt from a granite rock 20 feet above the water. When I landed in the crystal clear water, my body was refreshed, and I was rejuvenated as I came out. **(Ahmad Nahas)**



On a dark, cold, cloudy night, as I lay on the slightly wet and damp ground, the wind was blowing slightly through the trees. I heard the sound of critters running through the tall grass. As I opened and closed my eyes, I watched the ocean-like sky float by. The air was foggy and smelled stale. Behind the fluffy, cotton-like clouds, there were tiny, flickering specks of glitter in the sky. There was a golden balloon-shaped bubble behind the clouds. It was almost like a honeypot hanging from a branch in the cold, dark night sky. I fell asleep to the sounds of tall grass blowing in the wind. **(Carissa Love)**



Ocean Sunset on the Island

Bright orange sun slowly setting on the ocean's horizon.

The colors change, sometimes purple, sometimes pink,

sometimes yellow mixed with purple, sometimes pink mixed with yellow.

But the best of all is the ocean looking brightly covered with silver dollars.

The sun looks huge where half has been swallowed by the horizon.

The orange sun is completely gone.

The ocean stays still and awaits another dawn.

(Joy Bally)

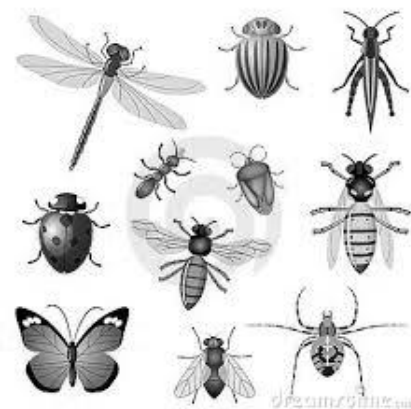


When I was in Mexico, everything was green, especially at my mom's house. Whenever you would come out to the patio, you were able to see trees and lots and lots of flowers, on your right and left side. On the right side, there was a peach tree; of course, I ate lots of peaches while I was there. They were yellow inside and outside, and as soon as you put them close to your nose, you were able to smell the delicious and fresh aroma that they had. Around the tree, there were some plants and flowers. The ones that would always catch my attention were three bushes of roses: one of them was white and smelled amazing; red ones were blood red; and yellow ones were bright and big. You could fit each of the roses on the palm of your hand.



On the left side, there were about 30 different pots, each having a flower or plant of different colors, pink, bright pink, white, red, lavender, blue, green and yellow. One beautiful one was white with light pink on the edges; it was really pretty. But there was this other one that caught my attention: it had three leaves, a mainly orange flower, and yellow spots in the middle. The interesting thing about this flower was that it only bloomed once for one day. Isn't it amazing how nature is? **(Belem Calixto Martinez)**

We were on the golf course with the kids. The sky was blue, no clouds, with an orange sun beginning to set. We started to notice orange and red bugs flying all around. I noticed them on the kids. I felt anxious and worried as I started to check myself. Seeing them on my arms and legs, I felt scared. My heart began to race, my breathing started to pick up, and my hands became sweaty. I started flailing, trying to get the creatures off. The kids and instructor started to laugh. I found nothing funny. One of them came up behind me saying, "They're on your back, too, and your phone," causing me to fling my phone through the air. **(Victoria Patterson)**



Behind Verona Middle School, they have a woods that we used to go hike in. Sometimes it was amazing, and other times it wasn't. It was a peaceful feeling, seeing all the leaves start to turn from dark green to light green and then to a pretty yellow. All the insects slowly disappeared as winter slowly approached. The gentle breeze smacked against my face. Man, I used to hate those little pokey things that stuck to everything. **(Kendra Atkinson)**



Honestly, nature is a bit of a dilemma for me, since I like the serene feel of it but can find the quiet a bit unsettling.

In my senior year biology class, we spent the year in the prairie doing our work, and it gave me more of an appreciation for the stillness and lack of human influence. However, at the same time, it feels too alien or even dangerous, given how little I really know about it. Nature in itself isn't meant to be controlled, which is why we use terms like "just human nature." Its autonomous ways are what make it feel so real and enticing. But the less control I have, the more I feel it's not the place for me, like the powers that be have the final say, not myself. **(Anthony Jefferson)**



I will never forget the time I went camping with my sixth grade class. I had never been

camping before and was not looking forward to it. Once we arrived, I was so confused. In front of me stood an old, beat down, raggedy shack. I just knew it had no electricity. Deep down inside me, I wanted to cry. Being in sixth grade, I held it together (for the most part). As we opened the door to this raggedy shack, the first thing I saw was bunkbeds, which right away gave me thoughts of the juvenile detention center. I tried telling myself I would only be there for one night. Right away, one of my classmates wanted to go for a walk. I was outnumbered and absolutely had to go along. On the walk, I saw dead trees,

black birds, and long rocky paths which seemed to have no ending. I missed home, I missed the city street lights, and I missed the loud madness I could hear just by opening my bedroom window. My classmates felt free. I felt trapped with no way out. The next morning, I was the first one on the bus ready to go. **(Shanon Holmes)**

I'm not an outdoors, nature-loving type of person, so all of the experiences I've had haven't been pleasant. I remember as a child going to



Bible Camp at Crystal Lake. The water was dark and blurry and smelled like mildew. The sun was scorching and burned my skin so that my skin was hot to the touch. The tent we slept in allowed the moon to light our faces throughout the night, and we could hear the bugs creaking and buzzing throughout the night. **(Avé Thorpe)**

When I was 13 years old, I was stung in the face by a bee. I was at a teen camp that lasted a week. I saw the swollen black and yellow insect hovering outside of the creaky cabin door. With sweaty palms, I lunged out of the sweltering cabin and sprinted in uncomfortable thong sandals. As my foam sandal flopped off my foot with each step, I grew hoarse from shouting in fear. The insect beelined for my glistening forehead and planted his thick searing stinger into my sun-kissed skin. The tumultuous deafening scream that rocked my vocal cords to the core alerted the adults that I needed medical attention. This incident affected the way I now behave when I encounter a bee. I



no longer run away screaming. Instead, I stay very silent and still in an attempt to keep the bee from bothering me. **(Cherri Sorrells)**

FINDING PLATO'S CAVE TODAY

I can apply the Allegory of the Cave to my own life when I think about my lack of education. At one time, I thought my high school education was enough. I was a prisoner to myself and to my fears about college.



The shadows cast on the wall were the low-paying jobs I was once proud to obtain. Once I attempted to leave the cave and enroll in MATC, but I was overwhelmed and did not believe that college was for me. I retreated to the cave and entry-level employment.

I ventured out of the cave again. This time I dragged myself up the steep and rugged ascent of wanting to better myself and set examples for my children. In this case, the sun is the Odyssey Project. I was very nervous and worried about how I would manage. The last few assignments have shown me just how out of touch I am with my education and potential. They were blinding initially, but I am now learning new habits centered on education. Eventually I will venture back down into the cave, not to stay but to encourage future generations to venture outside the cave. (**Cherri Sorrells**)

My experience in caves is from when I was younger and still a single person. I lived "la vida loca," with no control of my own life. I used to drink a lot and party every weekend. Many times I was driving intoxicated with

alcohol. I put other people's lives at risk. Sometimes when I had to go to work, I didn't feel good. I never listened to good advice from my family. I thought I knew everything and it was my own life, so who cares?

Today I am so proud to be alive because sometimes I could have died in one of those bad days I had before. I am married



and have two children. My wife (Guadalupe Tinajero, Odyssey '16) is attending college. I will be working hard to make my dreams real. This is the time to get out of the cave and see the light. I need to leave the ignorance and be smart. (**José Mendoza**)



Facebook is a good example of a cave I've noticed nowadays. The users of Facebook are prisoners. These users are only looking at the Facebook wall.

Sadly, they believe only in what they see and watch there. The people who are in charge of Facebook represent the fire, where the fire is the truth. Facebook can manipulate what people like and their interests. Users become ignorant by only seeing what Facebook thinks they like. (**Ahmad Nahas**)

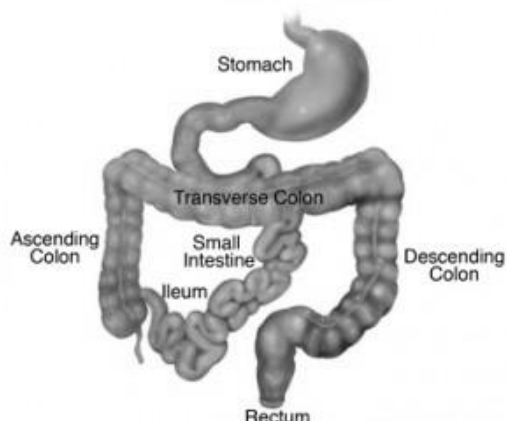
A time I felt like I was in a cave, a dark place, was my senior year in high school. I was racked with pain and felt like I had no control over my body. I couldn't sleep at night, so it was hard to focus in class. Just holding it together was a struggle. After test after test, they

finally diagnosed me with Crohn's Disease. I was never ever able to swallow pills and was slammed with taking about 14 pills a day. It was final exam week, and I had to pull it together and fight through the pain on top of trying to take all those pills. It was a very dark time, and I had to spend weeks at a time in the hospital just wanting to be healthy/normal.

They told me Crohn's Disease was a predominately European Caucasian disease and ran in families, so they were kind of shocked I had it. They asked had I ever traveled out of the country. I laughed and said no. They stated they didn't know how people got it but thought it was environmental. My mind went a thousand places. Why me? I never left the country, and no one in my family ever heard of it, let alone had it.

I've been through countless heavy drugs. They last for a few months but then stop working. There are times when I'm symptom free—no pain, no urgent/frequent bloody bowel movements, no excruciating cramps and stabbing pain in the stomach literally stopping me in whatever I'm doing. Then there are times when I have these things they call "flare ups," where all those symptoms come at once and usually put me in the hospital. I've come up with some coping techniques like rocking and

Crohn's Disease



humming, so if you see me doing that, don't mind me.

The toughest part about having this is I look healthy as can be. You wouldn't know unless I shared, which I hate doing because I HATE pity or for people to look at me differently. **(Victoria Patterson)**

One cave was being in an abusive relationship. I thought this person was supposed to be what was best

for me. It was either his way or the highway. It became so overwhelming and draining that in the process I lost myself. I was "chained" to this person who didn't have my best interests at heart and who just wanted me because he could treat me as if I was a property piece. He didn't appreciate anything I did, and everything was always wrong. I was in a cave for many years and didn't want to walk to the light. One day I was shown a different way and was taken to the light.



Even if it was blinding, I eventually came back to reality. **(Maria Cardenas)**

My whole life I have been in a cave. From my childhood to my adult life, I have been in a cave until now.

Being born with a single mother and no father into poverty started my life in a cave. As I got older, I went through so much. It was easier to stay hidden or ignorant to things.

I have been through poverty, homelessness,

sexual assault as a child, teenaged motherhood, and lack of education. I have been in a cave out of fear, which has made me procrastinate or stay ignorant to life experiences. I have been in a cave until now due to my kids and Odyssey! **(Alyanna Cooper)**

Depression can be a cave. When you are going through depression, you feel alone, like there isn't someone who will understand you. You hold it all in and deal with the depression yourself. You feel like everyone's life is just glitter and gold. **(Kendra Atkinson)**

My life is like the Allegory of the Cave because I had no idea how long we would stay in Malaysia. We had choices, but they were all dangerous. We could go back to Iraq, but we left because it was dangerous. We could go by boat to Australia, or by jungle to Indonesia and then Europe, but we could be stopped and put in jail, or lose our money or someone in our family.

That is why we stayed in Malaysia and waited. It took seven years, but this was the safest option. Sometimes we felt like prisoners in the cave. My life was hard because I couldn't get the basic needs, as my kids weren't able to go to school, and we did not have health insurance. But we worked together to make



the cave feel bigger. While we waited, we made a good situation by working hard and starting a school for refugee students.

I got out of the cave when I arrived in the U.S. in 2014. Now I'm looking at the world with different eyes. Now many doors are open for me as I still work hard to reach my goals. **(Musab Naji)**

It's the journey of my life. I have been stuck in my own cave of growing up being biracial and trying to find myself, trying to "know" myself and who I am. I am trapped living in a world of error, stuck in a cave or some type of hole that I can't find my way out of. It's hard because with racism it is hard to be accepted. The white kids didn't want to play with me, and the black kids thought I was acting too proper or white.

(Carissa Love)



I used to live in a basement. It was my own real-life cave, the shadows on the wall

NETFLIX

replaced by a TV screen with Netflix and video games. My friends and I were the prisoners. At the time I had reached some level of success. I could afford anything I wanted for my lifestyle. I had traveled across the sea and had come back. I thought I knew things. I, like everyone else in the cave, was confident in my ignorance. It wasn't until my income changed that I was forced to realize I knew nothing at all. I was blinded by the realities of life. I had to leave the basement. I had to leave the cave and go on an odyssey to learn the truth of the world so I could see and find a better path for me and my brothers (prisoners).

(Nathaniel Lake)

I have been in a cave multiple times. Born to two parents that eventually chose drugs over me, I was raised by my grandmother. Being in the pursuit of happiness, I was in a very abusive marriage, was a teen parent, and am currently dealing with my son's passing. I have felt like I just exist but am stuck in a cave. . . .

People shun you, especially dealing with what I am going through with my son. Those that I once supported and was there for have turned their backs on me to a point that I feel like they never cared. With domestic abuse, I never knew what love was and thought because my ex-

husband hit me he loved me. NOT! I did not have a mother or father to teach me how to be a young lady or mother, so I had to learn through trial and error. **(Felica Thomas)**



The cave I live in deals with racism and the fact that I've been low-income my whole life. A time I can remember is when I was in third grade. I was asked what I wanted to be when I grew up. My reply was "a hair braider." My teacher said, "Every black girl wants to braid hair." I felt like being black was WRONG. In schools and even in the community, I never felt welcome, so I always stayed out of the way. **(Shanon Holmes)**



I have a 21-year-old son who was getting off work and was picked up by his so-called friends. His friends had stolen a vehicle, and the police stopped them. They sent my son to prison for three years, though he was just a passenger and had just gotten off from work. He was 18 years old at the time.



He was released from prison in May of this year. It has been hard because as a black male who was locked up in Madison, WI, he finds that officers always assume he is doing something wrong. He gets pulled over for no reason at all. They check his name and most of time give him a hard time. He found a job, but it doesn't pay too much. He is starting to lose some of his motivation, but as his mom I am his light at the end of the tunnel. When he is feeling down, I give him HOPE. He then continues to move on. My son is my heart, my everything. We will get through this together. **(Ngina Ali)**

I have been stuck in the cave of language. Being bilingual has its pros and cons. The good thing is that I have been able to explore two languages and two cultures. But in the real world, it is necessary to be proficient in both languages to take advantage of all the privileges of being bicultural and bilingual. As of today, I can say that the Odyssey Project is my first opportunity to escape from the cave by reading books and practicing my writing in English. **(Grisel Tapio Claudio)**

The cave of alcoholism is one that my family suffers from. My great grandfather died from alcohol, the same as my grandfather. It's a sickness that has taken lives in my family. I grew up in the middle of a lot of alcohol. I never knew what would be next: people fighting, people crying, and not being able to sleep because others wanted to dance and keep drinking. Alcoholics are sick people with an allergy to alcohol who live in a cave where they only think of themselves.

Thank goodness for my parents! They decided to get help, and we are out of that cave. Now my father is also studying

to get his high school diploma. My mother is working hard to make her dream of being a lawyer come true. I can see clearly the way my parents' alcoholism kept my family in a cave for many years. There was no hope. We only saw shadows of life and experienced the same problems all over again, but my parents got out and changed our lives. They were present and sober for us on our birthdays and school events. They were there for us when we were sick and needed them most. They didn't only

stay sober for them or us but also to help others. They were the first to open a Spanish-speaking AA meeting in Madison. I feel that this is a good example of Plato's Allegory of the Cave.

(Marisol Gonzalez)



I felt in a cave at school wanting to understand things I was taught but not knowing how to say what help I needed. . . . I struggled a lot in my early years of school with reading and math. I used to stay up hours at a time with my mom. . . . She tried to comfort me while I was wiping tears away after being stuck



Television asserts influence through deception and targeting, picking at insecurities and fabricating a sense of desire. Commercials will be both up front and subliminal, easing us in the direction of crafting a persona rather than showcasing our true selves. Actors and musicians trend everything from clothes to relief work, making us think that if we do this or that, we might be a little like them. Media manipulates masses of malleable minds. **(Anthony Jefferson)**

on page 5 of a book and stuck on the same word sounding it out. . . . My mom decided to get some tests done to see what my exact diagnosis was. I remember not being able to play outside at recess because I had to stay in at lunch to get extra help. My cave was how I felt about myself at a young age and how many insecurities I had that I shouldn't have had. I overcame most of my insecurities, but as I'm getting older and maturing, I see that there are still some areas of my life . . . where I need to build up my self-confidence, . . . not being blind-sided by the label that was given to me as a child. I call it a label because having a learning disability does not define who I am as a mother, wife, or student. I want to work on the things that I am not good at and not always shut down and feel I'm trapped in that same cave I was once trapped in. Shutting down or quitting just are not options for me anymore.

(Simone Bell-Perdue)

The cave I observe most is that dug from wanting to fit "the norm." Between the media and peer influence, there are shadows cast from day one for most people. Along the way, we obtain labels from our minds or the minds of others, each a shackle binding us in place along the row.



I was trapped in a cave for eight years of my life. I was in a very unhealthy relationship that was very abusive, both mentally and physically. It's all I knew as a sense of love and care. I thought being treated the way I was being treated was love. I found out after escaping the relationship (cave) that it was not at all how you treat the one you love. You should feel appreciated and not taken for granted. I was beaten, cheated on, and made to believe it was my fault. It was a very dark time in my life. At the time I didn't feel like it was that way at all. I thought I was happy and in love and everything in my life was going the way it should. I constantly was making excuses and fighting for something I should have just let go of a long time ago. Now that I was able to break free from the relationship . . . it's like my life was given back to me. I was able to begin rebuilding my self-esteem and self-worth. . . . I knew I had to do this not only for me but for my son. . . . I got into this program

right in time. I now feel like I can finally say I'm happy and realize that it doesn't take being in an unhealthy relationship or in a relationship at all to maintain that happiness that truly is from within. **(Jessica Tucker)**

Looking back on my life, the lack of education and my pursuit of money kept me trapped for ten years in a dead-end job that robbed me of my youth and dignity. I had every opportunity to finish school; however, I was not able to get it done until I quit that job. Taking care of people turned into worry about others before family and myself, all in the name of work, money, health insurance, and independence until my mental and physical body could take no more. If I would have finished the long school program in my first junior college program, perhaps the outcome would have been different, especially the lives of those affected by the long shifts I worked and the days I was unable to see my family due to physical and mental exhaustion. If I had made school my first priority, life would have been much easier and worth the sacrifice.

(Lawana Diagne)

I saw a post on Facebook about a homeless man lying in the street screaming. He was thanking God for being his only salvation supposedly. I wondered if anybody bothered to find out if he could sing, write, dance, or anything. They just took a picture.

Now this homeless man has 2, 636 views and so many likes on Facebook, but he is still in the street screaming to God. So many people are in different situations and are screaming for God to come be the salvation that they think they need. If we all have the same spirit from God with different expressions, why can't we be the salvation for each other?

I've heard it said that people are miserable because they spend 99.4% of the time thinking about themselves when there isn't a

"self." This seems like a cave that very few make it out of. Your pain can cure mine, and my pain can cure yours. How can I love you if I don't sympathize with you? **(Johnnie Walton)**

Now that I think about it, I was in a cave unable to go back to see my family one more time. Family is the most precious treasure that you can have. My parents moved back to Mexico six years ago. It was hard for me to let my mom go. I'm the only daughter out of the three kids, so it was hard living without my mom although I knew she was healthy and happy. When I got my work permit, I found out that I was able to travel. . . . Tears came down my cheeks. I was going back to be with my parents, my family in my hometown, after twelve long years. **(Belem Calixto Martinez)**



I have been stuck in my own cave of being selfish by saying that I don't have time to go back to school because of this or that reason. I was working dead-end jobs hoping and praying they pay the bills, applying for higher positions in the company, but being looked over because I have no education beyond high school. Now I'm out of the cave and can see the light. I will continue to push to get my education. **(Asha Green)**



happened in my past would attract positive things or blessings, so to speak. **(Avé Thorpe)**

My cave would be working to survive the moment instead of going to school to actually learn and be successful with a career which would make my living situation much better and would open so many doors. I guess I was stuck in the moment, not looking at the big picture. Instead of going to school, I made excuses for why I needed to work more. Looking back, I regret

I had a great time going to the beaches and rivers and eating fresh fish regularly on the island of Trinidad. But it was a cave, especially when I learned in my Geography and History classes about all the different countries that existed in the world. I realized at a young age I needed to explore. . . . My pen pal was from England. . . . I frequented the library to learn about the different people and cultures that existed in the world. At the age of 23 I left the island for the first time, making my way to London, England. This experience opened my mind up to a whole new plan for my life. . . . **(Joy Bally)**

In the past I have been stuck in a cave of resentment because of some of the things I've had to endure. At one point I had it in mind that being angry or bitter or having a bad attitude regarding some of the hard times in my life would make me seem tougher or stronger. I was stuck in a mentality that prompted being mean because I thought that it would prevent more bad things from happening or prevent others from trying to hurt me again. I later found out in life that changing my attitude to being more positive and letting go of what

more than anything not applying myself. I regret feeling like I knew it all because right now I could be living so much better. **(Kyisha Williams)**

I've seen people trapped in addiction. They feel isolated and alone. By obsessing on the need to feel complete, they turn to substances to compensate for that need. For example, Josh started taking Adderall to stay up late and study. He later needed more and more pills to even get through the day. . . . In a short time, Josh was up 2-3 days a week with no sleep and started to become lethargic. He was sleepwalking through his life. He was conscious, but his reality wasn't real. He had been missing so much necessary sleep and continued in a zombie-like existence.

(Spencer Gamble)



ORACLE OVATIONS

The realities and diversity expressed through the articles and testaments in the Oracle are speaking to a growing demographic of people that need this kind of relatable material to take the next step forward. Sometimes speaking of the hardships and the past obstacles helps us and others see a broader or sometimes clearer picture, limiting that harmful tunnel vision. The Oracle shows the fruits that this project bears from the individuals to the pioneering spirit we look to cultivate among all generations. With the right medium, I think the Oracle could be a beacon of its own, the steady reminder to stay grounded but aim for the sky. . . .

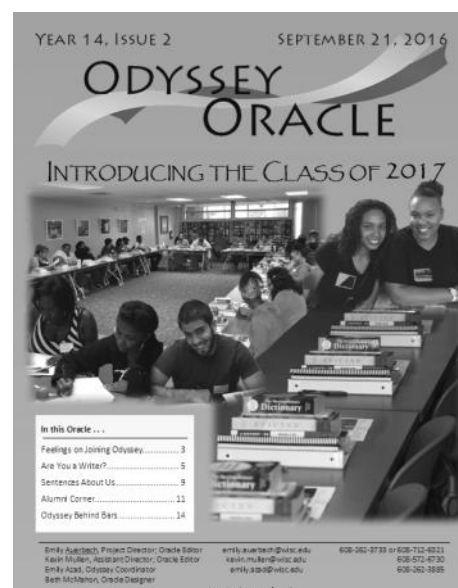
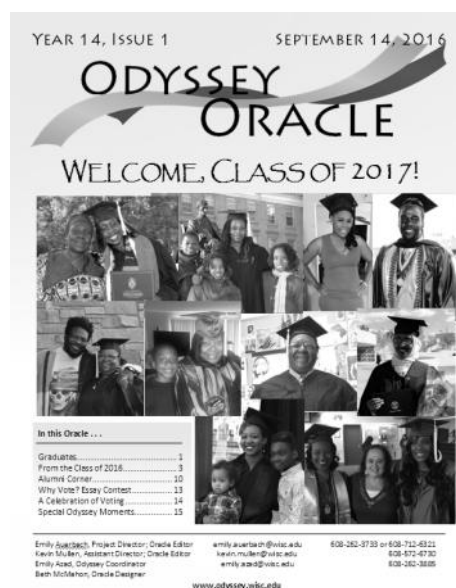
The “Feelings on Joining the Odyssey Project” spoke to me because they showcase the desire and hope that I know resides in a lot of adults wanting to continue their education. The gratitude at getting that chance is so relatable, and messages like that are important to put out there because they inspire and challenge in positive ways. From Carissa feeling like she was given a second chance as an adult to Victoria seeing a brighter future for herself and her family, each one serves as a channel for the common voice. Whether you’re seeking second chances or a start you never got, there’s an Odyssey story you can compare to your situation. **(Anthony Jefferson)**

Reading the first Oracle made me feel proud, and I know I will do GREAT in this program. Odyssey gave these individuals a VOICE to be heard and seen. Everyone had obstacles that they endured, but they were

determined to continue no matter what was going on in their personal lives. They were exposed to things that they never knew were possible. The sentences that jumped out at me were *Don’t give up! Take a step outside of your comfort zone. Odyssey will show you that nothing is impossible.* **(Ngina Ali)**

Reading the Oracle made me feel excited, relieved, but nervous and curious at the same time. I’ve concluded that this is the best, most gifted journey I’ve been blessed to explore. I’ve learned that this is my commitment and my family now. I am here to learn about myself, challenge myself, and succeed in life starting NOW! **(D’onna Atkinson)**

The reading made me feel a form of calm knowing that there have been others just like me that have gone through struggles and circumstances but have made it. The amount of motivation and support written from last year’s class is amazing. It made a lot of my insecurities and concerns gone. I learned that the Odyssey Program is the place to be at. **(Maria Cardenas)**



Sentences in the Oracle that jumped out are *Be yourself and put 1,000% into class, Here I feel welcome, This class is unique, If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything, Odyssey gave me hope, inspiration, and goals, and You are a lucky person.* I learned that Odyssey gave people hope and the ability to believe in themselves. It is a home of all different types of unique and motivated individuals, each person with his or her own story and life journey.

(Alyanna Cooper)

After reading the Oracle I think that the alum who stood out the most was my cousin Marisela (Marisela Tellez Giron '16). After reading her welcoming letter and her poems, I feel like I got a better understanding of her experience in the program and how the class could help me also. What I like the most is how everyone in the Oracle had the same coursework but their experiences were similar and different at the same time. The one thing they all had in common was how they all felt like a family afterwards, and I'm excited to feel the same way. **(Maria Dary)**

Reading the Oracle made me feel better about being accepted into the Odyssey Program. I have to admit when my sister (Karina Gomez '16) told me about this program, it sounded good and I was happy for her. But then she



told me that this program would be a great opportunity for me. I was scared and intimidated. But after reading the stories from other alumni, it made me feel more confident about the decision I made. I can't wait for what's to come in our year together. **(Susan Gomez)**

The Oracle is very emotional and touching (soulful). It makes me feel that I'm part of something big and important. It encouraged me to continue in the program until the end, no matter what obstacles I will find in my way. . . .

When I read the Oracle Junior, I felt very moved by every single word. I want my children to feel as proud of me as Raven White does of her mother (Lea White, Odyssey '09). I also come home every Wednesday very excited to tell my family what I just learned. My son is 14 years old, and I have a big desire for him to experience college life. I'm always scared thinking of the money and the lack of opportunities because he was born in Mexico, but by reading these wonderful real life stories in the Oracles, I know that if others can do it, he will also make it. As Ms. Lea told her children, never give up! Si se puede! **(Marisol Gonzalez)**



Reading the letters in the Oracle puts my mind at ease. I know that this is going to be a long journey for me, but the letters confirm and encourage each and every one of us. Sentences that jump out are *If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything! Everyone has faced obstacles they have been able to overcome. The staff (Emily) will not allow you to give up on yourself.* **(Asha Green)**

After reading the Oracle, I felt like I had no excuse not to try my best. Before reading the Oracle I was nervous and embarrassed at the fact that I would be exposed again, laughed at, and passed through another system. After reading each story, I let out a big breath of relief. I feel like the Odyssey was made for me to show myself no one can control my life decisions but me. If I only try, there will never be a reason why I'm not successful at getting where I want to be in life. I also learned that it's never too late to get back up! **(Shanon Holmes)**

I learned that the Odyssey Project is a bit more of a personal journey, rather than a solely educational experience. From what my father (Rockameem '08) told me and based on the readings in the Oracle, you won't be able to really experience the Odyssey Program unless you "come to class with a family-oriented personality." Sentences that jumped out were *Education is the key to freedom, to advancing your world. Wealth is not only material and financial means; it's also knowledge.*

...

Juanita Wilson '07 wrote in "I Love Odyssey," *I am going to be a lifelong learner.* This is something I'm slowly but surely coming to understand and, in all honesty, am finding almost irritating. It drives me borderline mad to



know there is or never will be a point where I can understand enough things in the world. I always must push my mind further to gain and understand all the information I can and continue to grow from there.

(Nathaniel Lake-Bell)

Reading the Oracle almost made me feel as if I had gone through the journey with the previous students. Reading this made me feel a little more comfortable about embarking on this journey because the

previous students started off with some of the same feelings as I have, but the program resulted in their success. One sentence that stood out to me was when Mustafa Mohammed Saed (Odyssey '16; son of Musab Naji '17) said, "This is a journey that you might want to end within the first four classes." I had to laugh because I felt that way on the first night of class. Students from the previous classes encouraged us that the feeling would pass and to stay. I learned that the Odyssey Project is a life-changing experience that will help us all to find our true selves. . . .

One of the pieces that I was fixated on in the Oracle was by Raven White in College Corner. I

found it amazing that she attributed so much of her success to her mother's success and completion of the Odyssey Project (Lea White '09). It made me think about my own children and how my own success can provoke theirs. As they watch me on my journey through Odyssey, they are finding their own strength. **(Avé Thorpe)**



Reading the Oracle made me feel excited and reassured me that this is the program for me. I have to stay focused, positive, and more open-minded than usual so that I am able to enjoy and appreciate everything Odyssey has to offer. Hearing from people who have already experienced Odyssey is like putting icing on a cake. Some of the things that stood out to me were how honest the writers were at admitting how they didn't feel smart or confident about themselves, how life situations seemed overwhelming, and how they did not believe they could do it. All they needed to do was apply themselves, push harder, and be more open to expressing their hardships so they were not alone and a solution could be found to keep them focused and active in Odyssey so their journeys were a success.

Reading the Oracle just really made me hungry to learn and push myself to be the person I plan to become, which is great. I want SUCCESS so badly I can taste it, but I know it doesn't come easy. . . I have never been the emotional type, but lately I have been in touch with my tears. It's only because I know who I can be, and I wasted so much time not applying myself and looking for excuses. I finally have the opportunity to be great, and I refuse to miss my beat. . . .

Reading "Woman on an Odyssey" about Keena Atkinson '10 spoke to me because I am her. My child's father is away and will be coming home soon, but not soon enough. My daughter is very smart and has so many questions that I don't always know how to answer. . . . What is a good job when your bills outweigh the amount of money you bring home so you're constantly looking for solutions just to make ends meet? You have to keep



pushing and praying until you reach your goal, which is why I am chasing a career.

(Kyisha Williams)

The reading from the Oracle made me feel more driven to do things in the class and made me feel like I could get my work done and wouldn't be alone. A lot of the columns from the alumni from previous years had gone through situations that were difficult but got through them. A lot had kids, which I can relate to, and they went on to be successful and to plan on doing great things, which inspired me. The story by Alice McDaniel '09 about "We Ate Dog Food" reminded me how hard my mom (Rhonda Johnson '09) worked to make a way for me and my brothers and sisters. My mom pulled off two jobs at a time, picked us up from school, made us dinner, and even went through the Odyssey Project. She inspired me every day by her strength. . . . I have learned so much from my mom and from this program. I am dedicated to working hard, even when times get hard in my life, and even when my daughter is up at night needing a diaper change. I am dedicated to working hard and going very far in life. . . .



I really enjoyed reading in the Oracle about Keena Atkinson (Odyssey '10; UW '15) because it gave me hope not to give up on my dreams. Moms always make a way for their kids. I want to be that mom for Lola and teach her to never give up, even when it's hard. I want to be able to have a great job so I can provide things she needs and wants that I never had as a child. **(Simone Bell-Perdue)**

When I first read “Woman on an Odyssey” about Keena Atkinson ’10, I realized that this was not the first time I had heard of this inspiring young lady. I read an article on Madison.com that seemed to turn on a light switch. Reading her story about her struggle, dedication, and perseverance was so moving. I couldn’t stop thinking about it and comparing it to my situation. If she is homeless and a single mother of two [but earns a UW-Madison bachelor’s degree], why can’t I do that? What excuse do I have? Honestly she solidified my decision to apply for the Odyssey Program. I remembered her (vaguely) from my childhood neighborhood. I sent her a Facebook message just letting her know that her achievements did not go unnoticed. She replied with words of encouragement. She may never know, but her inspiring response and journey meant the world to me. **(Cherri Sorrells)**

From the Letters from the Class of 2016 in the Oracle, I took away how amazing this course is and how amazing the teachers are with everything from support mentally/physically or just being a shoulder to lean on or cry on. I can tell that this class and our teachers are going to be like one big happy family. If I ever feel like quitting, I now know I can go back to the first Oracle we received and, no matter what, it will continue to motivate me to continue with my journey. **(Jessica Tucker)**

I agree with Grisel Tapia in “Are You a Writer?” because I don’t consider myself a writer. I always spend too many hours writing small things. While I have an idea of what I want to write, it is difficult for me when I try to write. Now I really get help from teachers and Kevin to express my feelings in writing and to be more confident. **(Musab Naji)**



I loved the piece “I Love My Webster’s” by Tosumba Welch ’13. He used a deep way to describe the relationship with a dictionary, like it was with a lover or best friend, someone who could tell him things others couldn’t. This is the type of relationship I have with my poetry. It’s just so honest/real. **(Victoria Patterson)**



Eugene Smalls’s “Life-Altering Journey” was a remarkable story to me. I have never been behind bars and always wondered if these individuals ever got a chance in life to be heard and loved and given direction to pursue their dreams of having a great future. What I got from the story was



compassion and hope. The compassion I see is Eugene Smalls (Odyssey ’12) taking what he learned from the Odyssey Project and passing it on to other inmates. He has hope for a much brighter future by taking a personal interest in spreading the word of God through the prisons. He found his path in life. He has cleansed himself of his demons. He has returned to prison to help the inmates see a bright future. **(Joy Bally)**

ALUMNI CORNER

My Journey

by René Robinson '08

My journey started about eight months ago,
How I would fare, I really didn't know.
Reading, writing for sure there would be,
But from six to nine, that I couldn't see.
The professors were there for all to meet,
Outlining History, Humanities, and Philosophy.
I was scared but I didn't know why,
Maybe it was the thirty years that had quickly gone by.
Getting acclimated was a little rough at first,
But soon thereafter to read books I would thirst.
See, prior to Odyssey, I didn't read,
All the info I got was from the TV.
But things have changed
Mainly the screen
From the TV to the computer
I'm now a Google Queen.
My journey, my journey,
Who would have thought
Would be the beginning of me being taught,
Being taught the importance of opening my mind,
Instead of sitting around wasting my time.
Thank you, Odyssey, for choosing me,
I've found knowledge,
My greatest discovery



Rene Riffs on Plato

I believe the prisoners in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" are us: people, human beings in general. It has nothing to do with race, economical or educational status; I consider those sub-caves. We have all been fettered (shackled and chained) from generation to generation. We have been taught how to think and what to think. The expansion of our mind has been limited to our surroundings. We have been made products of our environment by our communities, our neighborhoods, and our upbringing; we were all born in a cave.



The cave is like a one-sided coin: seeing only one side. If you are born rich, do you know what it is to be born poor? If you are born poor, do you know what it is to be born rich? The importance of getting out of the cave is to find out what's on the other side of the coin; such as Socrates' example of going from the darkness to the light. I believe every human being in this world is dealing with some form of darkness, whether by force or choice.

We need to walk towards love, passing by hate. We need to walk towards courage, passing by fear. We need to walk towards "I can," passing by those infamous words, "I can't."



René performs as a musician, motivational speaker, and dramatic reader (Sojourner Truth, Maya Angelou, and others) in church, at community events, on the radio, and for every Odyssey class.

Odyssey Soup

Josephine Lorya Ozulamoi '08

I am the product of love.
 I was raised around love,
 and love is what I have become.
 My name is Josephine,
 I am a singing machine.
 I am an exotic human being from Africa.
 I am the original,
 and I am on an Odyssey.
 I am on an odyssey to earn a higher education.
 During my Odyssey, I met wonderful people
 from different backgrounds.
 We are all part of the recipe
 to make the Odyssey Soup.
 Our teachers stir us up daily
 to stimulate our minds.
 This journey is wonderful,
 This journey is full of life,
 Full of love,
 Full of hope



Josephine Lorya Ozulamoi, a refugee from the Sudan, calls Odyssey "the best thing that's happened to me" and her "passport to the blessing of higher education." A mother of three, Josephine graduated from UW-Madison with a bachelor's degree in 2012 and hopes to be graduating this May 2017 from UW-Madison with a master's degree in Social Work. She wants to give back to other refugee families.

FOOD MEMORIES

Fish from Gambia

I remember an exotic Gambian dish called Fish Yassa. It has a spicy, zesty, mouthwatering taste to it, almost matching the tropical heat in the Gambia. Fish Yassa is marinated, grilled fish with a side of spicy, sour onion sauce with rice. Yassa is made with fresh fish, lemons, ginger, peppers, onions, and pieces of sour tamarind. The fish is cleaned and seasoned with salt, ginger, and lemon, then grilled with charcoal using a low-heat local grill. Then onions are chopped, seasoned with mustard, lemon, garlic and tamarind pieces and salt, and fried in low heat oil for a few minutes. The grilled fish is added to the onions and cooked for a few more minutes on both sides until the fish completely absorbs the onion sauce. Serve the fish and onions over white rice, and garnish with parsley and slices of lemon. Yassa is also perfect for when recovering from a cold or loss of appetite because it awakens all your taste buds. Always have a glass of a cold drink because the spices are hot. (**Sukai Yarbo**)



Iraqi Biryani

My aunt cooks biryani. This food is very delicious. For this dish she uses rice and vegetables like carrots, green beans, potatoes, corn, dry grapes, and special spices. The spices she uses include cardamom, cloves, and curry. Oh, this smell I will



never forget! I am lucky because my wife, Shaimaa (Odyssey '16), learned how to cook biryani from my aunt. We celebrate every time Shaimaa cooks biryani for us. (**Musab Naji**)

Taste of Game

The wild, greasy, gamey taste of this delicious red



meat was lingering on my tongue. It was heavenly.

My mother would take out the big cast iron pot. She wouldn't accept this delicacy without seeing the head, feet, or tail. In the pot the meat had been cleaned, garlic, onion, and salt had been added for taste, and her special seasoning had the house smelling spicy good. Every holiday until her death we looked

forward to the first boiled then baked meal, with sweet potatoes and Louisiana Hot Sauce blend. This delicacy made a scrumptious meal for the family. If I didn't tell you, no one would ever know how good raccoon tastes. I will never eat 'coon again. It just would never taste the same if someone else was to cook it. (**Lawana Diagne**)

La Barbacoa

Yesterday, I had barbacoa for dinner. It is a very popular dish in Mexico. First, I had to put the meat in boiling water for two hours. While it was cooking, I added some spices, such as oregano,

onions, and garlic. In another container I mixed guajillo pepper, chipotle pepper, onions, garlic, orange juice, laurel leaves, and salt. I kept cooking for another hour. I chopped some cilantro, onions, radishes, and lemons. I made some spicy sauce using green tomatoes and cilantro. I invited my in-laws. They were so hungry like me. I set the casserole in some tacos. Before my in-laws left my house, they told me to call them back the next time I prepare something. (**José Mendoza**)

Mangoes from Trinidad Are the Best

My favorite fruit will always be from the Caribbean: mangoes, sapodilla, soursop, guavas, and the list goes on. Eating a ripe mango straight from the tree is the best. You bite into it, don't peel it, and then feel the juice starts running between your fingers and down your hand, dripping onto the floor. The taste of the mango is explosive in your mouth, so sugary sweet it makes your mouth water so much! The smell of a ripe mango is like a strong essence burning through

your nostrils. The sight of ripe mangoes on a tree brings excitement and the adrenaline to climb that mango tree and to make sure it ends up in your mouth.



Mango trees can be seen in almost everyone's backyard. If you did not have one, mango trees can be seen in empty lots, the beach, your neighbor's, and everywhere on campus in Trinidad. (**Joy Bally**)

A Filipino Feeling of Family

Whenever the Filipino side of my family gets together for a special occasion, we always

have a feast. My grandma would begin cooking the night before. I remember waking up to the warm, sweet smell of fresh pandesal (bread) and my mouth would begin watering. All day my grandmother's house would become alive with different aromas of soy sauce, bay leaves, and my least favorite, peppercorns. I used to hate when my grandma would put too many peppercorns in the adoba because as soon as you bite into them, you get an immediate burst of a gritty, spicy, chalk-like taste. My favorite dish is our traditional pancit dish. It is a noodle dish full of vivid colors from all the different veggies, and the chicken that was mixed in was always so moist and full of flavor. Whenever I eat pancit, it gives me a warm feeling of family and togetherness because we would always have the dish at every family get-together. (**Jessica Tucker**)



My Grandma's Quesadillas

I can remember my grandmother's quesadillas. They were so good that she was living off them by selling her quesadillas every day. I remember every taste and every smell from the beginning when she was cooking chicharron (a pork meat with a lot of grease) with salsa. The salsa sometimes was spicy, but it was just right. She would also make tinga, which is chicken with onions in tomato sauce with a little bit of chipotle. Those two were my favorite because then she would make the tortillas by hand in the hot and greasy comal (Mexican flat griddle). When the tortilla was cooked and crispy, she would add Oaxaca cheese, which is a cheese that can melt and give a delicious taste to everything, but is special for quesadillas. Then you can add a little bit of salsa verde with this special flavor of sour and spicy. My grandma's quesadillas were the best in all of Mexico City. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**



Mexican Prickly Pear Cactus

I remember as a child going to my grandparents' house from my mom's side of the family to a small village two hours away from home where you could find apple trees, pear trees, and pecan trees. What I liked the most was to take down the tunas (Spanish for the fruit of the prickly pear cactus). Since they have thorns, we had to take them down with a stick and shake them in the sand to get rid of the thorns. With no knife to cut them, we had to take

the fruit skin off to be able to eat it with our hands. The tunas were the best, with a sweet, juicy, and delicious taste after a long play day. Eating them sitting under a



tree on a sunny day, being around birds and feeling the fresh air, and seeing the wonderful view of the village—which is near the Pico de Orizaba volcano—makes me wish I can go back to live that experience again. **(Grisel Claudio Tapia)**

My Most Satisfyingly Unsatisfying Breakfast

I was raised primarily by my mother. She cooked for me and my sister the majority of my life. But around my junior year of high school, I was sent to live with my father in California. I never really spent that much time with him when I was growing up, so it was a huge change for me. My dad is a head chef and at the time worked at a country club in San Diego. He worked long hours seven days a week and it was only him and I. Every morning when I would wake up for school, we would sit on his old smelly brown couch, drink hazelnut coffee, and eat wheat toast with peanut butter and a bowl of brown sugar oatmeal that never made me feel full. The coffee was always reused from the day before and was so thick and black that I always mocked him and pretended my spoon would get stuck while I tried to stir in the sugar. I always remember this as my most

satisfyingly unsatisfying breakfast because although I was always left hungry and the coffee was horrible, I cherished this small amount of time with my father. **(Maria Dary)**



Tamales

Every Christmas Eve, my mom, my sisters, and I would be preparing everything to make tamales. My mom's pressure cooker with the pork meat and garlic would be boiling on the stove. The corn husks were resting in lukewarm water. The California dried peppers with garlic, salt and cumin are also boiling behind us as we



are preparing the delicious "masa" (corn flour mixture for tamales). All the smells together let us know that Christmas is here. We pour the pork broth into the masa and mix. We mix some salt in it, too, to bring it to that delicious taste. Then as we all help to shred the pork, we can smell that the peppers are ready to be pureed. We mix the puree with the pork meat and let it boil, mixing in some more cumin and salt to the taste. Now the real work starts as we spread the masa over 200 corn husks. My mom puts the pork mixture in the corn husk, folding it and putting it on our big, dented silver stock pot. After all the hard work and four hours later of simmering on the stove, the tamales are finally moist and full of flavor. Then we know Christmas is here. **(Susana Gomez)**

Birthday Cake

A food memory that I have is when my boyfriend made me a birthday cake for my 23rd birthday. He said that he was going to make me a cheesecake, but I didn't believe him. My



favorite things to eat are strawberries because of how juicy, sour and sweet they can be. I got tired of eating generic brand desserts. I had gone to sleep the night before and wasn't really expecting anything. My birthday is always a cold, gloomy day, so I always end up staying home. He made this year so special that even until this day I can still taste it. He made a strawberry cheesecake with strawberry syrup. It looked so delicious and tasted even better. The strawberry syrup was sour and so sweet all at once. It reminded me of one of those sour gummies that are full of artificial sugar. Inside of the cheesecake it had even more strawberry syrup; it made it look like a work of art. The crust was my favorite part. It was a mixture of cinnamon and nutmeg goodness that reminded me of Teddy Graham cookies. I didn't realize that everything he had made had been from scratch. Having home baked goods has a totally different meaning and tastes even better when it comes from your loved ones. **(Maria Cardenas)**

Piece of Cake!

Walking in my grandmother's house from school, I saw my grandmother over the stove mixing ingredients up. To my surprise, she was starting to make pineapple cream cheese cake. I dropped everything I had and went to wash my hands. I went into the kitchen to assist my grandmother in making this delicious cake. Did I tell you it is my favorite cake of all time? Well anyways. . . I proceeded to pour four cups of the cake flour in the bowl. I added the eggs, butter, sugar, oil, water, and cream cheese, then mixed everything together. . . I put the cake in the oven and set the oven at 350 degrees. We then proceeded to make the frosting, my favorite part. I got the cream cheese out of the refrigerator,

along with sugar and pineapples. I mixed the cream cheese and sugar together . . . Finally, the cake was done. . . . After 30 minutes we proceeded to put the frosting on the cake, the cream cheese we mixed up earlier, and the crushed pineapples on top of the cake. Mmmm, the juice from the pineapples was so good. Finally, the cake was done, but I couldn't have a piece. I had homework that needed to be done. Even though I had to do homework and had to wait to get that first slice, I was in heaven. The cake was so moist and the pineapples melted in my mouth. Oh, my goodness, I will not forget that taste. It was delicious. The juice from the pineapple was running from my mouth.
(Ngina Ali)



Sunday Dinner with Grandma Helen

My grandma's greens are so good. They make your mouth water as they melt on your tongue. Sunday dinners with the family are always full of love. The kids argue and play while the grownups create a masterpiece. They serve fresh sweet potatoes, baked macaroni and cheese with a little sour cream to add some flavor, fried chicken, Kenya's famous spaghetti with sugar, and let's not forget cornbread. The house is usually full of noise from laughs to cries; that is, until the food is done and everyone is focused on enjoying their meals. They don't hesitate on stuffing their mouths. The room is silent unless someone says,



"Mmmm, Grandma, this food is so good." It's usually one of the kids. You have people at the table and scattered on the floor. This is our definition of family time, eating good old soul food. (Kyisha Williams)

Angie's Soul Food Cooking

My mother-in-law makes the best fried chicken I have ever tasted. Angie seasons the chicken with her special seasoning in a Ziploc bag. First, she places the chicken on a pan. She seasons the bird and tosses it in a Ziploc bag and shakes it all up. I can taste the chicken as she drops it in the sizzling, scalding grease. Hovering over the stove as she removes the golden brown chicken from the stove, I feel my senses are going crazy. I need a taste on the tip of my taste buds. Finally, it is time to eat! I pour the hot sauce over my golden brown bird. It's time to dig in! My taste buds begin to dance. (Asha Green)



Precious Moments

Two months ago I was in Mexico. It was one week before I had to come back. One of my nieces, Natali, came to my mom's house, and she brought with her some zucchini flowers. In exchange, my mom gave her about five pounds of fresh tomatoes. My mom then told me that we (I helped her cook everyday) were going to fill them up with "queso doblecrema" (double cream cheese), which is delicious. Mmmmm. We cleaned the flowers, and then my mom started filling them with the cheese, while I beat the eggs and got them ready for her. Then she took the eggs and the stuffed zucchini flowers to the small kitchen. She

didn't use her kitchen inside the house much because she didn't like the smell of food around the main house. Anyways, she covered the



zucchini flowers with egg and then fried them. While she was doing that with about 30 flowers, I had to make the sauce. For the sauce, I had to put in the blender some fresh tomatoes, fresh jalapenos, onion, garlic, and a bit of salt. After my mom was done, I took the sauce to her. She already had a pan ready with some oil. She added some onion to give it more flavor. She waited for about two minutes and then added the blended sauce. She then had to wait for about 10 minutes to let it boil before adding the flowers. I wanted to try them right away, but I always liked to wait for my dad. Dinner with my family was a blessing. (Belem Calixto)

An Unhappy Thanksgiving

For as long as I can remember, I will never forget the day, November 27th, 2008, when I had just awakened from a dream. I dreamt of the smell of my mom's cooking the night before Thanksgiving.



As
I

woke up and ran downstairs to see all the food I dreamt of, I was crushed to only see my foster mom setting the table. The table was set for only four people. I expected a huge ham with smoke still rising from it. I wanted to see the bright yellow, sweet-as-candy pineapples lying on the ham as if the pineapples were sunbathing on the beach. Instead, my foster mom took a small, dry-looking turkey out of the oven and put it in the middle of the table. I rolled my eyes and walked back downstairs saying, "It's just another holiday away from my real dinner table and real family."

(Shanon Holmes)

Peach Peanut Butter

When my mother made peanut butter toast with butter, it was very delicious and soft. She made me open up a can of peaches, cut them up into pieces, and put them on my peanut butter toast. The taste of this treat was warm and soft, yet it added a taste of peach juice. There was nothing like sitting around the brown wooden table with my mother creating this tasty snack. After we finished eating, crumbs left on our plate from the toast and juice, we cleaned the dishes!

(D'onna Atkinson)



East African Delicacy

Ten years ago specifically, I created a duplication of an East African dish. Baasto e Hilib is a well-roasted lamb leg or chop sautéed in olive oil with spaghetti. There are crisp red and green bell peppers and succulent portabella mushrooms drenched in a white creamy glaze seasoned with spices to accept the lamb. The

meat is tender, not too gummy. It is similar to spaghetti and meatballs from Italian cuisine. It is important not to overcook the peppers. They should remain crunchy. The

meat should be so tender it falls from the bone. Brown it first and slow roast it to perfection. For the glaze you use droppings from the lamb and several punches of flour. Boil the spaghetti until its soft and then sauté it in the glaze. Pour half of the glaze on the lamb. Lastly, spread the lamb pieces over the spaghetti. You're in for a treat. I have made this meal many times with different variations to be creative. It can also be made with rice, which is called Baris e Hilib. There is a sort of color palate that's pleasing to the eye and an aroma that smells delicious. **(Spencer Gamble)**



choices were despicable. There was one time when I went to visit his sister in South Bend, Indiana. She would always make us eat either liver or bologna. I hate both. The liver was slimy yet tough and had a foul sewer smell. The taste was even worse; it was almost like eating manure.

Then there was the time I went to visit his brother Charles in Champagne, Illinois. He would always catch rabbits, skin them, and make stew. Not only did it smell like what I would believe a dead body would smell like, but it also tasted the same. It was extremely greasy with a fishy taste almost, but you could smell and taste the blood the closer it got to your nose and mouth. It was similar to liver but still had hairs on it. Yuck! **(Avé Thorpe)**

My Sticky Syrup Sandwich

My drug-addicted father left me home with my teenaged brother. I was hungry. There was food but nothing that really went together. He knew I loved sandwiches and syrup for pancakes. My brother made me a sandwich. The smell was sweet yet bitter. The taste and texture was almost like eating a wet rug. It was sweet, chewy, and sticky. I had very sticky hands. My brother helped me wash my hands and face. I will always remember that sandwich. **(Alyanna Cooper)**



Liver and the Other Brown Meat

So when I was younger, some summers my mom



would send me away to the family of her ex-husband, who is also the father of my siblings, family. They were somewhat country, and their food

A Happy Thanksgiving

I remember when my children's grandmother made chitterlings for Thanksgiving. I smelled exactly what they were. I didn't know that humans still ate that mess. For those of you who don't know what chitterlings are, they are pig intestines. My son didn't want any chitterlings but his grandmother told him that he couldn't leave his spot until he ate those chitterlings. When she walked out of the room, I ate all of the chitterlings for him and told him not to say anything. He was happy, so I was happy.

(Johnnie Walton)



Picking Apples

I love picking delicious, juicy, red, and vibrant apples on a hot steamy day. Picking apples high from a limb of a tree, I shake the branch to get the best apples from the top. After looking through multiple apples, without black worm holes in them, I pick out the best round apple. As I take the first bite, apple juices hit my face and run down my cheek. The taste is so crisp and juicy with a hard, stringy peel for the skin. As I stand under the bright hot sun, on a hot summer day, sweat beads run down my face. The ground is



filled with apples of different shapes, sizes, and colors. I close my eyes with every bite, while listening to the sounds of nature. The birds are flying by, the lawn mower drives by, and I smell freshly cut grass. Kids are playing in the yard, running and playing tag, while the sweet smells of freshly baked pie are cooking in the kitchen.

(Carissa Love)



A Sweet Treat

No food to eat... nothing like a sweet treat. Food was scarce and times were hard. We were struggling. Grandma was at work for the umpteenth time on overtime just to make enough to pay the bills and buy food for the next week to come. As I looked into my cousin's tear-stained eyes, he wailed, "I'm hungry!" As the oldest of the kids, I went into the kitchen and searched. There was bread but no meat. My mind wondered what I could add to make a meal for us. I found syrup! I took the butter from the refrigerator, spread it

over the white bread, and laid it in the skillet. As the bread browned, I took the syrup and added cinnamon to it. Not much of a meal to some, but it was a sweet treat to fill our bellies before bed. The sweet smell of the cinnamon as we both feasted on the best sweet dinner we'd ever eaten was courtesy of no food in our home.

(Felica Thomas)

The First Time I Ate an Oyster

At first glance the rough bumps lined with washed out colors of green, black and grey do not make this particular food look appealing. It looks more like some type of fat, dried crustacean or a rotten plum long forgotten under a fridge. Inspired by Tony Bourdain, I begin to open the shell by



sliding my knife along the thin ridge indicating that if there were any way to open it with ease, it would be here. Keeping in mind that I do not want to eat any of the shell, I take care in how I exert force with the knife. I rock it back and forth, shifting the blade side to side as if I were picking a lock in a dim, candlelit room. I have no desire to eat any of the putrid looking shell. Finally, with a grinding pop, the shell opens.

I run my blade along the roof of the shell to scrape off any flesh that could be stuck. I examine what is to be my reward.... Inside lies what appears to be the remnant of some creature's eyeball or perhaps the phlegm from some ancient prehistoric beast long forgotten on the ocean floor. Although it is visually offensive, its smell is relatively neutral. This quite possibly is the oyster's greatest trick.

The moment I slip the once-living, slime-covered mucus membrane in my mouth, I find it is the most bitter and repulsive taste. "Fight or flight" kicks in, and my whole body rejects the very idea of me having this in my mouth, let alone consuming it. I have shivers, which I assume are similar to someone having a religious experience.

Thinking back on it now, my stomach still churns. It was like the ocean had thrown up, compressed it, and slid its way into my mouth. Had it not been for the fact that my head chef was watching me, I'm sure at that time that I would have spit it out like

the loogie it was. I swallowed, closed my eyes, and let the moment wash over me: the saltiness of the ocean, the horribly awkward texture that I refused to chew. I had to let it pass. I could not let it win. I would not let this abomination make me throw up...and I won. **(Nathaniel Lake)**



Thai Food

In Thailand, where I visited last summer, I had a delicious meal that's called "Seimah." It is made by Thai families from fried eggplants with tasty milk. It has a smell like olive oil. The eggplants were made with cardamom and chili, spicy and steaming hot. The milk was an ivory color with a sugary taste.

(Ahmad Nahas)

Apple Juice

I wiggled my toes in the prickly grass as I sat barefoot on a grassy knoll. As I stood, I swiftly swiped the back of my stiff blue jeans to remove any loose blades. After carefully lacing my cool leather boot, I



ventured down the hill to a sea of trees. The tall oaks had begun to bear fruit. I spied a shiny green apple that barely hung on as the cool wind blew. I didn't have to reach very high to grip the solid, smooth skin. I spun the apple around inside of my shirt and prepared my watering taste buds. As I took the first bite, my taste buds came to life. I made a strange facial expression as the sour acidic juice flowed. I crunched the next few bites as I gulped down chunks of peel. I inhaled the sweet smell of trees, as I crunched another juicy bite. I licked my lips and tasted sweet and sour fruit juice. (**Cherri Sorrells**)



Toasted PB&J

My favorite snack is toasted Peanut Butter and Jelly. The first time I ever had it was when I was 11 years old. I didn't want soft bread so I put butter in a pan and toasted my peanut butter and jelly sandwich. The peanut butter melts all over the jelly and they intertwine together, making the perfect combination. (**Kendra Atkinson**)

Mama's Famous Spinach Pie

Every Thanksgiving or Christmas, my mom makes the best spinach pie. I know when people hear spinach they go "EW!" but let me tell you even if you despise spinach you will grow to love it after I tell you how it's made.

My mom starts with the crust of the pie, which is always falling off and crispy, not too crispy but just enough. Then she adds the mixtures of egg, spinach, Italian spices (because this is an Italian dish), and a pinch of heaven that I cannot describe because literally your mouth waters smelling it in the oven. It is layered with cheese, but not just any cheese, shredded cheddar. Every time I eat it, it makes me so happy because while we're sharing this delicious piece of pie, we're chatting about memories, good or bad. This past summer I went to visit my mom in

Michigan with my daughter and the first thing she said was that she was making spinach pie. I almost fell it made me so happy. I never can figure out how my mom never burns the pie. She can be doing a million things with us, but I have never had burnt spinach pie. It's always crispy, soft in the middle, and with a crispy bottom.

Every time I think of her "famous spinach pie," it makes me think of our family time that we spent in the house as kids. I could try and make the spinach pie, but it will never compare to my mom's. I'm going to tell you one thing: once you have one piece, you will never get enough. You'll be asking if there is more. (**Simone Bell-Perdue**)



Ketchup Balls Got Me Through

After going to bed refusing to eat what had been served for dinner that night, I drifted off to sleep but woke up to a sharp pain coming. I could feel my stomach in my back. I convinced my ten-year-old self to sneak into the kitchen. I had to feel my way down the stairs and knew I was there when my feet hit the cold floor. I put my hands in front and felt to the fridge door. I opened it for light. I took out the bottle of ketchup to prop the door open as I started searching for something to eat that didn't have to be cooked. I settled for bread and ketchup. I took two pieces of bread, laid them on the counter, squeezed the ketchup on top, and then made them into balls to make it feel like more. As I bit into it, my mouth began to water and I felt as if I would throw it up at first. I took another bite, beginning to feel it hit the bottom of my stomach, feeling me up as if I was eating a feast. It was my feast that filled me up and helped me sleep: bread and ketchup. **(Victoria Patterson)**

Some of my best memories are of the time we would go to my late grandma's house for a meal. She was a sturdy old woman in her wheelchair, confined for 20 or so years by the time I came into the world, but

that never stopped her from preparing a feast. St. Patrick's was corn beef and she loved a good batch of ribs for Independence Day along with a good helping of homemade potato salad. Christmas and Easter brought a honey glazed ham and boiled potatoes to the table, tender and hearty like it leapt off a television screen just for us. But none compared to Thanksgiving when she would wheel into the kitchen in the dark morning hours and start her turkey and side dishes, filling every room with the sharpness of the seasoned deviled eggs or the buttery whiff from her homemade mashed taters. All day I would sit and listen to the blender whirring or the metal spoon clanging against a jar, a sort of edible symphony being conducted by the careful veteran composer. One by one dishes filled her small grey card table: sweet potatoes with marshmallow topping, sage dressing made from scratch, corn pudding and deviled eggs doted on and likely sampled by her a few times, and never forget those sweet pumpkin pies. I miss her dearly but when I help my mom to prepare a meal like my grandma's I know we're helping to keep memories like this going for ourselves and others. **(Anthony Jefferson)**

