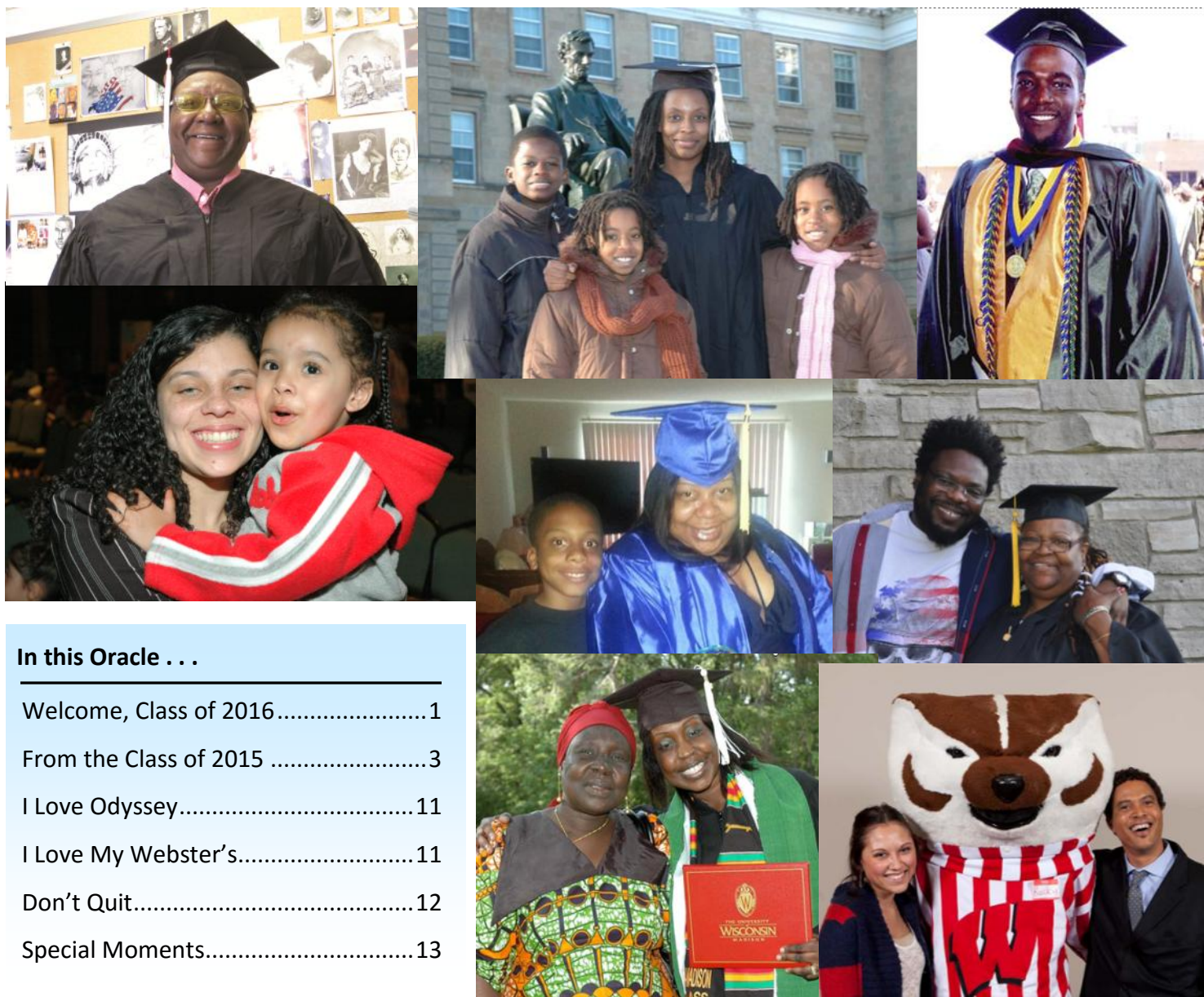


Year 13, Issue 1

September 9, 2015

ODYSSEY ORACLE

WELCOME, CLASS OF 2016!



In this Oracle . . .

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

eauebach@dcs.wisc.edu
kmullen@dcs.wisc.edu

262-3733 or 712-6321
572-6730

www.odyssey.wisc.edu



Graduates of the Odyssey Project have gone on to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees from Madison College, UW Madison, Edgewood College, and other institutions, have won scholarships and awards, and have gotten accepted into graduate school. Alumni pictured on page 1 are Tom Gardner '08, Kegan Carter '04, Cameron Daniels '07, Rocio Morejon '06, LoLita Phillips '13, James Horton '09 with Yasmin Horton '07, Josephine Lorya-Ozulamoi '08, Brian Benford '07. Alumni on p. 2 are Sherri Bester '08, Mary Wells '07, Molinda Henry '07, Billie Kelsey '12, Tineisha Scott '04, Michelle Brown Foxx '05, Lorena Lovejoy '97 with Katy Farrens '07, Shanita Lawrence '09.



FROM THE CLASS OF 2015



First of all I would like to congratulate those of you who made it. You don't know it yet, but you're a part of a big legacy. I know when I first began this class I was nervous and I was scared, but just **trust** and believe that Mrs.

Emily and her whole team want nothing but the best and have nothing but great things in store for you. Come in with an open heart and mind, and get ready to be changed.

(Kelly Hayes)



Before Odyssey I wanted to enroll in someone's college so bad it didn't matter whose. But something always interfered. I applied for Odyssey and received not an acceptance letter, but a letter stating I would be first on the wait list. Well, as you all could

imagine, I was a bit disappointed, and after that I was done reaching for a higher education. I had a newborn baby and enough other things on my plate. Two weeks before first semester began I received a phone call from Emily saying that she had room for me in the class of 2015. Of course I accepted it with great honor. I promised her I would try my hardest and not let my daughter be a distraction or excuse. I was a UW Odyssey student!

The first semester started off all right for me. I came to class and did my work. But I went back to work soon after the semester started and the pressure was on. It became hard to keep up. Between work, my daughter, school, and finding housing, I wasn't able to do it all. At least I thought I couldn't. I got behind on homework, but I still did not miss a class. After a while it became overwhelming and my personal life was going downhill. I gave up. But Emily did not. She continued to call me until I responded. She helped

me get back on my feet and focused. I've realized how lucky I am to be a part of this program. Second semester I missed quite a bit of class. I made the mistake of not reaching out for help in the beginning. If I could do my Odyssey experience over again, I would go about it in a completely different manner. But the message I am trying to get across is to be grateful and appreciative. This is an amazing program full of people who really care and want to help you. Use it to your advantage and enjoy this experience.

(Latesha Jackson)



Welcome to the Odyssey Journey. I must say this was a Journey! This Journey taught me so many things: One, never give up; two, everything that seems to be challenging is not meant to give up. There were times when I thought about giving up because I was working two jobs and raising

three kids. It seemed like everything was crashing down on me at once, not to mention I was pregnant with my fourth child. But when I came to class on Wednesday, my favorite mentor (Carol) was always there to encourage me, and my classmates' smiles and jokes kept me going. Whatever life Journey you face, stick with it. It wouldn't be a Journey if everything went great.

(Mikiea Price)





Welcome to the Class of 2016! Even though you don't know me, at the end of your journey in the Odyssey project we will be family—an Odyssey family! Don't be intimidated by the class because these wonderful

people are here to help you. At first, when I started, I did not know what to expect, and I wasn't sure if this was for me. The more I came to class I realized that I had been missing out on so much. Don't be afraid to open up and enjoy your time here. You will go places that you would have never imagined you can go. Expand your mind and absorb all the knowledge that you can, and don't let anything or anyone tell you or keep you from doing your best. Believe me, it can be hard; I know firsthand. From September to May, I was on crutches two separate times and it was really hard for me to get around, but I stuck it out and finally made it through the obstacles that were standing in my way. So take this experience and welcome it because it can help take you very far. All you have to do is "Believe in Yourself!"

(Melissa Dominguez)



You are getting ready to embark on a remarkable journey. I was in your shoes just last year. Walking into that room of 29 strangers was a bit intimidating for me that first day, but I stuck it out because I knew that this was something I needed to do for myself.

It took me a couple months to really open up to the other classmates, but after reading some of their articles in the Oracle I felt like I had known them forever. Honestly it was my fellow classmates that helped keep me going. Life is never perfect or easy. Sometimes you want to give up and go back to your normal life that you had before. Don't!!!! If life was meant to be



easy, it probably wouldn't be called life. In Odyssey we are a family, so get to know your classmates and even some of the alumni. We are here to support you to get you across that stage in May. Also, don't be afraid to open up to Emily. Having this woman in your corner is like having a championship winning coach on your side, and she will help you as much as she can.

Odyssey is not like your typical classroom. We are allowed to voice our opinions at all times but in a respectful manner. We are adults that come from different backgrounds. So welcome to this wonderful family where your thirst for knowledge will be filled. It's a lot of reading and writing, but I promise you it's worth it. The staff is amazing and everyone here wants to see you succeed. No risk, no reward, right? **(DeAngelo Hood)**



Welcome to the Odyssey Project. It may not feel like it now, but in a few short classes, being here will feel like home. I came in reserved, unsure if this class was for me, and left confident it was the door of opportunity I've waited my whole life for. Your odyssey won't always

be easy, but I promise that if you are committed it will be worth it. If you are struggling, utilize the support system designed for your success. Good luck and God bless!

(Jessi Hodges)



and you might gain a couple of best friends. I'm not going to lie to you: it's hard working full time, coming home, making dinner, and then trying to make it to class every

Wednesday on the cold winter days, but trust me it's all worth it. I wanted to quit so many times. Losing my mom in the first semester was the hardest of them all. I wanted to stay home and cry my soul out, but knowing that my

mom would have wanted me to finish what I started gave me the strength to keep going, knowing that she would be looking down on me. So please don't give up. You are going to have many reasons to quit but don't—keep pushing.

(Margarita Cid Luna)



Welcome to the Odyssey Class of 2016. I graduated with the Class of 2015. I hope you are ready to learn and get introduced to new things. You will be doing a lot of reading, writing, and group discussion. I enjoyed coming to class every Wednesday night. I

met new friends, we got new books, we ate like a family, and we cried, talked and laughed. For me I didn't face a lot of obstacles during this time. I had a good support system. But if anybody needed help or just a few encouraging words, I was right there to help. Odyssey is like your second family. We all go through problems and have the same issues, but we can help each other out. Emily, Kevin, and the other teachers will do anything to help you out and make sure you can get to class or finish your homework. They will work with you! You get to see art works you may not have seen before, read a poem that fits you like a glove, or go to a concert that you couldn't afford to go to before. The best time I had is when Baron Kelly, the acting coach, came to teach us a few things about acting. He really got me out of my shell. Enjoy!

(Brandi Whitlock)

I know it's scary, it's your first day, and you might not know anybody in the classroom. But trust me, by the end you are going to know everyone,



Congratulations to you all, embarking on this odyssey. I'm a 2015 graduate. This will be one of the most important times of your lives. I ask that you take total advantage of this wonderful opportunity. Allow yourself to be open-minded and

vulnerable at times. Take this class seriously and focus on the teachings. Don't wait until the last minute to do your homework; give yourself proper time to finish all your classwork. There were times when class got difficult, but that's only because of poor preparation on my part. Students of Odyssey 2016, I plead—proper preparation and ample study time will be a key component of your Odyssey journey. Don't allow any negative student or comments to hinder you. Take advantage of the Odyssey staff and participate in class always. And ask questions if needed—don't feel ashamed or embarrassed to ask for help. Odyssey students, sit back and enjoy this Odyssey journey because it will last a lifetime. **(Derek Dodd)**



Hi Class of 2016, I'm from the class of 2015. First and foremost, congratulations on being accepted into the Odyssey program. I can only hope that you take this opportunity to put forth 110% of you—because with putting forth effort into bettering yourself, then

you are actually doing the same for the program because it's made for you! Understand that you couldn't be in a better place for starting, continuing, or coming back to your education, no matter your age or educational background. Ask yourself what your why is, and your why should wake you up every day. Your why should make you put that much more time into doing your assignments and listening in class. This staff that is standing in front of you right now is more than amazing—they are here for you and they want to see more out of you. They do see more in you than you ever thought you saw in yourself. Words cannot begin to express the way I feel about Emily, Kevin, Coach, and the rest of the staff that work with this program. Whenever you say someone is heaven sent then to me that person is truly amazing, and Emily and the rest of the team are just that.

Take that next step and leap off into an education that will actually break down everything to the point where you will understand why



Shakespeare is still being taught to our students to this day, after hundreds of years. Come in and be open minded and objective about what you hear and learn, and understand that what you put in is what you get out of this program. It sometimes takes my breath away to see what lengths Emily and Kevin go through to help the students here in Odyssey. Once in your third or fourth week, sit back and look at all that is put in to make this program what it is.

Even the volunteers who come in to share, educate, and help out get you and every one of us to the next level. It's a wonderful feeling to have someone you barely know want to help you succeed, and, moreover, to push you to succeed like these new faces do. Funny thing is, more than friends, they will go above and beyond to see you do better, to see you have better, and to see you achieve greater things in your life. I know that being accepted in this program is the beginning of something great. Even though I myself was in college before but didn't graduate, I know that this is just a stepping stone to my higher education. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world to start back my education and move forward to greater things. I wouldn't change being in the presence of Emily or Kevin for anything in the world. Everything about this program is positive—the camaraderie, the friendships, and the teamwork that gets everyone involved with learning. So help out and be that year that lets go, lets loose, sheds their shyness, and dives right in. Come out of your comfort zone and be that year that amazes and stands out more than the rest. Be ready to learn and speak your opinion, and don't shy away from what others might think because here in the odyssey your voice matters.

Oh, and please turn your phones on silent, or better yet keep them in the car . . . Don't be that person where Emily is in the middle of a discussion and your phone goes off. She wouldn't do that to you! **(Christopher Villalpando)**



My name is Sahira Rocillo. I want to tell you a bit about me. I was born in Mexico and moved to Madison when I was 18 years old. I did not speak any English and it took a little while before I did. I was able to graduate from high school and go to MATC for a little while, until I could no longer

pay for my classes. Then in 2013 I became a mom to my little boy, Dorian. I love him with every cell in my body. Those of you who are parents know the feeling. After becoming a mom I began to feel really alone and I felt a big lack of support. Despite the bumps on the road, I am here to tell you that things do get better. Look at me: I am an Odyssey Project graduate, which makes me part of the Alumni, which makes me part of an elite group, but most importantly it makes me part of a wonderful family.

I was blown out of my mind when I received Emily's call telling me that I had been accepted to Odyssey. I am sure many of you will agree with me, being accepted into Odyssey was the best thing that happened in a long time. This is a journey. Just know that your teachers and staff are there for you, and you can rely on them. They will do anything in their power to provide you with the tools and flexibility to be on top of your academics. Obstacles, time, family emergencies, physical and mental health, stress and life, will try to block your way to success, but if you maintain an open communication with Emily, you can be sure that you will have all her support and help.

I was diagnosed with SAD, Seasonal Affective Disorder, a couple of years ago. SAD is a disorder that affects your mood and energy during a certain season, especially winter. Let's just say that I had to wrestle with myself every day. I decided to talk to Odyssey's Resource

Coordinator, Susan, and through Emily and the program I was able to get help, and I even experienced the benefits of LED light therapy. Apart from my beloved classmates (yeah, this is the first class of your life where you will LOVE every single one of your classmates), Emily and Kevin were the very ground where I could feel my feet planted solidly, and I was no longer hanging from a thread.

I want you to take a minute and applaud yourself, and acknowledge your brave and courageous decision to apply to the Odyssey Project. I would also like to congratulate you because today you are sitting on a precious spot among 29 other special classmates that will grow into you sooner than you think. Here you are, sitting in a room, a real college class is about to begin, and this is your first day as a member of the Odyssey Project. I bet that even now, as you begin to get aware of your surroundings and fix your eyes on your new books and materials, it might still feel surreal. Well, I want to let you in on a new realization, so take a breath and let it sink in . . . ready? **YOU ARE NOW A COLLEGE STUDENT!**

When it was me sitting there on the first day, I remember reading the letters that the previous class had written for us. The one that stuck with me was: "Fasten Your Seatbelts." Let me tell you, that little phrase encases all those things that might be running through your head, and yes, it is a threat, and you are not to take it lightly; but in a really good way. This class will change your life. If you are

coming with a positive attitude, if you let yourself go and render your soul and energy to this project, I assure you, it will be one of the best experiences in your life. So good luck, Odysseys! Have fun, buckle up, and squeeze every single drop of awesomeness and success from this class. Congratulations, Class of 2016! **YOU CAN DO IT! YOU ARE NOT ALONE ANYMORE!** All the success and love to you.

(Sahira Rocillo Ramírez)





I was in the Odyssey Class of 2015. When they told me I was accepted, my life and hopes got higher and brighter. I'm not going to tell you that it's an easy journey or that there will not be challenges because there will be, and also there will be struggles or

obstacles that make it harder to get to class. But if you're really involved and want to succeed, Emily and Kevin will not let you give up. See the class as a big family that's trying to make a change for the better. Don't feel alone because every one of your classmates has struggles, too. Odyssey is a big opportunity for a big and great change in your life. Use it and take advantage of every single opportunity you have, as it's always positive. Hope you have a great year. **(Brenda Juarez Cruz)**



Are you ready to rumble?!?! I'm here to tell you that no matter how quiet you may be, the literature you're going to read will help you conquer many of your fears. William Blake will make your head spin until you see that he is not crazy, and that we are all

just ordinary people! In this class no longer will you need to be judgmental, but you will embrace being different because that is what makes us all unique. Odyssey will redefine the way you eat, sleep, and think because no longer will you take time for granted—you will cherish every hour, every minute, and every second you have been given. Look at the 30 men and women around you because this group of people is now travelling on a journey with you. This new family is amazing, and you're all ingredients of a magnificent recipe. Listen and learn because literature is your new best friend. Just ask my man Socrates: this journey will lead you to enlightenment all because you took advantage of a great opportunity!! Now float like a butterfly and sting like a bee. Writing now helps my consciousness be free! **(Michelle Conley)**



Today you are embarking on a journey with 29 other students and an amazing team of teachers. You are probably looking around at the other students and wondering what could we possibly have in common? However, by the end of this course you will become a

family, a very unique one at that. You will also create some unforgettable friendships with Emily, Kevin, Coach, Craig, Gene, and Jean. Each one of them is there to see that you succeed. Never take advantage of these amazing people for they will believe in you when you can't believe in yourself, and they will love you when you can't love yourself. If you are so lucky to love them back, you will truly understand how special they are and how blessed you have been to know them. So if there is a doubt in your mind whether this is your thing or not, trust me, don't give up and stay awhile. Believe me when I say by the end, you won't want to leave.

Hi, my name is Nissa Marie Uriostegui (don't worry you won't be quizzed on my last name) and I am proud to say that I am a graduate of the UW Odyssey Project. When I first walked into that classroom I was a scared single mother to four children who was very skeptical and had a double shield around her due to her past. Besides my family and my close friends I didn't let many people in; however, with the push of Emily and Kevin and the support of my classmates, I am now a strong, confident, and independent woman. Always remember that you will never be judged and you will never have to worry about where you come from or who you are. All you have to be is true to yourself.

I'm not going to tell you that this is going to be easy; but it's not impossible either as long as you take advantage of the resources that are available to you. My journey was a challenge, and there were times that I wanted to give up. But all good things usually come with hard work. The one thing that saved me was Kevin and the tutors. I

am a big believer that if you want to succeed and exceed with this program, then you should at least attend tutoring once a week, even if it's not mandatory. Not only did I see my writing improve over the year, but I also saw my understanding of the readings improve, especially when we were reading Socrates. The best part of it is how accepting the library and Kevin were of bringing your children in while you're at tutoring. I was able to bring my four children in to tutoring with me, which really saved me because there was no way I could have found daycare for them twice a week. My favorite part of it is watching how amazingly Kevin interacts with my kids and the incredible bond he has created with them.

You will be going through a lot of texts over the next year. Some will excite you and some will bore you, but no matter what, never give up on any of them. One of the hardest ones for me was Socrates; however, when you figure it out it will make so much sense. No matter if you love it or hate it, soak it up and make it part of your life for the next year, for it will make the rest of the texts so much easier to understand.

Also, soak in the poetry, for it will change your writing forever, even if you're not a poetry kind of person. Believe me when I say there is a poem for everybody, and somewhere out there, there is a poem or a poet for everybody.

You have a busy year ahead of you. There will be actors, visitors, art, fieldtrips, and self-exploration to look forward to. By the time you're done, you will never be the same. I want to wish the best to all of you. Make sure you enjoy yourselves as you begin to embark on your on Odyssey. I hope that all of you find your path to your Odyssey because this journey will be unforgettable and will forever stay with you.

Best regards! **(Nissa Uriostegui)**



I am an ESL student and a mother of two children. I did not have to worry about daycare since it's offered here at the program, as well as dinner. Odyssey is an excellent opportunity to expand your knowledge. You will learn History, Literature, English, and Art.

I enjoyed reading about Frederic Douglass because I did not know very much regarding slavery. His book gave me a much better picture of it. I have improved my English with the help of tutors and teachers. I remember when we needed to make some Art, which I am not very good at, and I made something that could easily be compared to a kindergarten student, but I had fun doing it.

Being an ESL student made it very difficult for me, but YOU can do it! Balancing school and family is tough; however, being organized allows me to remain organized at school and at home so that I am able to complete all the activities that are needed. An advice I want to give you is to start your assignments on time and to use all the help that the tutors and the teachers can give you.

An unforgettable moment occurred on a Wednesday night, as I recall, when my husband was not in town. I was getting ready to bring my kids to daycare so I could attend class. My daughter was sleeping, and I had to wake her up. I carried her on my back, down the stairs, and we fell; thankfully, nothing happened to her, but I bent and injured my toes. I was limping for two weeks. I remember going to class with a lot of pain, but I thought there is no chance to skip class because I loved every class.

So as you can see, I love to go to school, especially this fun class which gave me lots of new knowledge as well as good new friends. I hope that you enjoy this experience as much as I did. Best wishes to all of you.

(Veronica Tinajero)



Congratulations on being selected to this amazing project. Welcome to the Odyssey Class of 2016. You might think it's a little scary entering Odyssey class, but it's not. Prepare for one of the best experiences of your life and one of the most rewarding. You will learn

a lot in extraordinary lessons. You will learn how to love reading, lots of history, so get ready to learn. If you don't like to read, that will change. In Odyssey class you can't NOT want to read some of the books Emily talks about. Don't be afraid to ask for suggestions. I can honestly tell you that I have never read so many books in just one school year. All thanks to Emily, you will be doing a lot of reading and writing that will transform your life. You are about to enter the world of studying and will get to know so many great personalities that definitely changed the course of US history.

I can tell you, you've made an excellent choice to be part of Odyssey as part of your continuing education. I am sure this will be a very productive and exciting year. My best advice to you all is to work until the end of class and the end of the year. Emily will expect you to be ready from day one. Always remember that you are a big element in this class.

I wish you good luck on this amazing journey, so keep calm and survive Odyssey 2016.

(Natalia Rodríguez)



Welcome! As you travel down the Odyssey Journey to yourself, don't be cautious. Listen to the stories around you to get a better understanding of the world around you. Be patient and open with yourself, and tell yourself from the beginning that you will fight through your fears, no

matter what. Once a week make a decision to come out of your shell and be free of all chains,

even if it's only in your writings. I came in a failure and came out with no need to even compete with anyone. The "me" I found through my Odyssey Journey I found taking the steps I've written above. I became a winner when I decided after every fall I'll always get back up. I wish you joy. I wish you love. Enjoy the journey . . .
(Shaneika Sanders)



I am writing this letter to congratulate you for one of the best gifts you'll ever receive. This is the opportunity you all have been waiting for, that one chance that a lot of people have denied you. Your chance is the Odyssey Program. Today is the start of a

hard two semesters, but trust me it is worth it. In this class you will want to give up, but Emily will help you to see it through. You will enjoy every single Wednesday and regret the ones you miss. The reading is hard, but you will learn to love it. It will make you realize how much you have missed by not reading more. If you ever get stuck on your homework, help is only a call away. The instructors want you to succeed and will give you all the help you'll need. The journey is long and full of challenges, but the things you learn and the people you meet will make it worthwhile. Hearing and sharing personal struggles and challenges will help to make you grow as a person. I wish you the best during and after the program. **(Heydy Pichardo)**



I LOVE 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.

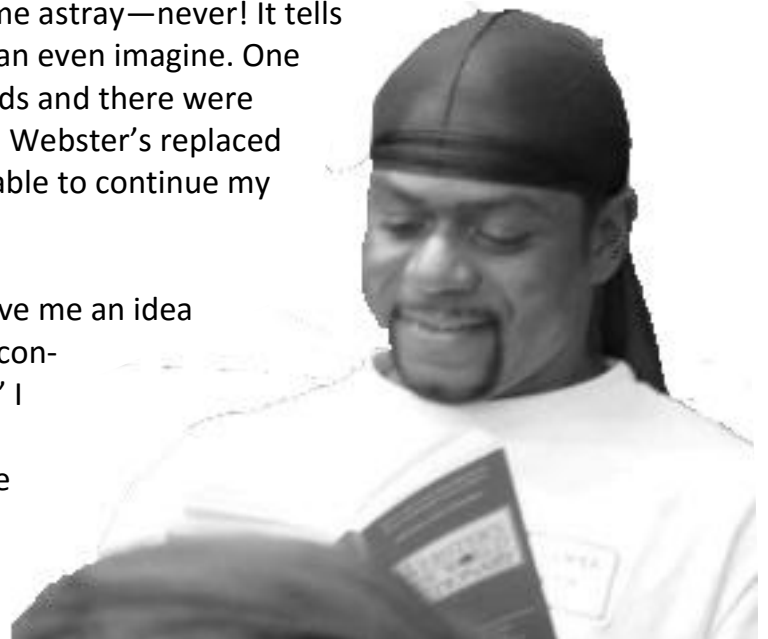
I feel that I am not alone anymore if I need help with a problem. I feel that I am loved by my teachers and classmates. I feel that life is beautiful this year and the rest of my life because of Odyssey. I feel that there will always be help available to me. I feel blessed.

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 those blank spots with words, and I was able to continue my 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 matter how hard it gets, don't quit.

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

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



Joe Robinson with his family

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; Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson with Oroki Rice '07, Ivonne Ramos '08, and Kegan Carter '04; former UW Chancellor Bidy 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