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ODYSSEY ORACLE

ODYSSEY CELEBRATES NEW DIGS



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On January 21, Odyssey class was held for the first time in our new UW South Madison location at 2312 S. Park St. Pastor Everett Mitchell, Director of UW Community Relations, was on hand to welcome us, and alumni Corey Saffold (Madison Police), Billie Kelsey (UW senior), and Hedi Rudd (photographer and Urban League Development and Event Manager) added encouragement. Filmmakers were on hand to create a video about Nitia Johnson for an upcoming award ceremony.

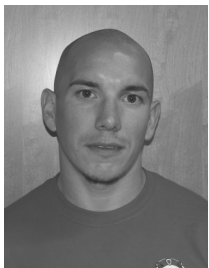


MOVED BY MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



After reading your “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” I was left with heavy emotions because of the depth of it. I was angry because, being an African American, America is my home too, but there are times I feel it doesn’t accept me. The unfair treatment towards minorities

is sickening. I was joyful because you are a man of courage and show a great deal of strength laying down a solid foundation for us Blacks today. It really touched the pit of my soul, and everything you mentioned was filled with knowledge and truth. Your way of using language is applaudable. I was just amazed with how all the pieces of the letter connected together and how I was able to envision many things you spoke about. **(Lakoyé Buford)**



I know all too well the feeling of being confined to a cement cell, as if you were an animal in the zoo. Being portrayed as something you’re not is also not something I’m new to as well. While they say you’re a violent demonstrator, I think it’s just the fact that the

government and others are scared of what a following you have and how much of what you preach makes so much sense. . . . To this day, I still can’t understand the belief system that people who are prejudiced have. For the thousands that took continuous beatings and police brutality and still stood tall and made a point to demonstrate through non-violent gatherings, how amazing that is that so many at one time held their ground. Your dream has come true . . . but sadly there is still much work to be done. Thank you so much for your work, effort, diligence, strength, honor, and integrity. **(Christopher Villalpando)**



Dr. King, I very much admire your desire to carry the gospel of freedom, justice, and equality wherever it is needed. . . . You, Dr. King, made a statement that “the Negro is all too familiar with the word ‘wait,’ which is a subtle way of saying ‘never.’” You used a

breathtaking image of the word ‘wait’ by describing it as “tranquilizing thalidomide,” a pill developed in Europe in the 1960s. The drug was a sedative. It was very relaxing, making one feel very comfortable, until a pregnancy happened, but then the reality of what had been taken stared you dead in the face—the monster [child with birth defects] that was created. . . . Dr. King, I love, admire, and appreciate all of your efforts to make this a better world for the socially and economically deprived people of this world—all of the people, whether they are black, Jewish, or white. **(Lenora Rodin)**



Your letter was eye opening for me because I did not know how bad the situation was. . . . I can feel your hope, your demand, your rage, but most importantly I can feel your love for people, no matter what race they are. Dr.

King, let me tell you a bit about myself. I am a young Latina in a country that does not welcome me as much as I would like it to. I came to the U.S. when I was 15 years old, and since then I have always held a job and paid taxes. I married a white man, and for some white people that was the worst decision he could ever have made. Some of his friends asked him if I married him to be able to obtain legal status, which I did not. When we go places, especially small town restaurants, people look at me with a disgusted face. . . . It is my skin color that bothers them. . . . As a human, I feel your pain, and I hope and am sure that your work will pay off. **(Heydy Pichard Reyes)**



I want you to know, Dr. King, that your words of wisdom, your sense of justice, your appearances, your protests, and your school of love and human dignity have not been in vain. Here we are in an era where we definitely “are in dire need of creative extremists.” . . . You are a leader and hero, not only to the African-American people but also for any and every civil right movement, especially those that dignify humans. . . . It saddens me to tell you that despite the advances that we have accomplished, racial injustice is still a soaring and alive creature. . . . Your words are alive, soaring as loud and strong as a hungry lion. We, your children, are feeding off them, and we can’t get filled. **(Sahira Rocillo Ramirez)**



I am Hispanic and understand the African American cause. I believe that everybody needs to have equal opportunities, no matter their ethnicity or skin color. One thing that is very relevant to me is when you say, “When you suddenly find your tongue

twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can’t go to the public amusement park . . . and see tears welling up in her eyes.” As a parent of a six-year-old son and a four-year-old daughter, I could understand your indignation and frustration. **(Veronica Tinajero)**

Even though it is subtle and not as prevalent, racial injustice has been expressed here often. I believe it is expressed widely through the Madison Public School system. I have experienced much racism. . . . It is 1963 and I am a third grader in Hawthorne Elementary. Almost every day I am called a nigger,



cotton picker, or even yard ape. It hurts my feelings because as I look at the other kids, most of them white, the color of our skin is the only difference I see. . . . Your non-violent approach has taught me not to retaliate violently as I almost always feel like doing.

(Patricia McKnight)



One thing you said in particular that really opened my eyes more was your analogy to Socrates. I recently read *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, and to hear how a well-educated African American man such as yourself took it and applied it to

the situations you were going through was just brilliant. You stated, “just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, we must see the need of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood.” This hit home for me because even in 2015 we are still dealing with racism and prejudice. **(DeAngelo Hood)**





I was sitting in a Black History class with one of my students. They were showing a movie about the sit-ins and how they were getting spit at and hit and having food thrown on them. The kids were shocked!

“They wouldn’t be doing that stuff to me!”

These kids have no idea what opportunities they have today. They take for granted what their ancestors did for them. Some died for them, got beatings for them, just so they can be free to do what they do today.

(Brandi Whitlock)



I’m grateful for your efforts, and you have made a difference in my life. Now I don’t have to explain to my daughter why she and I can’t go to certain areas. I am so glad I don’t feel isolated like a different breed by having

limited options, such as an HBC or not being able to go to college altogether. When you said “forever fighting a degenerating sense of nobodiness,” it really stuck out to me. I am an expressive person, and in today’s time, because of you, I am able to express who I am through my writing as well as in my self-worth. My goals are to become a doctor or a professional in something, and that might not have been possible if you and others didn’t fight for it. **(Nitia Johnson)**



When you wrote “I guess it’s easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say ‘wait,’” I can understand the frustration. I’ve been in the same position of needing something to get done or

needing immediate attention, and seeing it

being put off because they don’t understand the severity. I think you did an excellent job of describing the importance . . . of urgency. I cannot fathom someone reading this and not seeing the need for change! **(Janina White)**



How impressive are your strategies, tactics, and theoretical foundations you practiced in your struggle for civil rights. Your fight against oppression and injustice is a great example for future

generations. Your allusions to historical characters are great examples. Very important in the history of humanity is Jesus, an extremist in love, and his disciple Paul. Very important people in the making of US history, like Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson, changed the course of history in the US, promulgating liberty and equality. Another great allusion is Saint Augustine: “An unjust law is no law at all.” **(Natalia Rodríguez Miramontes)**

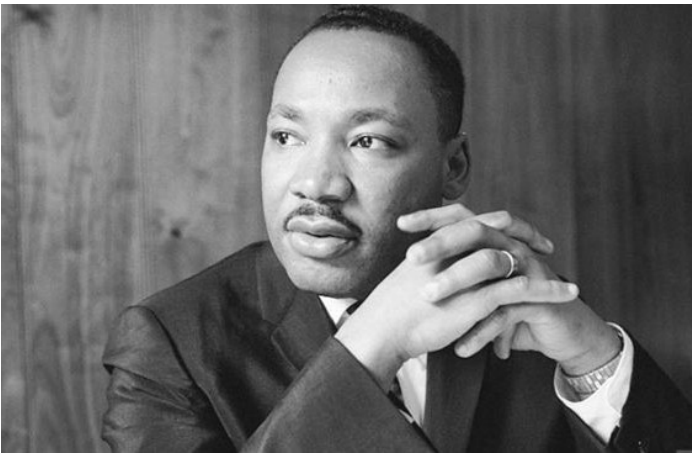


In this particular letter that you wrote to the clergymen, it seems as though it came with great distress. . . . I understand that you want to demonstrate that this was a personal

mission to spread the word of justice in Birmingham, but comparing yourself to great prophets from the Bible would come off as pretentious. **(Dorothy Katana)**



Jesus, Amos, Paul, Martin Luther, John Bunyan, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Jefferson are all parallels you use when talking about your work, calling yourself an extremist. You also use the metaphor of you being the gadfly, just as



Socrates did when he was sitting in jail for standing up for what he believed to be just. "We must see the need of having nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men to rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood." Through your nonviolent approach, you annoyed the authorities. Since they didn't have an excuse to fight back, you ended up annoying them into seeing things in a different way, just like the gadfly pesters the horse until it moves. **(Nissa Uriostegui)**



I'm moved by the letter you wrote. I'm feeling the determination in you. What stuck out to me the most is when you stated, "Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly." That's what I face today in this world. When people directly mistreat, disrespect, abuse, and downgrade each other, it indirectly affects a community. I have been battling the cops in black communities killing young black boys. I can feel their mothers' pain. My heart goes out to those families. . . . Reading your letter was like words of encouragement. Some people criticize before listening to you. **(Mikiea Price)**

You said "police brutality is known in every section of this country." This is true today, dating back to Rodney King and to the killing of Michael



Brown. In other news, officers were caught using pictures of black males for target practice, which is very disturbing. There also have been many cases of blacks serving years in jail for crimes they have not committed. .

. . A very interesting quote you said that caught my attention was, "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" This is very true and lives up to . . . us being "nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men to rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism." I very much enjoyed and loved reading your letter. **(Joseph Lentz)**



It's sad how a man of God can turn his back on 'mancoloredkind.' It's hard to see even holy men take hatred into their own hands and kill a black man for crossing the street. For you to be so insightful is a true blessing. You standing up for our people is

encouraging to the highest degree. No longer shall black people be cast aside like rag dolls. I stand with you on this, Dr. King. **(Myisha Ellis)**



You are the most influential African American man in the world. I thank you so much for standing up for all African Americans' rights and for non-violence throughout the world. It's truly an honor to write a letter to you, Dr. King, as I am also African

American. This is the year 2015, and there still is a white power structure of this world that leaves the Black community and Latino community with not many alternatives. But thanks to you, Dr. King, some things have gotten better. I have choices in life, and other minority races do likewise, because of your vision, inspiration of your life, and your God-given mission for the world. **(Derek Dodd)**



I would like to applaud and commend you for everything that you have done and are doing to make sure that EVERYONE is treated equally. I know that it must be hard sitting in a jail rather than being at home with your loving family. I

myself have been a victim of racism and know firsthand how frustrating it can be. Ignorance can play a big role in how some people can think and act. I agree with your statement, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." How can something be "just" for some and not for all!!! It is unfortunate that we live in a world so full of people of prejudice and hate that they cannot see the damage and the hurt that they are causing. . . . How can you be a person of God and NOT love thy brother, whether black or white? Jesus said, "Love and bless those that curse you and pray for them," but I see that it will take longer for those that are blinded with hate in their heart. **(Melissa Dominguez)**

How quickly we forgot your fight! I'm embarrassed by the complacency and lack of concern. We question time and wait. "Wait almost always means never!" That is such a strong statement, Dr. King.



You are right! I commend you for stepping up and leading the world's fight. . . . I have lived in ignorance. You have given me knowledge, provided truths, and opened my mind. . . . I want to be the gadfly you spoke of. . . . I'm committed to using

my time constructively and being ready to accept my position as coworker to God. The time is now! I will move forward with your words, your work, and all of your successes as fuel. **(Jessi Hodges)**



It's 52 years later and the saddest thing today is that some of the same things are going on right here at home. Lately we have been having police brutality taking the lives of our brothers and sisters. . . . We have people of all different races and religions from around the world

marching and protesting because you said it best: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." I'm standing tall with my head held high and God as my plate of armor because I think this is something we will overcome!

(Michelle Conley)



TASTING MEMORIES

I was recently invited to my brother's for Sunday dinner. It was scheduled for 2 PM. As I entered his home, I was immediately reminded of my Sunday dinners at Grandma's house during childhood. I could hear from the living room the cheers of the Packers fans and the NFL commentators arguing about the last play. The children's voices and giggles followed up the stairs. As I closed the door and began removing all my winter gear, I was engulfed with the warmth coming from the kitchen oven. Just a few breaths in and my mouth began to water from the aroma of Grandma's American apple pie and peach cobbler. As I walked further in (closer to the kitchen), there was a pleasant mixture of sage, onion, and green peppers lingering in the air.

Within moments, I felt back at Grandma's and we were reminiscing about old times. It became a day of appreciation, good eating, and remembering a lady who was missing at this valuable family time. **(Jessi Hodges)**

My favorite time of year is Christmas because that's when the good food gets cooked. We start with the *pernil* (pork shoulder). We season it at least a day or two before cooking it.

We have the potato salad, one plain and one with the works. Then I prepare the seafood salad—OMG, my favorite! It has shrimp, crab meat, octopus, green peppers, onions, lemon juice, olive oil, and a couple of cilantro leaves and is mixed really well. You can add a little salt and pepper if you'd like but it's not necessary.

We also make *arroz con dulce*, and we cannot forget the *coquito*. It's a Puerto Rican coconut drink. The whole time while we are cooking, we have Christmas music playing while everyone has a part in the meal. **(Melissa Dominguez)**

My fondest memory of a food-centered activity would be our family reunion on my father's side. We have such a beautiful time among all relatives. We have three-day food festivities. One day it's fish, another day it's ribs, and then the last day it's different kinds of chicken. We have such a beautiful time with each other and share loving memories among all. **(Derek Dodd)**

For Christmas dinner in 2014, I made green beans with smoked turkey with the perfect amount of seasonings, baked chicken with onions and bell peppers, pot roast slow-cooked for a night with potatoes and carrots, and my mom's best invention ever: an apple, strawberry, and pear cobbler with French vanilla ice cream. When the food was done and we sat down and ate, I put in the green beans to taste so good and the second and third plate helpings to satisfy that craving before it has a chance to dry upon your lips. The cobbler was so savory and juicy that the crust started to fall apart. The sweet nectars of fruit medley sank into the bowl, still warm with cool French vanilla ice cream melting away into the juice of the cobbler. **(Myisha Black)**

I remember it like it was yesterday. For my aunt's birthday, she wanted me to cook one of my signature dishes. First I start with a rack of country-style pork ribs. I boil the ribs in a cup of water and the rest beer. I let the ribs boil for 20 minutes while

I clean and prepare my chitlins. When the ribs are done boiling, I season them with the regular seasoning, but I add my secret seasoning. After that, I put Sweet Baby Ray's BBQ sauce on my ribs and slow bake the juicy ribs in the oven. I start to finish my chitlins and put them in a pot to



cook thoroughly. I start my mac and cheese with three different indulgent cheeses. For the vegetable, I make succulent green beans. As the ribs get finished, I put more sauce on them and set them aside. I finish the vegetables and the mac and cheese and stir my secret sauce into the chitlins to make them nice and sweet. **(Joseph Lentz)**

The memory I remember the most is my grandmom cooking. What a wonderful cook she was. Anytime we had to cook multiple meals in a week, I remember her taking all the leftovers out of the fridge and putting them in one pot. I used to cry. I thought it would be the most terrible meal ever. But when she got done, that was the greatest meal ever. I don't know what that woman had done, but it was the most amazing meal. I don't think she had a recipe because it was all made of leftovers. My grandmom and her cooking should never be missed. She could make a meal out of anything. I thank God for her. I never went hungry and always ate the finest. I wish she was still here. **(Mikiea Price)**

Every time I'm home alone with nothing to do, I always check the fridge—more than five times. If there's a lot of meat and vegetables, I get happy and anxious to cook something. I mostly like to make salmon with rice and salad. Also I make a flavor-fresh water to go with it. I love that meal because I know it's healthy for my family and me. When I'm cooking, I get hungrier because I can smell the salmon cooking, the tomatoes I used for the rice, and the fresh leaves of lettuce for the salad. All that fresh food smelling really good gets me happy because it's also healthy. **(Brenda Juarez Cruz)**



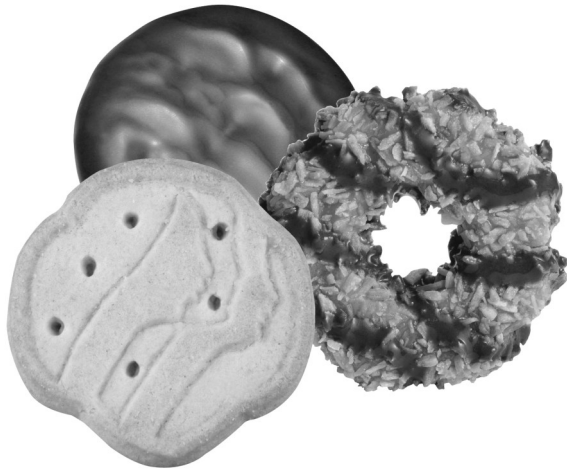
My dad has been making cream of leek soup for as long as I can remember, and I have yet to meet somebody that doesn't care for it. Every time he starts to boil the chicken, it takes me back to childhood memories when I would help him peel the potatoes, onions, and chicken skin.

It's funny that now that I'm older, it's the one meal that I know how to make. The cream-based soup made from milk, chicken broth, and sour cream is flavored with leek. However, it's not an overpowering taste. Chicken and potatoes are the finishing touch. **(Nissa Uriostegui)**

The most vivid memory I have of my mother cooking is when I was younger and I used to help my mom cook for Thanksgiving. My mom used to sit at the kitchen table and tell me everything to bring to her. I remember her making dressing and greens the most. I remember the greens stinking so bad, and it seemed like she would cook them all night! I would have to soak the greens in cold water in the sink with salt to make sure all the dirt was off. Then I would do a second rinse and start taking off the stems. My mom would start boiling water for smoked turkey wings and would add seasoning salt and black pepper. We would boil the turkey until the meat fell off the bone. Then we would add the greens.

Even though they smelled bad to me at that time, I loved the taste of greens and turkey meat. It's comfort food, plus they're good for you! You would know the greens were done when they were dark green and very tender. This time with my mom taught me how to cook, and I got to spend quality time with my mom. I enjoy cooking for my family. **(Brandi Whitlock)**

... I loved Girl Scouts. It kept me around positive people, and I got to share things with my granny. We sewed, crocheted, and made crafts and things together, but out of all things my granny enjoyed the most, it was the shortbread cookies I brought her. When she could afford to eat one, it was like a little piece of heaven that she always ate slowly, savoring it and talking about it for a short period after. She



was diabetic and explained to me the dangers of having too much of one thing in her body, sugar being one of them. She said that the ingredients in cookies cause them to melt in your mouth, which is perfect for a woman of old age with no previous dental care.

These moments and memories continued for years, but between her eyesight getting worse and her home health nurse stealing potentially thousands of dollars' worth of items from her, she had to leave the land she owned, her home, and her old time memories to live with my aunt in St. Louis. . . . My grandmother continued to get sick, and it got so bad that she started to lose her memory. . . . To my surprise, even though my granny didn't know who I was, we shared some laughs and I was able to bring her Girl Scout cookies like old times. The doctors said she hadn't eaten anything for six or more days. When she felt the cookies, she ate two. At that moment is when I started to sob. . . . When she died a couple days later, I was at peace. Now when I think about my grandma, it is a happy, calm feeling, the same as the first day when I introduced her to Girl Scout cookies. (**Nitia Johnson**)

A memory of food was from this past Thanksgiving. I went to my brother's house and ate. I met up with my other family, including my mom, sister, nieces, and nephews. We ate all the traditional foods. I was excited about the chitterlings. My mom made them perfect! They were so tender and were seasoned just right. They were mixed with onions and

potatoes. The best part of all was she made them just for me! No one else eats chitterlings, so of course I felt special. I got a separate bowl for them, separate from the other foods, drenched them in hot sauce, and dug in. Thanksgiving was great! (**Janina White**)

There is no better time in the day than when we sit together at dinner time to share news and concerns with my family. Living in the US, it is sometimes difficult to organize a dinner together because of everybody's busy schedule. What I miss most about food from Mazatlan, Mexico, is fresh seafood—fish and shrimp that is recently fished—, and that big market place where I used to go with my dad to buy the best looking fish and smoked marlin.

As soon as we got home, we could start setting up ingredients, cutting vegetables, and having the pot or pan on the stove at the right temperature. I love cooking with my parents. We used to talk all the time about how they learned to cook from their parents. To live near the sea makes it much easier to get seafood. At a good price, it is very accessible. We cook seafood in many ways. One of my favorite plates is shrimp ceviche. My dad is a big fan of lobster, and he cooks it in the oven with butter and garlic. My mom loves grilled fish and rice. My sister and I prepare to cook ceviche with lots of tomato, cucumber, onion, and cilantro. (**Natalia Rodríguez Miramontes**)

Thanksgiving was my favorite holiday as a child. Weird, I know. You would think that just like any other child, my favorite would be Christmas, but not me. Every Thanksgiving I would get up super early to help my grandmother prepare and cook Thanksgiving dinner, and I have her to thank for my passion for food now. We'd start off with the meat since that took the longest. Seasoning the turkey with fresh herbs mixed with butter and glazing the ham with her famous pineapple and honey glaze. We would have prepped the dressing the night before, and the aroma of sage and sautéed celery and onions filled the house. While the ham and turkey was in the oven, we would get started on the

sweet potato pies. She always had to make four or five because our family loved her pies. They were moist and sweet with a slight kick to it from the orange liqueur she added to them.

A general menu for us would be ham, turkey, sweet potatoes, potato salad, greens, green beans, dressing, black-eyed peas, and so much more. I can say I really had a Big Momma like the one from the movie *Soul Food*. Even though she's gone, I still carry on her legacy of trying to hold the family together and cooking an amazing Thanksgiving feast. **(DeAngelo Hood)**



I grab the fork and tilt it in such degree that I use it as though it was a knife. I start cutting through the fluffy-moist bread crumbs and the creamy center of the chocolate cake that is now swimming in my mouth.

I grab a nice bite and play with the custard inside my mouth. Melting the chocolate against my tongue and palate, I already feel better. The dark chocolate chips are fighting against my clouded mind. That's OK, though, because they are winning. Less than an hour ago, I was crying—just a little mommy crisis. Sometimes having a toddler in a way-past-naptime mood and not being prepared when a diaper emergency occurs can be too much. . . . I cry my eyes out to my friend Lena, and after I'm calm, we bust a mission to Michelangelo's Café. I buy a slice of the most indulgent, unhealthiest thing I see. Its name is Ultimate Chocolate Cake, and I

propel it with a hot mocha with whipped cream! I deserve it after a meltdown. My cake is not too sweet, my mocha not too bitter, so maybe it feels just right. **(Sahira Rocillo Ramírez)**

Broiling a nice juicy chicken until it spatters and hisses and rushes up in all the right places is wonderful. Roasting a chicken and seeing the skin crisp up in the oven while the meat goes tender beneath is lovely. Most of the ills in the world can be cured with a savory stuffing to put it all together, dripping broth and juices.

Sautéed chili flakes served with a salad of oyster mushrooms, cucumber, and corn is what I love—fresh, vibrant, and crunchy, with just enough spicy zing to make my night. The dessert was a chocolate cake, looking like a homespun masterpiece. It was fluffy as a pillow, toasty brown, and shot through with plum and colored swirls.

This was the best meal I've had thus far, spending time with my family in the best restaurant in the world: Fleming's. **(Dorothy Katana)**

I had been incarcerated in Taycheedah Correctional Institution for three years, and the food and the way it was served kept me constantly craving a good, home-cooked "Soul Food Dinner."

When my family would write to me, I would always express this to them. . . .

The dinner we all helped cook the day I came home was amazing. We had fried smothered pork chops, smothered rice with gravy, green beans in butter, and peach cobbler. This is not the traditional African America soul food dinner, which may consist of baked macaroni, greens, coleslaw, chitterlings, or ham, but it still is the kind of meal that makes you hurt yourself from eating so much. It was still soulful.

It was nice to sit down with my family at the dinner table, say grace, and enjoy this meal. **(Patricia McKnight)**

There's not really one particular time that I can think of about a feast or family meal, but there is a meal that is always a must on special occasions with my family. Over the years, it has stayed the same.

It always starts out with a soup called *posole*. It's made with boiled pork shoulders and shanks, red chilies, and lots of hominy corn. It has the perfect taste of chili in that it's spicy but not hot, not spicy enough to block the taste of the fresh meat



or vegetables that are cooked in the soup. What's even more to the soup is that you actually garnish it with sliced radishes, cabbage, cilantro, and squeezed limes. Most of the time we all use *tostadas* to eat the soup with as well. I personally like to spread sour cream over the top of my *tostadas* and sprinkle a little salt over that. This soup is usually made for the day before Christmas, but lately it is a Sunday meal that Mexican families enjoy across the States on a regular basis. I suppose there's no other way to explain this hot soup with fresh cabbage and other veggies sitting on top like a garnish. The hot cooked soup mixed with the crunch is just amazing beyond belief. To be honest, it's the best soup under the sun. Words can't even explain the goodness. **(Christopher Villalpando)**

I remember back in high school when I was taking Spanish courses I would make Mexican dishes with my mentor Michelle for extra credit points. The one dish I remember making was chicken quesadillas, one of my favorites. We were on Allrecipes.com one day browsing through recipes and both decided on quesadillas! We went to the grocery store and checked off every ingredient we needed after placing it in the cart. With onions, flour tortillas, chicken breasts, bell peppers, and shredded cheese, we were destined to make magic.

After about 30 minutes of cooking, we were finally

done and ready to eat. All in the first bite, the cheese melted on my tongue and was in perfect harmony with the other ingredients. The chicken breasts were tender and juicy, the onion brought a little smokiness, and the peppers added a kick of spice. The side of guacamole and sour cream only added more flavor and a feeling a heaven for just a moment. Man oh man, how I love quesadillas! **(Lakoyé Buford)**

I have not seen or spent a holiday with my family for 12 years, but I still have a vivid memory of Christmas back home [in Nicaragua]. My parents could not afford to buy us presents. I always laugh about that and tell friends that my parents could not afford Santa. One thing that they always did was buy us new clothes. We would wake up early in the morning of the 24th and hang out. I am not sure how to explain it, but it was almost like the air was filled with peace and people were happy.

After a while, my mom would start dinner, which was *gallina rellena*, which is stuffed chicken. The stuffing had raisins and vegetables, which made it a perfect combination. She also made rice and bread. We would all eat together and drink Coke, which was a treat for us. After eating, we would sit on the sidewalk, talk to neighbors, and play with fireworks. I miss Christmas back home. **(Heydy Pichardo Reyes)**



Sitting on the enclosed wooden front porch of our house located at 2044 Dodge Ave. in Evanston, Illinois, I remember the large bags of greens sitting in front of us and the smell of fresh dirt entering our nose along with the dew that sat upon them. It was a Saturday, and it was our responsibility to pick the greens off their stems to get them ready to be cleaned for Sunday dinner.

I remember the smell of them cooking—a pungent smell that was

Mexican culture has a great variety of good food. When I was little, I hardly ever went out to eat in restaurants. My mother would always cook for us. I remember some food dishes that she made that I did not like, but when I got older I learned to differentiate between tasty and not so much. Now I know everything she makes will be fantastic.

distinctive in taste and texture with its earthiness, which has a musty undertone. Oh, how I love the smell of collard greens, and I also love the taste. My grandmother never cooked enough because everyone in the house loved them. Of course, the adults grabbed giant bowls of them, which left the two of us children with little or none.

What I remember most is my birthdays. She always made a meal for my friends and family. She would always cook traditional food from Mexico for parties—food like *tamales*, *pozole*, *mole*, and *tostadas de tinga*. *Tostadas de tinga* have been my favorite since I can remember: they are *tostadas* with lettuce, avocado, sour cream, and the “*tinga*” (chicken, onions, tomatoes, and chipotle sauce). They are simply delicious! My father would always bring me a small cake; that was his present for me. At my birthday party, my friends and I had a wonderful time eating and playing. I believe food always makes us come closer and feel happier. (**Veronica Tinajero**)

Oh, how I love collard greens with their pungent smell and distinctive earthy taste with a musty undertone. (**Lenora Rodin**)



CREATIVE CORNER

I Have a Dream Too **by Lakoyé Buford**

I yearn to speak life back into your brittle corpse because after April 4,
1968 it seems our people just don't dream like they used to
I wonder how long it would take your heart to stop beating or your pulse to
stop racing once you've seen what we've turned into
Something that was once a dream is now a nightmare because my people have
stopped believing in our own ability to succeed
Pac was stressing, but we didn't get the message how we can still bloom in
the presence of concrete
Maybe if God made your star a bit brighter and carved your initials into
its core we'll have someone to look up to
Maybe if the blood we shed wasn't from violence but us actually attempting
to overcome the effects of these self-hating issues
We would dream again, finding the true meaning in how to love each other
again
They say the good die young and I guess they were right because
you have left this world way too soon
I want wake up from this nightmare and inherit your courage because just
like you I have a dream too



Why Not Tell You? **By Lenora Rodin**

Why not tell you that the truth you perceive to be true may not be accurate, or that maybe we need to take another look through new lenses or another pair of eyes? Are we in reality afraid of the truth? Is it because, like Socrates, "we are comfortable in our ignorance," or are we afraid that once we have been made aware of the truth that we will come out of the dark never to enter it again, only to be present in the light? Then what?

Why not tell you that you are smarter way beyond your most vivid dreams or your wildest imaginations? Or are you like one of the people in the Allegory of the Cave who were physically and mentally bound and refused to let another free them because they were convinced that their interpretation of what they saw was absolute?

Why not tell you that you are beautiful and deserving of all that is good? Is it because you are so used to believing and living by the negative adjectives used to describe your very existence?

Why not tell you that you are great? Is it because you are afraid that you might end up on a predestined date with greatness, a date that you do not believe you are worthy of or even deserve?

Why not tell you that after this UW Odyssey there awaits a greater one that will last a lifetime? Should I not tell you this because you would quit this journey that you are on right now in hope that life's challenges will not find you?

Why not tell you all of these wonderful things about yourself? Are you afraid that if you let go of who you think you are, you might become the person that you were really meant to be?

Why not tell you?

I LOVE...



I love me! I love my hair, my eyes, nose, lips—everything about me. Don't get me wrong. I have not always loved

myself. It took time. I learned to love the way I laugh and how I make people feel, my hips, and how I care for my family. I learned to accept me the way I am. God made me this special way, so I choose to accept it and just love me more because who else is going to love me if I don't? **(Brandi Whitlock)**



I love love. I love love so much that I am fooled by it. I love love to the point where I've lost Janina. I love love so much that the slightest memory of it keeps me in a relationship or in pain. I love love so much that I haven't let go. I love love so much that I'm still

waiting for love. **(Janina White)**



I love who I wake up and face in the mirror in the morning. I can't remember the last time I loved me. Although my physical life hasn't changed yet, I believe change is coming. More importantly, though, I feel and love the

inner change that has happened in me. I look at obstacles now like I must be doing something right because when I'm doing dumb s**t, nothing gets in the way. And

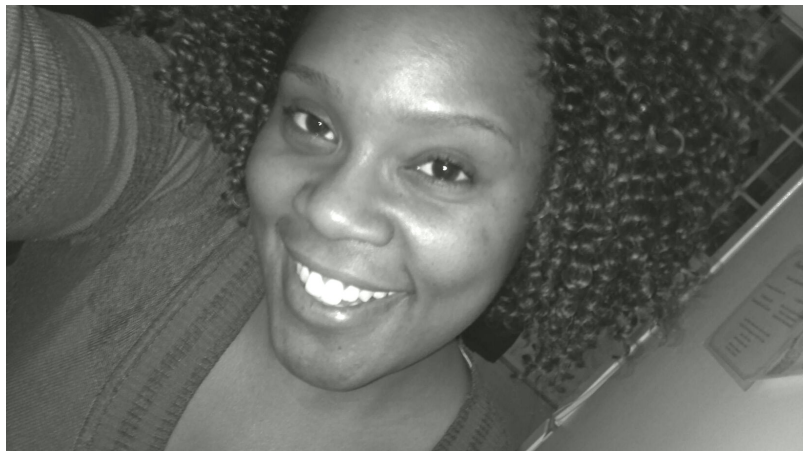


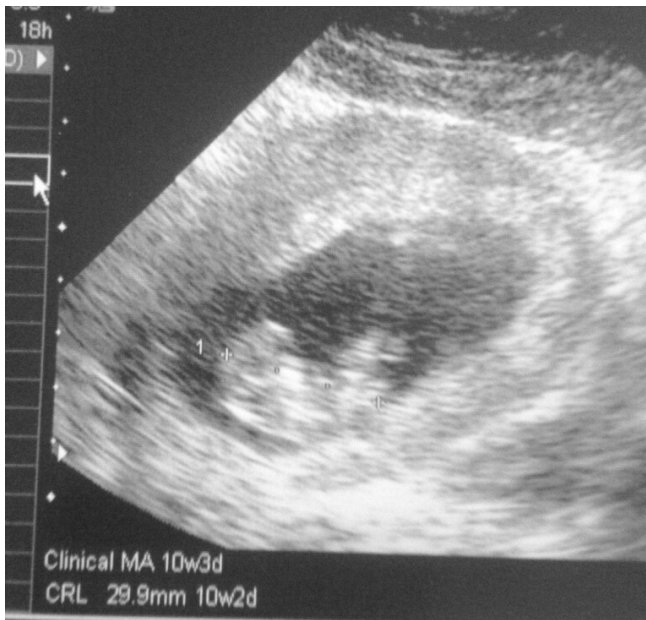
when I'm doing right, things still flow but little things will try to interrupt my peaceful thoughts. Yet still I remain calm and face myself with love. I'm patient with me. Though I'm not all the way where I plan to be on this self-love journey, I have forgiven me. I have forgiven me. . . . I love because I know how hate feels, and I cannot live there anymore. **(Shaneika Sanders)**



I love being a woman with black coarse hair and strength like the king of the jungle. . . . ROAR. There are days I go to sleep at 1:00 A.M. and back up at 5:00 A.M., prepping my child and me for school. It's those days I don't have time to whip my hair or do

make up, so I just shake and go. ROAR! I've always admired being a woman because we have the strength of 12 men and can run on low fuel, yet still look amazing at the same darn time. I love being a woman with black coarse hair and strength like the king of the jungle. . . . ROAR. **(Michelle Conley)**





We have our ups and downs, and some weeks are better than others. It seems to be a learning process, but with God's guidance and grace, I am finding the way. **(Nissa Uriostegui)**



I love my children. They are everything to me. My son Ali is very smart and also sensible. He loves reading, he loves to play the piano, and he really likes food. He eats anything. My daughter Isabel is adorable. She loves books and spends a lot of time playing that

she is a teacher or that she has a hair salon. She demands a lot of time. I am so blessed to have them both. I just love them so much. **(Veronica Tinajero)**



I love the fact that I am about to become a mom. I am not going to lie. At first I was nervous and scared. I also felt like a failure because all I could think of was how my chances of an education have become 100 times harder.

All of this changed the day my husband and I went for the first ultrasound appointment. It was the most amazing thing. There are no words to describe it. We got to see my little peanut. We got to hear its heartbeat, and we got to see it move. **(Heydy Pichardo Reyes)**



I love my children (a.k.a. my minions). Claudio, Antonio, Anna, and Francisco are the loves of my life, even if they do drive me crazy. We may not have much; however, we have each other.

My oldest son, Claudio, is 12 and is bossy. He seems to argue every last point; however, he holds down the fort when I'm feeling ill. My son Antonio is 11 and as sweet as can be. There isn't anything he wouldn't do for me. My daughter Anna is 9 and plays the diva role quite well. She is sassy, moody, and bossy, and she will always be my princess. My youngest, Francisco (also known as Pancho), is my miracle baby—born at 28 weeks. Since 29 weeks, he's kept me on my toes.



I love my daughter and how she shines like a star. I love making her smile. I love the way she asks me to hug her when she is sad. On the other hand, I love my son. He is like a little firecracker, a non-stop tornado. I love his little hands

touching my face and calling me mom. I love his drooling kisses. I guess you can say that I love being a mom. **(Margarita Cid Luna)**



I love to wake up every morning to the beautiful faces of my babies. It gives me hope that one day I can break free of the mental prison within myself and fly. Sometimes realizing how much of a blessing they really are can be overwhelming, but I know God gave me them for a reason, whether or not I feel I deserve it.

I love envisioning my future and how better off I will be once I find myself. I want that story to tell of starting from the bottom and making it to the top after realizing I do have a purpose in this world.

I love music and where it takes me. I feel it's there when no one understands me and when I don't understand myself.

I love the fact that I'm learning to love myself.
(Lakoyé Buford)



I love him with all my heart. I love him through his dark smooth skin to the core of his warm beating heart. I love the way he smiles and his laugh. I love the way his eyes glisten in the sun. I love the way he touches me whenever I feel the need of a hug. I love the way he

kisses me and the tingle that forms within. I love the way he caresses me after a long day. I love the way he loves me when I need someone to care. I love the way he speaks—the tone of his deep voice when it vibrates and echoes throughout the house. I love how he shows his appreciation with more than just a gift but with the gentle movements of his person. The way I love him is more than I could ever explain. When I need a friend to talk to, he's always by my side giving me guidance without judgment and being careful in his ways, sensitive and caring to every situation that comes his way. I love you like I love food. I can't get enough of you—my Lord, my Savior, my God! **(Myisha Ellis)**



I love the warmth that evolves from within on the first days of summer. It starts from inside out. Layers of clothes start to thin out in order to welcome the fresh air.

I love how that air is filled with life, like a paint brush splashing its color on the trees, the grass, the flowers, the sea.

I cling to my coat as though I could retain the summer's warmth within me. My cold feet at night make me more eager to see and feel those warm days. I love them, and I can't wait. **(Sahira Rocillo Ramírez)**



I love my brother because he always helps me with anything I need help with, and he's always there for me when I need him. Without my brother, I would be lost and crazy. When I was a child and my dad left us, my brother

had the courage to step up and take care of me, to protect me how a father should do with his daughter. Now that we are grown, he still cares for me and protects me. Whenever I feel lost or depressed, he helps me get back up and be the girl that never gives up. This is the reason why I love my brother. **(Brenda Juarez Cruz)**





I love that God gave me free will. I love that I can see beyond the surface of my situation. I love that I am accountable and free of excuse. I love that I am not handicapped by my struggles. I love that no one can ever hold me hostage. I love that I am committed to positioning myself. I love that I get better each day. I love all my weaknesses and my strengths. I love that I am making progress. I love myself! (**Jessi Hodges**)



I love being a mom. The reason why is because I get to parent differently than my parents.

My mom was 16 years old when she married my father, who was 24 years old. My dad was a Marine, so he wasn't home very much. My mom was very young and couldn't handle being 19 years old with three kids with no help. I took from them all the negative and turned it into something positive. My mom wasn't very supportive and still until this day hasn't ever said, "I'm proud of you!" That's why I try to encourage my kids and support them in whatever they strive to do. I let them know every day that I love them, that they can do anything they want to do. All they have to do is to believe—to believe that they can do it and will do it because Mom was there to have their back! (**Melissa Dominguez**)



I love my God because through him all things are possible. Through him I have the family that I do, the friends that I cherish, and the daughter that wakes me up every day to better myself and to continue on with being a better me and having a better tomorrow. Through him I am able to sacrifice today's wants for tomorrow's needs. With him my integrity and my dignity stays intact.

I love my God because everything is nothing without him. My family, myself, and my character are nothing without God. (**Christopher Villalpando**)



I love being a part of other people's lives who stand for equality and growth for all. It gives us hope for a better world and better relationships with other people in this world. The Bible clearly states we are all created equal. Righteousness and togetherness for all are a beautiful manifestation of God. I love being a part of the Odyssey family. (**Derek Dodd**)



I love my beautiful kids. They mean the world to me. I love their unique personality. I love their beautiful skin and smile. I love when they fuss. I love when they make me want to cuss. I love seeing me in them. I love seeing their independent skill and sassy, outspoken personalities. (**Mikiea Price**)



I LOVE the wonderful time that I'm having as a student in the Odyssey Project. It is making me understand the value of education. I LOVE how lucky I am to meet extraordinary people. Their personal struggles are so inspiring to me. (**Natalia Rodríguez Miramontes**)



I love the beautiful smile on my daughter's face when she wakes up next to me in the mornings, the warmth running through my body when I feel the love of someone who really cares, the vision of my success making a difference in my daughter's

life, the courage I have to try new things, the way Odyssey opens my eyes and mind to a world I've never seen, the woman this world, my struggles, this class, and the devil and God have made me, and the fact that I am still a work in progress—and in the process of learning me! (**Latesha Jackson**)



I love that I have a creative mind when it comes to writing my poetry. I believe that my words can touch the hearts of younger and older individuals, especially in hard times. I think through my words I can inspire people to do the same or even better

and also to show others they have the potential to do whatever they set their mind to. For example, one of my best poems is called "Being True," and it goes like this:

We cover our ears trying not to hear the words whose meaning we prefer to ignore. Who wants to know the huge eye of our own selfishness, the way it opens and devours and waits and wants, the way we cannot escape it? We are so needy, it is so sad, so hungry our cry was teeth. I imagine them in double rows like sharks' teeth ripping and tearing at the world, yet we hide behind our benign smiles, hide the things we can't bear to know, the way sometimes everything's too much, all the demands and needs of everyone crowd us, our own interior clamor. We yearn to slip into a place where the truth cannot reach us. There you stand with those looks on your face. As those words slip your lips, you try to break me down. Your negativity is not welcome here. Life is what you make of it, so push away your cold-heartedness because the only way to be you is to be true. (Joseph Lentz)



I love life because you do so many different things and you can make so many different changes if you want to. I love life so much because that is the one thing you and only you can control. No matter what else you are going through, as long as you are still living you can go any way you decide. Nobody on this earth can take that away, unless they take you out. (**Tenishia Bland**)



I love myself. For too long I've put others before myself, neglecting my needs and wants. Falling into a deep depression and meaningless sex was my way of not dealing with the issues I was dealing with within. Drugs and alcohol even came into play. My life was in a complete downwards spiral. Then finally I decided no more. No more will I allow myself to be depressed and continue to abuse myself. I know my self worth now because I do finally love myself. (**Deangelo Hood**)



I love me . . . sometimes. I love the me that is productive, caring, loving, giving, musical, and understanding.

I love when I make others happy. I wish I could all the time.

I love my kids and family. I love flowers and stars, and I love the way love makes me feel. I don't think there is anything stronger than love, not even a bomb—for real! (**Patricia McKnight**)



TUTORING

HELP US TO SUCCEED

BY MILLI LAU '14



All of us want to have a chance to receive higher education and advance our lives. The UW-Odyssey Project helps us to get a foot in the door of a college education. In order to succeed, participating in tutoring is very important. I want to encourage every Odyssey student to utilize the resources that Emily arranges for us.

I was one of the Year 11 (Class of 2014) students. I felt like the only student who had trouble understanding lectures and following in-class discussions because of the language barrier. I was so frustrated and often worried about my studies at that time. Therefore, I met with our tutors over two hours every week in order to finish my reading and writing assignments. With the help of our tutors (Kevin, Carol, etc.), I could be one of the students who got a good grade in Odyssey class and won the scholarship in memory of Emily's mother.

What I gain from our tutors is not limited to a grade or a scholarship. The most important thing is the improvement of my English. This not only makes my study at Madison College smoother, but it also helps me pass a job interview and get my first job. You will not waste your time if you participate in tutoring. It can help you succeed in the future.





