# ODYSSEY ORACLE

## WELCOME, CLASS OF 2017!



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## FROM THE CLASS OF 2016

Dear Class of 2017,



I am a student from the class of 2016. I am writing to let you know that with being accepted to the class, make sure you are motivated to get the work done. If you are ever in a situation where you really need

someone to talk to, open up to Emily or Kevin because they understand, they listen, and they keep you going, even when you are feeling down. Whenever you come to a point where you want to give up, NEVER do it because it's not worth it. Have pride, confidence, self-motivation, and also come to the class with a family-oriented personality. Best believe you will make it where you want to if you just put your mind to it. (Katia Robinson)



Believe it or don't believe it, the Odyssey Program will change your whole life. Odyssey will help you discover your talent. Odyssey will show you that nothing is impossible. If you can't write poems,

Odyssey will help you to write more than one. If your English is not good, Odyssey will help you to improve it. If you want to know about American history, Odyssey will teach you about it. If you want to have a higher education, Odyssey will help you get closer to your dreams. All your dreams will come true if you really work hard to get them. You can start that by coming to the class every day and doing all of the homework. To be honest, I felt scared that I could not do it, but when I went

to Kevin, he helped and showed me how to do the homework. Kevin makes me believe that I can do the homework. That's what makes me never give up. (Umaima Mohammed Saed)



I am writing to inform you that the best thing you can do for yourself during this project is utilize any and all services offered. Try to do your best and never give up on you. Once you give up on yourself, you give

the world the "go" to give up on you. Even when your assignments are incomplete or undone, still do your best to maintain perfect attendance. Please spread the word to others about Odyssey. Know that in this class you are your brothers' and sisters' keeper. Always remember you must be in the game to win the game. (Nickitia Cooper)



Don't give up! "College is for the privileged, the wealthy, the intelligent." That's what society makes us believe. Odyssey gave me a second chance, and not only a second chance at education but also a second

chance at success within myself. Don't sell yourself short. These people believe in you. You just have to believe in yourself and never give up. (Ashley Wills)



Welcome to a grand exploration that is Odyssey. For the next eight months, prepare yourself to challenge and be challenged. Take a step outside of your comfort zone. At this

time you may not know that there is something inside of you that your classmates don't have. Please share it because your experiences matter. Make the most of this opportunity and make your Odyssey class the best ever. (Tory Latham)



Welcome aboard the ship, which will take you on an adventure. Prepare yourselves to meet your destination. Emily and the staff are about to take you on a trip of a lifetime. You

way, including finding yourself. Dedicate yourselves to class and don't hold back. Explore the resources at hand and make the best use of them. The whole staff is here to help and see you succeed. Attending the Odyssey program is a blessing for those who were picked. Let your minds wander, your ears listen, and eyes focus with your heart open. (Marisela Tellez)



No matter what obstacle you face throughout this journey, hold on and push through. You have been given an amazing opportunity to grow within yourself. Your views on life, politics, and the community

around you will be different. You will be enlightened by a lot of topics and opinions of your classmates. One thing in our class is that we uplift each other and encourage each other. We use each other when feeling down and reach out to the teachers. They are always there, even when they seem like they are not. Start your journey with an open mind for everyone comes from a different background. Remind yourself that no one is perfect. There is a reason why you were chosen. Good luck and prosper through! (Jayvonna Flemming)



I am a very proud student of this current Odyssev class. I was not as committed as I would have liked to be due to life situations. A lot of the time I wanted to say forget it. Twice I did. December 2015 I lost my

job. On the flip side, my husband took me to Myrtle Beach. I was so happy in 80 degree weather with sand running through my feet and watching and listening to the silent sound of the water's waves in my hotel room on the eighth floor. I wanted to pack up and move. will learn many things along the Mrs. Emily called me, texted me, Facebooked me and sent me a letter to my home. I kept refusing her calls. Once I received a letter to my home I crawled from under my pink and white blanket and I had seen the light. I called Mrs. Emily. She seemed so happy, which made me happy. I regained my strength, showered and prepared for class. The moral of the story is this: never quit. Here it is, April 6, 2016. After being behind like eight assignments, I am only missing three. I am very proud of me. I look forward to May 4, 2016. I will then be an alumna. Bettye Emmanuel, that's me. (Bettye Emmanuel)

The Odyssey program: I was lucky to be in that program. It is a journey that you might want to end the first four classes, but believe me: you will not want to be done later on. Enjoy every moment in the class because

you are going to miss it. People here love you and they are ready to help, so get yourself helped. You will feel different by the end of the class. I felt smart. If you don't like reading or writing, then you are in the right class. Wednesday will be a win day for those who show up. (Mustafa Mohammed Saed)



First of all, I would tell you, "You are a lucky person." You are lucky because you got accepted into the Odyssey class. Odyssey will make you find your way. Odyssey will open many doors for you.

Odyssey will show you how to be a successful person. My advice to you is to keep coming to class and do not miss any days. Also, try to always do your assignments on time. If you miss something, that means you miss a lot. Odyssey will help you see life from a different edge you have maybe never seen before. You will grow with Odyssey and Odyssey will grow with you. As I said before, "I hope everyone can have a chance to attend the Odyssey class because I think then our community would be perfect." (Shaimaa Ahmed)



When I started this class, I was scared because I didn't know what to expect coming into the the Odyssey program, my car go to class. I wanted to give up

but I didn't; I kept on pushing. I was in class on Wednesday nights and tutoring on Monday and Tuesday nights. I did not let that stop me from coming to class. The Odyssey is an amazing program to be in. You have great people to support you through the Odyssey program. My biggest thing is that if you need help on homework, please go to tutoring because you will get all the help that you need. If you do not understand the reading, Kevin will make sure you get the help that you need. The Odyssey program has opened my eyes so much because they helped me grow from when I first started. I have had nights at home where I wanted to cry because of all the help that I have gotten from my teachers and

volunteers. They have helped me out with my daughter and with my homework. My class has helped me when I have stumbled over words I didn't know, so don't be scared to stumble across words you don't know. I love the Odyssey. (Jalisa Galvin)



Odyssey gave me life! I entered Odyssey in limbo, like I was dangling carelessly in mid-air, trying to keep my balance 1,000 feet high while walking on a tightrope. With a mere shift of a slight breeze, I could fall over.

Now, balancing walking on a tightrope is not my cup of tea, so falling over was inevitable. On one side were all my struggles, hurt, pain and hardship, and on the other it was the sheer determination that I'm going to make it. I have to make it, not only for me but for my family. We all depended on me. When they say things are thrown in your path at the right time for all the right reasons, that would be Odyssey program. A month into my Odyssey. Odyssey gave me hope, inspiration and goals to reach. Odyssey was was totaled and I didn't want to my light guiding me through the dark where I couldn't see. Odyssey motivated and excited me and gave me back my passion that had been slowly slipping out of me. Odyssey gave me life. It never gave up on me, for I will never give up on my Odyssey. So, I invite you, Class of 2017, to follow in my footsteps as you, too, get to experience the gifts of your Odyssey. (Arkeshia Sallay)



This journey isn't easy. I spent many nights with confusion and writer's block. I would read a passage in a book and fear my thoughts about it. Some of it I flat out didn't understand. I continued to scratch my head

and had many questions. At times I felt lost. I

didn't want to go to class. A year may seem like an eternity but it goes fast. You will find bliss when you find out your own meaning of the author's messages. You discover a side of you that you never knew existed. You feel a sigh of relief when that essay you spent all week revising is finally done. Each class and each assignment you learn a little more about yourself. You begin to grow into this overall intelligent human being. The world seems like a better place because you have wonderful teachers beside you who give you their soul from September to May. The help is always there, and I mean it's there. The discussions in this class are life-changing and your fellow classmates know so much. In the end, you will feel watching my every move! I felt I had to work this endless boost of confidence that you will always remember and take with you as you journey through life. This was my experience with Odyssey. I will never forget it. (Kala Taylor)



You are probably scared and excited right now, but your fear overwhelms any other emotion, and that's okay. You are here sitting in the red chairs that will take you on a journey that will empower you like never before.

Odyssey will not only be something that you look forward to every week, it will become the source of your education. That is all that matters now. Your writing will grow tremendously. You will be

proud of it. Kevin will help you with that. Coach will teach you crazy words that will make you think you are crazy and amazing when you use them. Emily will teach you how to read poetry and if you don't already know, poetry doesn't need grammar; all it needs is power. You'll be grateful for that. You will be amazed by what Craig and Jean teach you. The fear will dissipate and when it does, you'll be free to enjoy your Odyssey. Enjoy Wednesday! (Karina Herrejon)



Life brings you so many obstacles and challenges to overcome. It's definitely not a bouquet of beautiful red roses. Whenever you come to the point where you feel like giving up, just remember the thought that came across your

mind when you decided to apply for the program. When you discover so many reasons to quit, find just one to keep on going. Don't quit!

There were numerous amounts of times when I seriously considered walking away, but I could never bring myself to do so. I have two boys twice as hard, being a single young mother, raising two African American boys. This world is already designed to tear them down because of the pigment of their skin. They have to succeed! It is a must. I will not allow them to settle for less than they deserve. They were my purpose.

What or who is your purpose? What or who motivates you?

If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything!

Stand up! This is your chance to be heard and seen. (Jelissa Williams)





I am not a prophet, but I'm going to tell you about the things you're going to experience while you're a UW Odyssey Student.

Life...

You will wonder what ever happened to your bright-eyed enthusiasm when your stress levels interfere with your ability to put pen to paper. You will be concerned with maintaining your workload while balancing family responsibilities, household chores, and your financial obligations. You will think of Socrates and the thought-provoking ideas while making love. You will hear a joke, but instead of laugh, you will make a clear and concise retort to its maker about why the joke is insensitive; you will have a voice to speak up, to speak out, and speak within. You will begin and you will finish. You will develop a new sense of confidence and a close-knit group of peers to share ideas with. I am not a prophet, but wait and see how much you will astonish yourself. Open the books, open your mind, and open the door of possibility and opportunity and then you will have made yourself a prophet of your own destiny, your own life. P.S. See, I told you that you'd finish! (Tamara Thompson Moore)



Welcome and congratulations! I congratulate you on your decision to continue with your education. This program will be a new and exciting opportunity to learn and explore new books, ideas, and express yourself. Take

the time to enjoy every moment of this class and don't be afraid to ask questions when you don't know the answer. Welcome to one of the greatest adventures in your life; at the end of this journey you will not be the same.

(Karina Gómez)



Please give yourself the chance to embrace and let your class raise you up. Also, expose yourself and leave something in Odyssey's history. Be yourself and put 1,010% into class. I have experienced missing classes and

coming in late and you will regret this. The Class of 2016 is about to graduate and I will miss my teachers, classmates and staff from the Odyssey. Be happy that you made it into the Odyssey. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to be part of something. Take advantage of the benefits that Odyssey is giving you and remember that now you are a UW Madison college student. Take advantage of using the UHS services. Explore the life of a college student. Take one day out of your chaotic life and go to Union South, Memorial Union and, my favorite place, College Library and let your muse run wild when you write from the heart. (Luna Santos)



I would like to give you a warm welcome and congratulate all of you that were accepted into a new journey. Odyssey is an amazing class, and it is a blessing to all. This class is unique. For me, it is my second home. Here I feel

welcome. Every Wednesday when I knock on the door, there is always Emily or someone with a smile opening the door. The students are family; we all share feelings and thoughts. The class takes two and a half hours, but with the interesting lectures, the time goes really fast. Congratulations once again for becoming part of our family. I recommend you to attend all of the classes, complete the assignments on time, and be thankful to have this new opportunity. Work hard and keep following your dreams.

(Guadalupe Tinajero)



Your mind is going to be set on fire with knowledge if you are ready to receive it. The journey may at times seem long, yet it is worth every moment. I came into Odyssey with the knowledge of very little, yet I am proud today

that I have greater knowledge of people from my past that groomed my present. Stay strong no matter how hard it may seem. There is light at the end of the tunnel. I enjoyed every moment of meeting and greeting new people from different lands and learning the truth about how they live and breathe. Enjoy the journey and soar to the highest heights you can go. (Rosalyn Richmond)



I would like to give you all a warm welcome to Odyssey. I admire your bravery and willingness to apply for the class. I know picking up your pen to fill out the application and writing your testimony was not an easy task, but I can assure you that

it'll all be worth it in the end. If it is support and guidance toward your education that you are looking for, then look no further. Odyssey will expedite your thirst for knowledge and provide you with the nutrients to execute the building of your educational capacity. If you need insight and motivation to complete the assignments, do not hesitate to ask for help. The effort and energy you invest in Odyssey is what you will get out of it. Appreciate and take this opportunity seriously. The team of extraordinary teachers here will give you many blessings and help guide you in the direction that you desire most, if you let them. Whether you are ready or not, Odyssey will transform you in ways you never knew possible. Be prepared because you'll be going on a journey. Enjoy. (Mai Thao)

I suspect that if you are sitting here reading this, your journey up until this point has been challenging, at the very least, and arduous and treacherous at the very worst. You are probably tired and maybe even still nursing some wounds



you received along the way. Please – breathe...do it often...breathe. You are going to be able to lift your head and begin to look at the faces who are welcoming you. Take the cool water and other nourishments that they are going to offer. The

intense gazes from them may scare you at first, but soon you will begin to know they are sincere in their concern and commitment. It is safe here! As you come to class each week, allow the spirit of hope and hospitality and healing to wash over you each time you come in. Life may not get easier, but you will get better. I promise this: the opportunity before you is rich and simply dripping with gifts that your dreams are made of...Lastly, you may become afraid and overwhelmed from time to time. That happens from time to time as one grows and sheds the old skin so the new can come in. Don't stop. Keep breathing and keep coming back and never, ever stop learning how to tell your story! It matters; that is why you are here now. Welcome. (Lisa Partee)



I would like to tell you that whatever ideas you have about Odyssey are wrong. There are no words to describe this journey or experience. The impact it will have on you is so deep; no other class I've been in can touch it. The road

will be long and hard. You'll get the February blues but hang in there; the journey is well worth it. If you can, you should make each class. The discussions and improvisations of each class cannot be duplicated, described, or demonstrated. The support you will receive from your teachers, students, and alumni will push you along the way. If I can work two jobs and finish, I know you can. I know some of you will say, "I work and I have kids." I won't say you are wrong that it will be hard, but think how your kids will look up to you if you don't quit. I hope you will take this as seriously as I have. You can do it! (Steven Jones)



I came into the Odyssey and felt that I knew it all and that I was smart. Then I knew I was not. I figured it would be the English literature

that I took in college, not. I thought I couldn't write because I had lost that mojo. I knew my reading was like chopped stew so I didn't want to read. This was my safe place to keep me from reality. I have tapped into a woman I knew but did not know was this great and smart. I tell

you your doubts will be your ambitions and your flaws will be your strengths. Believe, even when you see no hope. Ask when you are afraid; con Kevin into the answers (lol). Be open with your mind, eagle eyes, and bat ears.

Be great, be proud, and use your haters to be your motivators. (**Brandice Hatcher**)



Everyone in the Odyssey program/ faculty makes it their mission that Odyssey provides you with a replenishing meal and book loads of information, all to help further your yet to be filled minds. Whether it is using information you never knew or

information you may have known, the Odyssey faculty wants to be sure you leave class knowing something new completely or an addition to what you may have some knowledge on. I say to you, make it your mission to get to class every week and stay up on what is due. You never know what will happen in this Odyssey class. The three days I missed were the most fun and interactive classes, but that doesn't take away from everything I have learned. As with you, don't let anything keep you from learning. Use Odyssey as a crutch if you have to. Regardless, everyone benefits from being an Odyssey member. (Joe Young)





First and foremost, welcome to the Odyssey Class of 2017! Wow, where to start? This is an amazing opportunity. This journey with the Odyssey Project has not only changed my life, but it has changed my children's lives as well. They

attended Odyssey Junior, and they loved it and looked forward to it--every week, every day! They enjoyed reading already, but this is a family to them --meeting and playing with the kids everyWednesday. During my journey with Odyssey I faced hardships, but who doesn't? There have been times I wanted to give up, but I knew this would be a life changer. I have missed days, but I have not given up. I refuse to! If I have any advice for you, it would be to be in class everyWednesday! Be appreciative and take advantage of being with teachers/ professors who actually care, and be a part of the family. (If you don't have family, or even if you do, you will have one here with Emily, Kevin, and the entire Odyssey family!) Participate in class, and get out of your comfort zone. If I had the chance to have this opportunity all over again, I wouldn't change anything except: 1. Make sure I'm here every week, and 2. Participate/get out of my comfort zone. . . . I'll be in touch with my class, and I'll stop by to say hello to you all! Again, congratulations! Come in open-minded and ready to learn! (Tasha Thompson)

# ALUMNI CORNER ILOVE ODYSSEY

#### BY JUANITA WILSON '07



I love Odyssey because before Odyssey I always felt like an outsider when I was among a group of people. I now feel that I can contribute to the conversation and feel that I am no longer a slow learner. I feel that I can accomplish whatever I set out to do. I am happy most of the time now.

I am going to be a lifelong learner.

I feel that I am not alone anymore if I need help with a problem. I feel that I am loved by my teachers and classmates. I feel that life is beautiful this year and the rest of my life because of Odyssey. I feel

that there will always be help available to me. I feel blessed.

those blank spots with words, and I was able to continue my

## I LOVE MY WEBSTER'S

#### BY TOSUMBA WELCH 13

I love my Webster's with a great passion and sense of dependency. Webster's has never stood me up, let me down, or led me astray—never! It tells me secrets that sometimes no one else can even imagine. One time I was walking through a path of words and there were blank spots on the path. Out of nowhere, Webster's replaced

walk.

Webster's sat me down one night and gave me an idea that landed me second place in an essay contest answering the question "Why Vote?" I have never known Webster's to be anything but perfect. Webster's has given me 230,000 reasons to be in love with it. I love my Webster's.

## DON'T QUIT

#### BY JOE ROBINSON '04

My advice to the new Odyssey class is don't quit. No classmates makes you feel stupid for voicing your matter how hard it gets, don't quit. opinion, don't quit. When your boyfriend or

When you get off work at 5:30, and you only have 30 minutes to get the kids situated and get to class, don't quit.

When you get stuck in the middle of writing a paper or doing a project, don't quit.

When you find out that your father has cancer and has to have surgery and treatment, don't quit.

When you have circumstances that occur that make you miss a class and you get behind on your work, don't quit.

When you feel as if you're not getting anything out of a particular subject, don't quit. When people tell you you are wasting your time, don't quit. When your car breaks down, and it's twenty below outside, and the only way to get here is on the city bus, don't quit. When your spouse is complaining that your five children are driving her crazy every Wednesday night, don't quit. When one of your

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Joe Robinson with classmate Tineisha Scott, who earned her Master's Degree at Edgewood College

classmates makes you feel stupid for voicing your opinion, don't quit. When your boyfriend or girlfriend accuses you of cheating on them because you had to turn your cell phone off during class, don't quit.

And if you get to the point where you just can't find any more motivation to force yourself to keep coming to this class, my advice is to call Emily, and I guarantee you that she won't let you quit! There were many times that I wanted to just give up, but Emily would not let me. She believed in us more than some of us believed in ourselves.

Finally, I would like to say that, the first couple of weeks, I was in class trying to figure out, what is the catch? Why are these people offering us this course for free? There must be a catch. I found out what the catch was. Each one of the teachers was trying to trick us into believing that our lives would somehow be better if we completed this Odyssey class and then go on to graduate from college. I guess I must be a little naïve, because I fell for it, hook, line, and sinker.



Joe Robinson with his family

## WE ATE DOG FOOD

#### BY ALICE MCDANIEL '09

#### WRITTEN FOR KEVIN MULLEN'S ODYSSEY ALUMNI COMPOSITION CLASS



... You can only write about what you feel and know really. I know that

my mom was not a high school graduate, but no one else would have known that unless she told you herself. She was a very well-versed, super-

intelligent, beautiful, spiritual, and loving woman.

My dad, on the other hand, could hardly read or write. He has lived most of his life with those limitations. He is a very funny, kind-hearted, spiritual, and good-looking man.

While in the care of my dad, my four other siblings and I ate dog food. That is what we were told some years later, and our mom confirmed that story. You are probably wondering how that happened. Well, I will tell you what we have been told.

My dad went to the grocery store. He was in the canned goods section, or so he thought. He looked at the picture on the can of some corn beef hash. "Ha, ha!" he said and grabbled it.

When my mom arrived home from work, she asked him if we had eaten yet. His reply was "Yes." My mom asked him, "What did you feed the children?" He said, "some hash." For those of you who have never eaten it and never want to, hash, according to Webster's Dictionary, comes from the French hacher, to chop, and means "to chop up meat and vegetables for cooking; usually a baked mixture, a muddled mess." She asked him again, "What did you say you fed them?" My dad replied again, "Hash. The cans are in the trash can."

My mom went to the trash can. As she lifted each of the cans out, she screamed at my dad, "You fool! You gave my children dog food, with your, 'no reading'

but we were rich.

We ate dog food, ass!" It goes without saying, that he was not asked to go shopping for groceries

> My parents didn't have the opportunity to complete their education due to obstacles. My dad was from the small town of Stamps, Arkansas. By the age of four, his mom was now a single parent. His father had left them. As the oldest of her two sons, he was now the man of the house. He went to school on a regular basis only up to the third grade. He had to work in the fields, either having to stay home or be pulled from his class at school whenever it was time for crops to be harvest.

Mother was from a large family of eleven and also from Arkansas. She got to go to school every day until she met my dad. With her parents' permission, they got married a year later.

They moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin several years later along with their two daughters. During their marriage they had some economic struggles. It was not for lack of ambition and determination and drive. Both of them would work—Dad as a laborer and Mom as a waitress or maid. I remember she would wear a black and white uniform when she rode the bus to the eastside of the city where the rich people lived....

Both of my parents instilled in their children that we should do our best at whatever we chose to do in life. "'Can't' is not a word," my mother would say. We could not use it at all as an excuse or reason not to go for things in life, like getting an education. . . . Education is the key to freedom, to advancing your world. Wealth is not only of material and financial means; it is also knowledge.

We ate dog food, but we were rich.

#### WHY VOTE?

### **An Essay Contest for Cash Prizes**

First Place: \$100 Second Place: \$75 Third Place: \$50

#### \*Deadline: Tuesday, September 27, 4 PM\*

Submit to Emily Auerbach at a Wednesday night class (Sept. 21), by mail to her at 21 N. Park St. 7<sup>th</sup> floor Madison WI 53715, by email (emily.auerbach@wisc.edu), or by FAX (608-265-2475)

Here are some comments from people who choose NOT to vote:

"I don't have time to figure out who's running, and it doesn't make a difference anyway because all politicians are the same and the system is rigged."

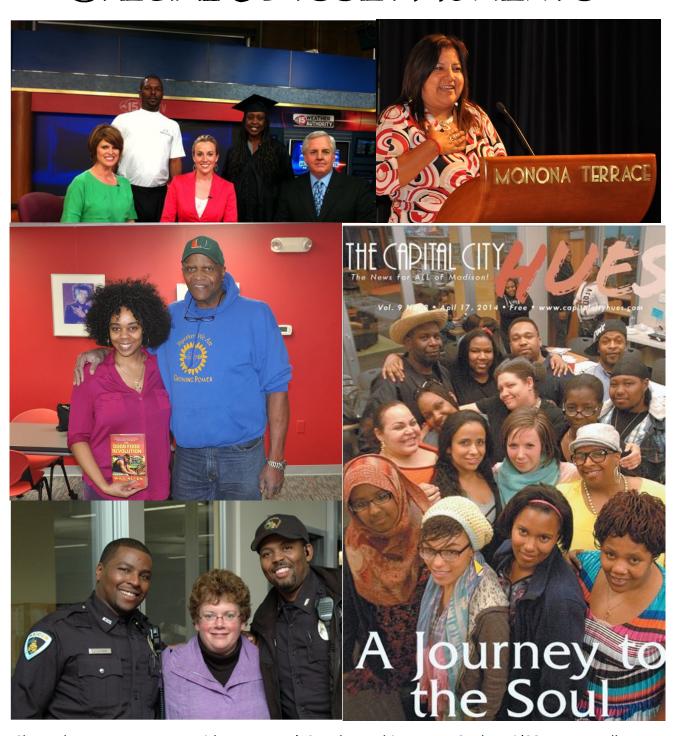
"My way to stand up and be counted is to NOT vote. That's my way of registering my protest with a corrupt system."

"Voting doesn't really matter, and one person's vote doesn't count, so why bother?"

Challenge: Change their minds and convince them to vote! Your job is to write one powerful page (no more than 250 words) in your own words to persuade people to vote. Prizes will be awarded to those who make the most convincing arguments. Winning entries will be included in the Oracle and possibly published in *The Capital Times*. Winners also will be invited to read their essays at a community event on Oct. 8. Be vivid and specific! Sometimes personal details (like how you felt when on parole and unable to vote, or experiences with voting that your relatives may have had) can set your essay apart from others. You can submit an essay even if you are not yourself an eligible voter. Please type if possible. If you need help with your essay, contact Odyssey's writing instructor Kevin Mullen at kevin.mullen@wisc.edu or 572-6730. Also know you can drop by for tutoring Monday or Tuesday nights 5-8 PM at our Odyssey classroom, 2312 S. Park St., starting Sept. 19.



### SPECIAL ODYSSEY MOMENTS



Channel 15 news reporters with Terry Hart '12 and Josephine Lorya-Ozulamoi '08; Teresa Tellez-Giron '04 receiving 2014 YWCA Woman of Distinction Award; Urban farmer and genius grant winner Will Allen with Nicki Cooper '16; former UW Chancellor Biddy Martin flanked by Madison Police officers Anthony Ward '04 and Corey Saffold '06; Class of 2014 students featured on Capital City Hues cover.



TV personality Tavis Smiley and scholar Cornel West taking Odyssey students out to dinner during their Poverty Tour; UW Chancellor Becky Blank with Tosumba Welch '13 and Stanley Sallay '07; scholar Henry Louis Gates with Kegan Carter '04 and Josephine Lorya Ozulamoi '08; Yolanda King (daughter of the late Martin Luther King, Jr.) with Emily Auerbach, Juanita Wilson '07, Pamela Holmes '04, and Denise Maddox '04; former Channel 3 news anchor Katy Sai with Juanita Wilson '07 and Annette Bland '06