



ODYSSEY ORACLE

CONQUERING CAMPUS



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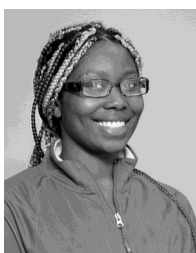


It was Wednesday, September 19, 2018, around 6:30 PM. All the students of the Odyssey Project 2018-2019 got a chance to have their picture ID taken at UW Madison Union South and then a tour of the Chazen Museum of Art.

I was in the group and enjoyed everything. It was my first time being in a yellow school bus in America, and I was excited like a little kid. At the Union South, I was amazed when I got my picture identification card from the UW Madison.

Then we went to the Chazen Museum of Art not too far from the Union, and Professor Gene Phillips and Professor Emily Auerbach helped us discover the place. We came back to the class around 8:30 PM and it was time for home.

(Tchallassi Edoh)



Seeing all the art and having it explained to me made me look at art totally differently, seeing that art can come in so many different forms (glass, oil canvas, paint, stone, etc.). I heard different thoughts about the art and

different perspectives from my own. Getting my ID card was so exciting and just made everything seem more real. I'm confident the journey will be exciting, and I'm very confident I'll be showing off my ID.

(Breonna Hawkins)

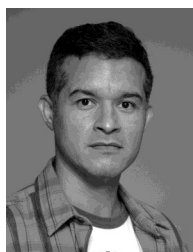


I loved our trip last week! Getting my ID was very exciting for me. It feels like I'm honestly doing something better with my life. Going to the art

museum was very fun. I took a lot of cool photos that I've shared with my family, and we're trying to come up

with a plan so we can go back with Professor Gene Phillips. It's a new and welcoming experience. I loved and enjoyed the entire day with my classmates and teachers!!

(Savannah Rose Perry)



The whole trip itself was memorable! The most memorable was exploring the art at the Chazen Museum. I enjoyed looking at pieces from Egypt—the coins and vases—and to just think about the time they were made. It's just

amazing to think about how good the sculptors, architects, and painters were thousands of years ago. **(J. Luis Pérez-Olgún)**



What I liked about the Chazen Museum was the top floor. I liked all of the glass art that is there. What I mainly liked was the wolf catching its prey. It seemed very real. The artist did a good job of showing how a wolf is after its

prey. I was able to imagine and feel those emotions of the hunter and the prey. I also liked the Egyptian art. This would be my first time being so close to that kind of art. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**





This was my first time going in a yellow school bus. I felt what my boys experience each day with a half hour ride to and back from school. The trip to the Union South brought a sense of what being a UW student is like. When I saw students working on their homework in groups with noises everywhere, I felt that I am too old because I cannot study in that environment.

The Chazen Museum of Art was a great experience. I had never been there—one, because I am always nervous about parking, and second because I do not do well on understanding art and music. After a tour with guides, I now understand how to look at art and how to process my thinking when I am looking at art. **(Yangchen Lhamo)**



I really enjoyed our class trip last week. It actually brought back memories from when I had gone on field trips as a kid and in the People Program as well. The Chazen Museum had so much art—pieces from Egypt, Russia, Germany, France. I found myself glancing at where every piece had originated and all the details the pieces entailed. Some looked so real, as if they were jumping out at me. I remember Professor Gene saying the artist used light to make the picture look so real.

My favorite piece would be the wolf and the rabbit. I remember the artist being female, and the piece was on the third floor with the “our time” new century of art. What I liked about it



was its detail. It was an actual sculpture of a wolf showing its teeth preying on the scared, curled up rabbit just inches away. It's like you can feel the intense energy. It just had me so curious as to what the sculptures are made out of and what inspired her to do something like this. Why not use colors instead of dark gray? The wolf had a rough look to its fur showing aggression as it's preying on this innocent, curled up rabbit. Another thing is that the wolf is on the wall hovering over this rabbit, so I instantly envisioned this rabbit trying to hide in maybe a hole of some sort. That's something I enjoy about art: you can make your own interpretation of what you get out of it. **(La'cee Webster)**



Getting my UW ID: now I feel like I'm officially a UW student. Not to take away from the Odyssey classroom experience, but with my ID I feel on par with other UW students. There is a saying, “How do you know who is a scholar?”

Answer: “Other scholars say so-and-so is a scholar.” When I wear my ID, other students will say, “He is a UW student.”

My best take away from the visit to the Chazen is I have some smart classmates. Many knew a lot about art. Finally, I'm glad I didn't break anything. **(Muhammad Abdullah)**



Memorable moments from our class field trip last Wednesday were the group picture outside the Union South and the fortune of being given a chance to see art that made me feel like I went back in time. I also liked how the art was separated along different times in history. **(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)**



I was nervous about taking my ID because my hair wasn't done and I had to take my hat off. I recently cut all my hair off and am not used to this new look. So I decided not to take my ID. After awhile, I thought to myself, why not? Just take it and own that bald head, girl. So I took it and will use it as a memory to look back on.

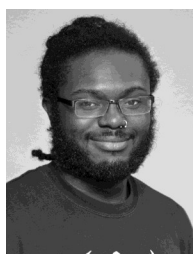
I enjoyed the art museum. I wish we would've had more time to walk around. I have always been a big fan of Greek mythology, so it was exciting to see that exhibit. I would love to go back and see other things there. **(Queeniece Creamer)**



I was excited yet nervous about getting ID cards. When I stepped off the bus, the feeling was surreal. This is official, I thought, as I waited for my ID card to be printed. I gazed around in awe and wonder at the sight of students all around, talking amongst themselves and posing for photos. Others goofed around while grabbing food or coffee with friends. I could tell right away that this Union South was a popular hangout for UW students. I felt an immense sense of pride. My smile spread wide as I held on to my ID card.

Next at the Chazen Museum of Art, I couldn't help but want to wander around and observe it all. I had never been there before, so everything there was new to me. It was so fun and exciting to look at different pieces of art and hear my classmates' feedback or perspective. **(Zataiya Gober)**

In one room of the Chazen, spread all across the walls, were dark, no-life pictures of stiff, rich, white people, with almost expressionless faces, eyes devoid of light. A couple of steps forward we entered another room, except this one was filled



with Greek artifacts—pots that told stories if you paid close attention. If you looked straight up, there was nothing but gray. We were told the gray images on the ceiling were made up of all the historic art pieces. There were faces that looked twisted, and bodies faded in and out of each other. It was like I was watching the River Styx. **(James Horton Jr.)**



Looking back at Union South to how I once saw it in my younger years, it was such a change. I observed the atmosphere, the people, the noise, and everyone finding a place to belong, either with a group, a friend, or just studying by themselves.

I was so excited to know we would be going to the museum. I have been to many before but never with just a small group and with the museum open just for us. The many media used to create such vivid, vulgar, and impressive works of art were mesmerizing. The statue in white that shows a confident presence, the global arrays of color to brighten one's eyes, the life images they portray, and the figures of a wild imagination drew me into a world I long to see. **(Sandra Zintzun)**

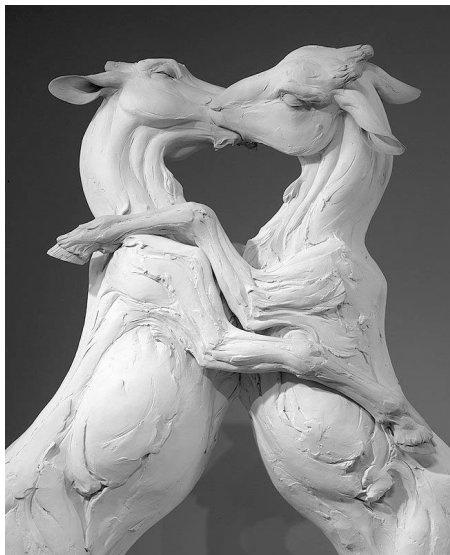


I really enjoyed our trip to the Union South to receive our photo IDs. I love the new atmosphere they have created

for us in student life. The environment was warm, welcoming, and relaxing, and I will make time to go back to the Union as often as possible.

I really enjoyed our field trip to the Chazen Museum. It was very educational and enlightening. I have lived here in Madison all my life and never once really thought about exploring it. But I am glad to have the experience exploring it with my classmates.

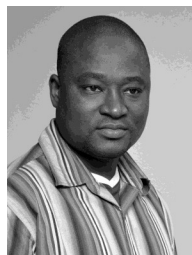
Now the goats, um hum, were quite interesting. That is my zodiac sign. I felt they were displayed very well and might I say very strongly? They were ready for major action. They stood out and made the statement "we are strong." LOL
(**Carmon Caire**)



placed their hooves on each other's back, mimicking the way humans kiss and embrace, was awesome. The title of this piece is "Rushing of Blood to the Head." I plan on visiting this interesting, free museum very soon so I can go back and look at the art I've already seen and look at others we didn't get a chance to see that night.
(**Erica 'Cocoa' Gentry**)



The two goats—well, it was a trip that somebody thought to make that. That was interesting. I don't think I expected all the nakedness. (**Martina Mitchell**)



The last time I was part of a school or class trip to visit places I was in the 9th grade. I remember how beautiful it was. Last week's visit to Union South and the Museum was a replica of what I had years ago. The trip



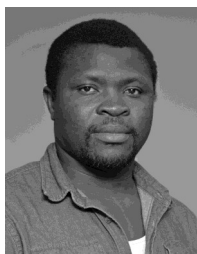
I liked how my classmates, including me, enjoyed themselves at the museum.

The most fascinating piece of art I saw was the kissing goats. The ivory colored goats were superbly detailed all over. The two male goats were kissing with so much passion that they both got a blood-filled erection. The way the sculptor tilted their heads and



was beautiful, educational, interactive, and, above all, fun.

Seeing my colleagues and teachers interacting, communicating, and even cracking jokes was something I will remember in life. This shows that we are a family and have each other's backs to protect and support.
(**Abdourahman Sallah**)



Last Wednesday the 19th was the day of our class field trip to the Chazen Museum of Art and to Union South to get ID cards. The yellow bus left our classroom around 6

PM in the direction of Union South for our ID cards. That was our first stop. There we were in line, waiting for our pictures to be taken. Then we got our cards. Later, we had a group photo before we got in the bus again to go to the Chazen Museum of Art.

Our second stop was my favorite. We were at the museum. In there, I saw a lot of paintings and statues that I really liked. Also, there was a particular painting that caught my attention. Gene, our professor, told us that painting I liked was bought for a million dollars. I was astonished about that news. The trip was good, and I really enjoyed every moment of it. I hope to go back there soon with my family. **(Hezouwe Walada)**



Our trip to the Union South was exciting. I felt a part of something. I was enrolled in a university before but had to take some time away from my education, which was heartbreaking. So just being back on campus felt great. Receiving my

student ID showed me that even though I took time away from my education, I never lost sight of going back to school. **(Galeca McCain)**



My most memorable moment would be receiving my student ID and looking down at it. Even though I wasn't too pleased with the picture, I sent it to my parents anyway. My dad's initial response was, "Oh, you got a job downtown." I told him,



"No, Dad, look closer." Hearing his voice change and being so happy for me, so proud, made me feel like I was on top of the world.

The Chazen Museum, well, I would have to say standing in front of the million dollar painting I was thinking to myself that the amount of money that had been spent on it could have changed all our lives. I adore art work, but I just

couldn't imagine spending all that money on a painting. **(Alice Ramirez)**



I really enjoyed our class trip to Union South, located at 1308 W. Dayton, very much. I had never been there before, but I've only been a resident in Madison for two years. I was invited the very next day to a luncheon in the very same place. I was glad and surprised when we went because I knew where I was going. I also enjoyed the photo we all took outside after we took our ID card photos before we got back on the bus.

I was very impressed at the museum when I first got off the elevator. I have thoughts to make a reservation as soon as possible to visit the Chazen Museum of Art with Professor Gene Phillips as a tour guide for me and any friends who accompany me. Then I'll have more time to see more sculptures and paintings. The short time we had, which was divided between Gene and Emily, was very well planned. I just was in awe with the different times and eras of painting and sculptures. Different styles by different artists made it amazing to me. **(Joyce Johnson)**



pretty calm setting. It made me want to come back there just to study and walk around to see the rest of the building. One thing I really enjoy is food, and I noticed they had an elegant looking restaurant of some sort, but the smell of freshly made burgers made my heart melt. On the left side of the office, I noticed they also have a variety of different flavored ice cream that looked appetizing! I told myself I would go back soon, and I certainly will.



I must say I had a great time on the trip. Going to get my school ID made me feel complete. I felt secure, like I am officially a UW Odyssey student. The Chazen Museum was AMAZING. I felt I learned so much more about art.

The different pieces and times they were made were so amazing to me! I really enjoyed taking pictures with my class. Overall, I really loved the trip. **(Candace Howard)**

Once we arrived at the museum, it was a little dark, but I noticed a big, brown, odd but cool looking building. We headed off the bus, and our adventure started. It was really awesome to see the different black and white pictures that were displayed on the wall, as well as the colored and abstract ones. When we went upstairs with Emily, there were all these odd sculptures made of glass and what looked to be ceramic and other material that really caught my eye. The glass was my favorite part. There were so many different styles and designs, and the colors were beautiful. **(Cheyenne Pete)**



Our trip to the museum was pretty amazing. I have never been to that specific place, or to Union South. When we first

arrived at the Union, I noticed crowds of people outside and walking into the building. It was huge on the outside as well as on the inside, but it was beautiful! There was a huge space with tables and chairs for people to do homework or just hang out, and I thought it was a



FEELING DIFFERENT LIKE WILLIAM BLAKE

Poet William Blake (1757-1827) differed from others of his time and felt he did not fit in. After reading Blake, students were asked to write in class about a time in their lives when they felt (or still feel) unlike those around them.



Well, my biggest fear is my own anxiety. It makes me feel smaller than everyone around me and takes my voice away. It's like being trapped, like drowning. Even though I have everyone's support and helping hand, I still

feel like nobody can save me. My own thoughts are my demons. Living with these demons keeps me quiet. My emotions take over, and instead of having a panic attack and expressing how I feel or saying what I want to say, I just keep quiet. That is how and why I feel different from other people. **(Alice Ramirez)**

was too light and my hair too straight. On the other hand, some places I was the "new popular girl" because I

talked and looked different and they liked that.

As an adult, I haven't talked too much about my tumultuous childhood and all the ways it has affected me in adulthood because I felt people would judge me by where I came from. So I kept quiet and tried my best to fit in. I thought if I had grown up differently or had been raised like they were, somehow the outcome of my life would have been different.

(Martina Mitchell)



I honestly can't think of a time when I felt as if I did not fit in. No matter the situation or who I'm around, I'm always able to adapt. Would you consider feeling uncomfortable not being able to fit in? If so, growing up I had a

hard time embracing my body. I always looked older than my age. However, as I grew older I learned to love myself more and accept my curves. **(Galeca McCain)**



Coming from poverty, my only option was to work really hard. This is the reason why, when I got a chance to go to school, I did my best to be always at the top of my class. That is how I ended up at one of the

prestigious schools in my country (CME in Togo). There I felt different because all my classmates had nice clothes, nice shoes, and money. I remember this like yesterday because that stage of my life impacted me. I came there with two shirts, three shorts, and one pair of shoes. Even though I was at the top of the class, I felt like I didn't belong there. I was always sad because I didn't have anything.

(Hezouwe Walada)



As a child, we moved a lot. It was very difficult always being the "new kid," always trying to fit into new environments, plus they were always different. In some schools I was a total

outcast, always being made fun of because they felt I talked "too proper," therefore being labeled a "white girl" by my African American counterparts. Also, my skin



The reason I felt and still feel different from those in my life and around me is the way I talk and say certain words. I HATE the way I talk and pronounce words (especially words that have a w, r, or wr sound) because every time I say

something, people (including my family and those I know) ask me to repeat what I said. Then I just stutter and then freeze up. When I said HATE, I mean HATE to the highest level of HATIVITY!! That's why I write my feelings—how I feel—especially in poems or in my art. In a way it's a curse, but in another it's a blessing.

(Quishanta Cary)

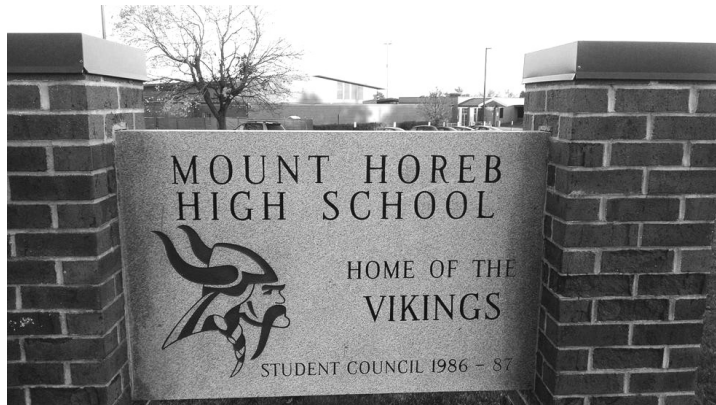


I couldn't think of one incident where I felt different from other people. I've always been a leader and never a follower, so I don't try to be like others and try to fit in anywhere. You either love me for who I am or leave me alone. But

there is one—when I wasn't doing too well in high school. I'd try several alternative schools but to no avail. I would leave school. I ended up going to Sidewalk High in Chicago, doing nothing all day. I found out I was going to have a baby and decided that I would get my G.E.D. before my baby was born, so I was around people who were still in high school and graduating—and downplayed me getting my G.E.D. They were trying to make the fact that I was getting my G.E.D. to be bad. They would say, "You can't get into college with that G.E.D." Well, I did. I did it all. I received my G.E.D. before my baby was born and have been to college THREE times with this G.E.D. **(Erica 'Cocoa' Gentry)**



I remember my first day of eighth grade at a new school in Mt. Horeb. If you know anything about this area, you know it's not very diverse, so automatically I felt as if I wouldn't be as smart as the other kids or not know as much, coming from a



Madison school. What would the students think of a black girl in their halls? It took me a while to come to accept that just because of a difference in skin color doesn't mean you won't be accepted, and sometimes you yourself being closed-minded can block so many blessings and lessons. Now when I walk in a room, no matter the race, I don't feel less educated. I don't feel lower than anyone because, just like I can learn from you, you might also be able to learn something from me. Confidence is the key.

(Breonna Hawkins)



A time I can remember feeling unlike those around me was in a high school class. It was an English honors class my freshman year. I remember already being nervous because it was the first day of school, and I didn't know what to expect. I was already

out of my comfort zone being in a new environment (high school) and having to find my way around as a freshman. Needless to say, I had a lot of anxiety already. Walking into class, I was late by a few minutes and happened to be the only one to come in late. Everyone was looking at me when I came in. The class was so packed I couldn't find my assigned seat right away. When I finally did, I felt as though all the attention was on me. I sat down after a few minutes of looking around. I realized I was the only black one in the class as well. I just remember feeling so out of place. I went home and told my mom how I should have taken regular English class because I was the only black girl and probably couldn't relate to the material. **(La'cee Webster)**



Most of my life, I can say that I didn't fit in with the people who surrounded me. As a black woman growing in Wisconsin, I'm always swallowed into white spaces, being forced to assimilate into the idea of who they want me to be. I can distinctively remember feeling stuck while sharing parts of myself to people whom I know would not appreciate it. In high school, I recall being in spaces where teachers assumed that I wasn't educated because of my name or the color of my skin. I was assumed to have cheated when I generated good scores, and it was assumed that I come from a terrible upbringing because my mother was a teen mom. Furthermore, the bar was always set low, and I was supposed to be okay with it and just accept my statistic. While all this was continuing to happen around me, it enclosed me further and further. I started to become the shell that they wanted, keeping my honest opinions and self-expression to myself. These occurrences made me feel like I couldn't be a person with expression, only a carbon copy, with the written manual of how I was supposed to work. **(Kayashia Blake)**



Losing my dad was hard. I had already differed from plenty of children by being raised by only my father and have barely known my mother! Moving with my mother after the passing of my father was very difficult—moving to a very small town when I was used to bigger cities, going to school and still being in middle school because their junior high went from sixth and ninth grade, wearing uniforms and riding a big yellow bus. I differed from others just based off what I knew and where I was from! It felt as though I had traveled to another country where we all

spoke the same language. I stuck out like a sore thumb when I walked in with braids others had never even thought about, shoes that were two different colors, and regular clothing because I hadn't been supplied with the school uniform. I felt as though I did not fit in, and no one understood me at the time!

(Savannah Rose Perry)



Through my life experiences, I have become very independent, strong, bull-headed, and set in my own ways. Being Hispanic and surrounded by other Hispanic women in my neighborhood, I always feel different. I do not act like them or think as they do. They seem to revolve around what the men in their lives say and ask them to do and be. For many years, I have tried to be as they are, "almost slaves" to their partners. I have made many sacrifices to satisfy that image my partner wished of me. But no more! My neighbor said it best: "You do not need a man for you. Do for yourself." His statement didn't make me feel like I fit in but just made me feel free to be me! **(Sandra Zintzun)**



I honestly cannot think of a time in my life where I didn't feel different, whether it's the way I talk, look, or think. I always feel like I'm so different compared to those around me. I can say that when I was younger, this made me feel awkward and like something was wrong with me. However, the older I get, the more I realize that there is nothing wrong with me or being perceived as different. So what? We all are unique and have differences that make us who we are. That is something to be celebrated, not ashamed of, in my opinion. **(Zataiya Gober)**



Back in my sophomore year of high school, I took it upon myself to take honors classes. The classes that I took were English honors and AP World History. In both of the classes, I was the only African American in the class. All of my classmates looked different from me, and my teacher looked different from me. There was a day in my English class when we got into small groups and had to act out a scene from Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet." One group thought it'd be funny if they did the scene "in the hood" where Romeo and Juliet were personified stereotypes of "ratchet folk." Romeo spoke in Ebonics, and Juliet had her shirt tied up at the chest, with another shirt tied to her head like a head wrap. Juliet faked like she was chewing gum while she patted her head, ignoring Romeo. At the end of the scene, all my classmates, including my teacher, laughed hysterically. I, on the other hand, was not amused at all. My annoyance reached its peak when a good friend of mine in the class told me, "Don't get butt hurt, it's just a joke, man." **(James Horton Jr.)**



I still have days where I feel different, more often than ever. After graduating high school, my friends and I grew apart. Some had kids, and some got married. Unlike them, I'm single and have no kids, but I would not change my situation at all because I believe something happens for a reason. Despite the fact that my friends are focused on their kids and marriage, I'm happy for them! Then there are days (more like weekends), my kid-less and single friends ask me to go out to a club or party. It's consistent for them, though. I don't mind going out to

have a good time, but I'm no party animal like them. So lately more than ever I've been feeling alone. That is where I think I am different as well. They worry more about partying, and I worry more about my future. I love them more than life, but when you set different goals you see things differently. My mindset is different, and that will not stop me from doing what I want and need to do in my life. To be different is to be a blessing! J

(Cheyenne Pete)



I felt so very different when I first came to the U.S.A. My first experience was that I didn't know how to run the tap water in the bathroom in the airport. I was looking for something to turn, but it had a sensor.

Another situation was when I first went to search for a job in New York City. I was asked to show two forms of identification. I asked, "What kind of identification do you need? I am here in front of you." Then later I learned that you need an ID card, which I never had in my life before. **(Yangchen Lhamo)**





In summer camp, children could swim but I couldn't. So as I approached the beach, a child tried to pull me under the water and dunk me, and that made me terrified to ever try to get into another pool. It gave me anxiety, and I feared getting in any kind of water besides my bath tub. It felt strange because I couldn't swim, but everyone else could. I felt uncomfortable and never went back to summer camp. I decided to volunteer at a daycare and be an assistant, and now I can say proudly I am a teacher of 22 years. **(Carmon Caire)**



Being my mother's child, I've always felt I was the black sheep, as others would call it. My views on life have always been different. The family looks at me as the crazy one, the lost one, the one who's going to end up in a bad place.

Another thing was finding out my father isn't my real dad after 16 years of him being in my life! Now I go around my family on his side and feel so empty. I don't feel that connection I once felt when I thought he was my dad!
(Candace Howard)



I was born and brought up in a poor family, surrounded by middle class families. At a young age, I was the only boy who walked to school, while my mates rode bicycles to and from school from Monday to Friday daily. While at school, students from the same class (rich families) hung out together, played, and did things together. At some point, I felt unlike those around me. This is due to the poverty I found myself in with my family.
(Abdourahman Sallah)



The way I feel different from those around me is having an accent when I speak and express myself. I have also felt different when applying for a job due to my previous immigration status.
(Richard Marroquin Santos)



I would have to say giving birth and going through a very hard time relaxing and dealing with a bunch of ignorance that led to me having a C-section made me feel extremely different. I feel like my tolerance for pain and b.s. in my life is extremely high. I had my entire procedure with no anesthesia. Feeling every pull, tear, and cut really put me in a different mind frame of being angry and furious but also blessed and excited after seeing my baby girl. With this experience, I honestly say it made me into a stronger woman that wants to succeed and remove all b.s. and ignorance from my life so that I never have to experience such pain and torture again.
(Diamond Clay)



When I was in elementary school, 1955-1964, I did not feel a part of whatever was going on. My late mother, Barbara Dean Bailey-Letherwood, only went to the eighth grade and was very shy, especially when it came to speaking to Caucasian people. I later learned that she wasn't just shy—it was conditioning from growing up in the segregated South and a fear of Caucasian people. She was a professed agoraphobic. I lacked self-confidence and was usually unprepared for school. We lived in Milwaukee, where she and I had no relatives. However, my four younger siblings had family, as the parents, sister, etc. of my stepfather, William Letherwood, had moved from Mississippi. Whenever we would visit my mother's family in Indianapolis and it was time to go, I would always cry and want to stay. **(Muhammad Abdullah)**



I felt different when I was in a relationship with my daughter's father. My thoughts were not good enough, my ideologies of life and the life I wanted for myself and my daughter did not matter. I forced myself to be complacent with a life I never wanted for myself and my child. I've always been very social, outgoing, and vibrant, always smiling. But the day my daughter's father dragged me down a hallway by my hair, pinned me to a bed, looked me dead-faced into my eyes, and told me I would be nothing without him, I changed. That was different for me because I believed him. From that point, I stopped fighting and became what he wanted—working, paying for everything, going to Packer games. (I don't even like the Packers. Hell, I don't even like football.)

I secluded myself in my own hatred of myself for becoming a battered woman, even though on the

outside I would never let someone else see me that way. I never lied about who I was because I was always prideful of my independence. But with being 265 pounds, unhappy, and unable to be myself, I found his cheating gave me an escape I was ashamed to say I always wanted. When I left, I felt ashamed. My daughter was supposed to have a family, and I ruined it. But as I lost 100 pounds, my smile grew. As I spoke about the abuse I blamed on myself, I became more independent. I was becoming me again. And my daughter respects me more than ever. She tells me how much she dislikes her father, and I tell her to love him. I could never be as strong as I am had I not been cheated on, abused in front of my then two year old, and then left a week after my grandmother died. He taught Mama how to raise you. Be strong and consistently rise above.

(Ebony Anderson-Carter)



There have been many times where I felt left out or that I did not fit in.

One was when I first arrived in this country, where not just the language was different but also the people. For example, when I lived in Houston, Texas, and hung out with friends who "spoke Spanish," they had their own dialect. It was difficult to understand their words and what they really meant. On top of that, they made fun of my Spanish accent. It was in Texas where I came to realize that many of them don't really like Mexicans, or they discriminate against their own.

Another time was being in Madison hanging out with friends of friends. It is very normal for people here to ask one another about careers, school, and jobs. I felt I didn't fit in because I didn't have any interesting career or school diploma to talk about. **(J. Luis Perez-Olguín)**



I always feel different. I guess I started feeling different the day I came to the United States. Like I wrote in "The Circuit" assignment about my experience with my first day at school, seeing all those different cultures made me feel different.

In the present day, I feel different, or at least I think people look at me as different. The reason is because all of those racist comments President Trump said about Latinos. Honestly I don't care about his comments, but I feel that because of them, I see more differences in stores and public parks. One example is if I take my kids to the park and there is a family that is not Latino, they will leave or just move away from where we are. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**



When I was 19 years old in Chicago, Illinois, where I was born and raised, I went to a modeling school. It was located in downtown Chicago, called the Loop, at 22 W. Madison off State St. This was 48 years ago.

The other students were all white, and all the young ladies were from 20-27 years old. All the young ladies were from all parts of Illinois, lived in the suburbs, and were from rich families. All of the classes were taught by white teachers. I had classes in Visual Poise, Personal Appearance, Drama, Astrology, and Make-Up.

I remember the first day I felt looked down upon. I was the only African American (black person) all of the young ladies had ever met.

But they all were nice to me and helped me to pass the classes. Some of the teachers and young ladies invited me to their homes and introduced me to a different way of life. I still lived in the ghetto on the lower south side (39th and Indiana) that we called the "Hood." They also invited my family to parties with swimming pools, tennis, and horseback-riding. I was very impressed. It was a life experience I'll never forget. After I graduated from Patricia Steven's Modeling, I got paid, and all the gowns, furs, and suits that I modeled were given to me. **(Joyce Johnson)**



The world is so gigantic. If I feel sometimes different or unlike others around me, I will say without questioning myself twice, "Of course." I am from far away, and I got a chance to travel a lot. I visited some

countries near my country in West Africa, and I also went to Europe, especially France. I lived there for ten years before I went back home and then came to the United States of America. At the same time, I will say, "That's OK." We sometimes have to accept things the way they are, live with them, and keep going. We are all human beings and have our weaknesses. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**





I mostly feel unlike those around me when I'm at work. I work in the Personal Lines department at American Family Insurance. Personal Lines is the area of insurance that covers your home, car, motorcycle, etc. I'm on a team of 17 service underwriters, and I'm the only black person on my team. When I moved into this position two years ago, it was pretty obvious that I wasn't welcomed by everyone. Some rolled their eyes, while others made more subtle unwelcome gestures. I still put on a happy face and held my head high amongst my fellow teammates.

One day, about four months into my position, I asked a question of one of my teammates. I had always intentionally avoided this teammate because she was the meanest and never spoke to me when I spoke to her. On this particular day, she and I were in the office while everyone else had gone to volunteer at United Way. I had a question in regard to the work that I was doing. She seemed eager to help and even came to my desk. She said that she'd find the solution and give me an answer. The next day, I got an immediate answer from a much cooler teammate. He came to my desk to help with the problem and told me what to do in future situations.

Later that day, shortly after lunch, my supervisor called me into his office. He didn't question me about what I had asked her or ask for my side of the story. He instead decided that I should redo my training and start over like my first day of training. I tried to explain, but his passive aggression brought the discussion to a quick halt. I was left without a voice in that situation and many others since. **(Monica Mims)**



To be totally honest, feeling like I don't fit in is the story of my life. It seems like no matter what I do or say, I end up being the odd one out. I always wonder, is it something that I am doing wrong? Or is it the people I choose to surround myself with? Sometimes I try to look at it as a good thing. It makes me feel special in a way to know there is no one quite like me, but more times than not I feel misunderstood and alone. I guess you could call it a gift and a curse. At the end of the day, I always encourage others to be themselves, no matter how strange others may perceive them. **(Queeneice Creamer)**



I remember after around six years old, I never felt pretty. Often I thought other girls were better looking. Around eighth grade, I would look at other girls and wish I looked like them. Instead of being who I really was, I began acting out and portraying someone else. Any behavior that was soft and gentle, I was the opposite.

Later on I looked back and reflected with a therapist, and I realized that it began after I was molested. As a child, you don't understand the molester was the ugly one and certainly not me. **(NatuRa Warford)**



There was a time and still is a time that I feel unwelcomed here in Madison. I have experienced racism toward myself and children at schools. Some places that I walk into make me feel like I don't belong there. **(Erannia Potter)**

MALCOLM X'S HOMEMADE EDUCATION

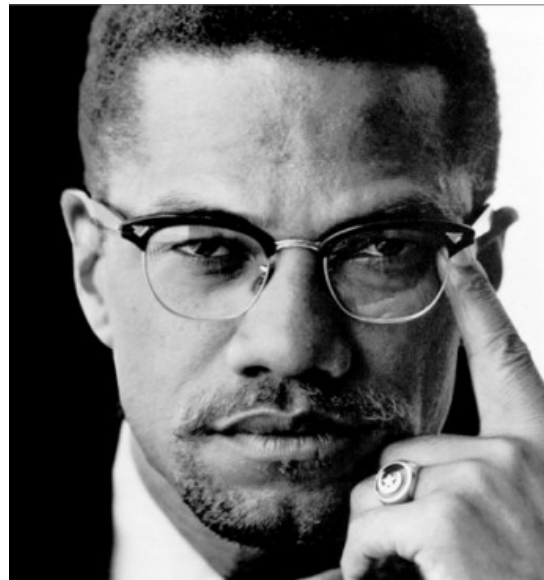
Malcolm X has me wanting to read the dictionary from beginning to end to also further expand my vocabulary. The dedication for books Malcolm has goes further than I ever thought—to even read after lights were out in prison, getting into the right position on the floor, watching out for guards, hiding in his bed. Malcolm couldn't have explained the plight of misrepresented people better. We don't seem to value knowledge as much as we should. We all know the saying "knowledge is power." (**James Horton Jr.**)

I admire Malcolm X for educating himself in prison. He used the time he served wisely. He managed to rise from being a pimp involved with drugs and crime. . . . He traveled to different countries, wrote books, spoke Arabic, married and raised a family . . . all this and more with only an eighth grade education. (**Joyce Johnson**)

I admire Malcolm X for educating himself in prison. He used the time he served wisely. He managed to rise from being a pimp involved with drugs and crime. . . . He traveled to different countries, wrote books, spoke Arabic, married and raised a family . . . all this and more with only an eighth grade education. (**Joyce Johnson**)

Homemade education means self-taught. I believe that Malcolm X was an extraordinary man. The ambition this man had to have while incarcerated to educate himself and dedicate his life to helping his fellow black man is amazing. (**Alice Ramirez**)

In my reading of Malcolm X's about his time in jail, I see he didn't have as much or any distractions from reading as being out in



public. Personally speaking, I have so many distractions: social media, phone, activities, friends, and TV. However, what makes it more difficult or challenging for me to read is that I never really read or grew up in a culture where reading was encouraged. . . . So just as Malcolm took the time to read, I need to make it part of my daily life. (**J.Luis Pérez-Olgún**)

Malcolm X refers to "homemade education" because he was self-taught, knowledgeable, self-disciplined, and well informed by teaching himself academically and morally rather than relying on others to educate him. One doesn't only need to go to school, college, or university to be educated because it is possible to get educated in streets, prisons, detention centers, and even in the jungle if one is determined and willing to apply oneself to seek education. Education, whether formal or informal, knows no race, sex, boundary, or religion; rich or poor, anyone can seek and acquire it. (**Abdourahman Sallah**)

Taking into his own hands with ability and perseverance to teach himself everything his mind was willing to consume, he becomes his own teacher. He could have easily done as others do, nothing, wasting away the years of his life with violence, boredom, within a system stacked against him. He chose to succeed and push through that barrier to lead others to do the same. (**Sandra Zintzun**)

In my opinion, what he meant by “homemade education” is born out of his experience in the public education of the twentieth century for many Americans of African descent after the collapse of Reconstruction in the South and in the North after the Great Migration. In most of the Jim Crow South, there were no high schools for African Americans, and many of the segregated schools in the North had inferior books and facilities. In his *Autobiography* he recounts an experience wherein he was discouraged from pursuing his dream of becoming an attorney by the very person and institution [junior high school teacher] entrusted with his education and other pursuits. . . . I was similarly discouraged from pursuing available educational pursuits due to my coming from a sharecropper family in the Jim Crow South. . . . **(Muhammad Abdullah)**

Homemade education was an education Malcolm sought after and gave himself. He knew and understood what his flaws were,

and he made a decision to change that. We all as humans can connect with this piece because we all want better for ourselves. Malcolm used his space and the predicament he was in to do so. **(Kayasia Blake)**

Malcolm taught himself by reading a lot of books. I feel the same way about reading. When I was in grammar school, I used to put the book I was reading in front of my textbook, pretending to be involved with the assignment until I got caught. **(Erica ‘Cocoa’ Gentry)**

Malcolm X’s writing is very powerful and touching. I believe knowledge or the access to education is equal to any kind of freedom. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**

He was amazing! Malcolm X was a very smart man and encouraging. He shows that many things are possible if your heart and mind desire it. **(NatuRa Warford)**



FRANCISCO JIMÉNEZ AND “THE CIRCUIT”

Having been raised by migrant workers, I can relate to the struggles and the hard work needed to put simple food on the table to feed a big family. I started working in fields at a very young age, but before I could work my role was to help feed the workers. I remember waking up early to make enough tortillas to make tacos and other meals throughout the day. Sometimes I even made them three to four times a day or took care of the dishes. Once I was old enough to work, I got up at 4 or 5 AM to be done with work before the sun was unbearable. We would have the weekends off during the summer, but there was always work on the tobacco fields. We didn't see much of our hard work, as it went towards taking care of the family. When we did get a little, it was off to the store to buy a good book or a Barbie. Just to have something all the other kids had at my age was very comforting. Most of my teen years were spent working in the summer to help the family. My only avenue out was art. I would spend hours in my room drawing or coloring. (**Sandra Zintzun**)

After reading “The Circuit,” I almost cried and was sad because I can relate to the part where Francisco, Roberto, and his dad have to wake up early in the morning to work in the hot sun for long hours until the sun disappeared behind them. I used to get up at 5 AM every morning when I was in Africa and walked almost ten miles far away from our village just to fetch some water. It was really hard. Then I had to follow my dad to go to the farm of our chief, where we worked all day. At the end of the day, the chief gave us some food in exchange for our labor. (**Hezouwe Walada**)

I relate to moving around from place to place and dealing with certain hardships and family problems, having to transfer from one school to



another. The young child was very vulnerable, devastated, and hurt because just when he got situated in a new home and school, now all of a sudden he had to pick up and move all over again. At one point, that was ME. (**Quishanta Cary**)

The constant moving resonates with me. As an adult, I can not think of a time or year when my children and I have not moved. It's stressful but

always necessary. (**Zataiya Gober**)

I can relate to the story when he mentions his first day of school. I really know that feeling. It's scary. I remember that day in the classroom where all the kids were talking to each other, laughing, and I was just sitting on my bench looking at all those kids, wondering what they were saying. I remember two kids said something to me, but I couldn't answer because I didn't know what they were saying. I just shook my head no. That day was the slowest school day of my life. When I went back home, I told my parents that I didn't want to go back to school; I'd rather go back to Mexico. After all of those days, here I am fighting every obstacle. (**Juan Carlos Abrajan**)

When my family and I lived in Jackson, Tennessee for 17 years, we moved from apartment to apartment, then house to house. Moving is mentally draining for me, so I understand and can relate to Francisco Jiménez. (**Erica 'Cocoa' Gentry**)

I really related to the boxes! As a child, we moved a lot, and life was very unstable and scary. Most vividly, I remember all the times I came in to “packed boxes”—sending the profound unspoken message that change has come, yet again.

(**Martina Mitchell**)

Not having English as my first language, I can relate to Francisco. I get anxiety when asked to read out loud. Then I privately go read the parts out loud to see if I am able to do it without making mistakes or passing out. There's a lot to learn from Francisco's story, like appreciating the things we have even if it isn't much at all and being kind to others because we never know what struggles people are facing. **(Alice Ramirez)**

When I was younger, I had to move around schools often and lived in many different states at a young age. Whether you move a lot or not, you can always take something you learned with you. Nobody can take away your education. **(Breonna Hawkins)**

My life as a child and teenager was a struggle for me! Although I may not have moved as much [as the family in "The Circuit"], I understand the term of younger working hands. Even though children should not have to work, sometimes life gives you a different story than you were hoping for! I had to work for myself at a very young age—not something I wanted, but ultimately I'm glad I did because it taught me more about life! **(Savannah Rose Perry)**

I can relate to moving frequently growing up. It wasn't always fun, but I've lived on every side of Madison in my 24 years of being here. The decision as a child was also not ours to make, so I as well was forced to start over a few times. I've made some nice friends along the way. I feel [Francisco's] missing school in order to work was a big responsibility for him at that young age. I haven't had to miss school in order to work, but I've experienced things growing up that taught me responsibility in middle school. I feel that's partially



why I'm so wise today. **(Cheyenne Pete)**

Reading this story, I found myself relating not only to Jiménez but also to the family. Growing up, my family and I moved around a lot. Both of my parents worked really hard; however, we still struggled. Even though we experienced hardships, we stuck together as a family. **(Galeca McCain)**

The story reminds me of my childhood. My mother was in and out of my life. Every time I thought there was change, the lightbulb went out. **(Diamond Clay)**

I can definitely relate to the language barrier—those feelings you get when trying to say something and people will either stare at you or make fun. Even if people make fun of you for not speaking their language or having an accent, never stop trying and learning! **(J. Luis Pérez-Olgún)**

I relate Panchito's family story to my moving to the United States of America. I was dreaming of leaving my country because the political and social situations in my country [Togo] were miserable. The country has a dictator, and the opportunity for a good or regular life was in the power of just one class of people. I got the opportunity to move and did it, leaving my family, my friends, and everything I owned behind me. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**

I can relate to moving around a lot and having to move after getting close to someone. I did a lot of moving around with my mom when she was looking for a place in Wisconsin coming from Chicago. I went to four different schools for fourth grade! One was in Chicago, one in Madison, and one in St. Paul, Minnesota. **(Candace Howard)**

ORACLE OVATIONS: ALUMNI ISSUE



A rush of great positive feelings went up and down my body as I was reading the Oracle. It is of great support to read all these positive words from people who went through

Odyssey. Despite their adversities, they were able to graduate. It also made me feel safe knowing the great things they said about the staff and that they will not let us fail. Reading the Oracle, I've learned how lucky I am to be part of this program. I learned that doing my assignments on time, taking advantage of tutoring, and being in class will make it go smoother. **(J. Luis Pérez-Olguín)**



It made me more relieved knowing that a lot of the previous graduates had the same feelings as me. I am excited for this journey! Quotes that jumped out: "Great experience for the soul,"

"awakening of your mind and spirit,"
"motivational and informative."

(La'cee Webster)



Reading the Oracle made me even more excited for the Odyssey class. I get the strong impression that this class will change my life for the better. The sentence that jumped out to me the most was that Odyssey

will be a great experience for my soul. I know personally my soul has been urging me to do something with myself and to stop sitting around. Another sentence that stood out to me was that Wednesdays were not like classes but

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ODYSSEY ORACLE

WELCOME, CLASS OF 2019!



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family get-togethers instead. I've never enjoyed the classroom setting in desks beside classmates I may never get to know on a deeper level. I learned that the staff in Odyssey truthfully care for each of their students, as the student letters often say how the staff "will never give up on you." In my experience going to school, I've seen countless kids, teens, and students be called lost causes by teachers and cast to the side.

(James Horton Jr.)



I learned that you have to try. Being uncomfortable is only an obstacle. Learn to defeat comfort because staying in your happy place does not allow growth.

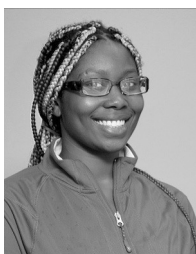
(Ebony Anderson-Carter)



Students said that Odyssey would always be a part of them and their future. I gathered that the students had life struggles and wanted to make life easier by being able to further their education. In Alice McDaniel's "We Ate Dog Food," I gathered that they were low income and her parents did the best they could to provide for them on a tight budget. They all were blessed and fed at the end of the day, the same as in "The Circuit." **(Carmon Caire)**



Reading the Oracle made me feel excited to start a new journey in life, being able to be around people in the same mind frame of wanting to accomplish something. All types of people can have a chance to complete another chapter in their lives. **(Erica 'Cocoa' Gentry)**



Reading how past students felt about the instructors and the class itself made me feel 100 times better, knowing that I'm not the only one who faces different problems in life. A quote that jumped out to me was "The day you compare yourself to others is the day you lose perspective." Reading the passage by Alice in "We Ate Dog Food" reminds me of "The Circuit" because Alice made herself rich in knowledge even though she herself faced many challenges. The Odyssey program will not let you give up on yourself and will not give up on you. Just trust the process and remember the meaning of odyssey. **(Breonna Hawkins)**



I was inspired by reading the Odyssey alumni stories about their past and what led them to the program. For so many different people from so many unique

backgrounds to come together to change their circumstances is amazing, not only for themselves but also for their families. What jumped out was how different participants welcomed us. . . . It made me feel like a ton was lifted off my shoulders. Here I was thinking that I was the only one that life had happened to. Reading this made me want to share my life's experiences to inspire others the way these alumni have inspired me. **(Kayasia Blake)**



Reading the Oracle made me feel more excited to be in the program. Some of the worry faded away. Bruce Moore wrote, "This class is a place where magic happens, lives get transformed, and dreams start to become realities, as long as we are willing to consistently come to class and do the required work." I feel like this sentence describes what most of the students want to say about the Odyssey Project. This program can open doors for people that think they are not school material. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**





I remember walking into the classroom very nervous and scared the first day. But after Emily and her staff talked to us, I was a little bit relieved, and now after reading these testimonials from former students, I feel right

at home. I can fondly say that Odyssey is my new family. I was asking myself how I could go back to school. It seems like God has answered my prayers. Through the years of my struggles, through the years that I have given up on school because of problems in my life, at this moment I feel alive. It's like being born again. My dreams of become a doctor have been revived. I now know without a doubt that the Odyssey Project will help me achieve my ultimate goal. . . . After reading Alice McDaniel's "We Ate Dog Food," I concluded that knowledge is power. If her dad knew how to read, he wouldn't have purchased the dog food. That story fit well with mine. When I arrived here in the U.S. back in 2009, I couldn't read any English, so I used the women's bathroom by accident. . .

. In sum, after reading the Odyssey Oracle, I am now 100% confident that the staff is here to empower me and help me achieve my dreams.
(Hezouwe Walada)

The Oracle was eye opening and also a friendly warning to focus, be prepared, and not give up—also to wash our hands before Char flips LOL! Everyone's words were so interesting and different. They made me want to



do better before I even started my homework! Their words of encouragement and security let me know that I am in the right place for a fresh start and a new outlook, but also let me know that it starts with me first. I need

to be in class, open, and focused.

(Savannah Rose Perry)



I was glad to read and see that I was not the only person nervous, excited, and scared at the same time!! The first day always seems like the worst, but I feel like I handled it very well!

This Oracle also shared different stories of people who were in the class last year, and it definitely gave me more motivation instead of discouragement! This class has changed lives for so many people. I cannot wait to see my own transformation at the end of this class. J (Cheyenne Pete)





Reading the stories from former students assured me that I made the best decision with applying to the Odyssey Program. It made me realize that I'm not the only person who took time away from my education. These stories give me hope that if I stick to my plan and also work hard, I will not only be a graduate of Odyssey but also earn my degree. **(Galeca McCain)**



Reading the Oracle made me feel at ease and really chilled my anxiety. I highlighted a few quotes as I read: "Try to be as open as possible." "I would never trade this experience for anything in the world." "Don't be afraid to ask for help." **(Monica Mims)**



Reading the Oracle made me feel determined and inspired! What I learned is Odyssey is like a family—I am not alone. The teachers and staff are sincerely and genuinely here to help and are interested in the most positive outcome for every student. I will make it! Keep pushing through and never give up. **(Martina Mitchell)**



Reading the Oracle reminded me of my childhood life in a refugee camp in India. It was a camp of 200 families, where there was no running water or electricity. It was a poverty-stricken camp, but we all lived as one. The oneness brought strength and happiness despite all the hardship that we had faced. I have felt my home deep inside. It gave me extra strength within to work harder and don't quit! **(Yangchen Lhamo)**



Reading the Oracle from the Class of 2018 has increased my excitement for joining the Odyssey Program. Being able to read others' thoughts and feelings for the staff helps me be able to open up more about things and not be afraid of being let down. **(Diamond Clay)**



One thing that really stood out to me is that everyone said that you will become family by the end of the course. It's kind of hard for me to believe this in my case because I am very guarded at times, but I am looking forward to being proved wrong. I also like that there seems to be a lot of support from staff. . . . I learned that the Odyssey Project is a diamond in the rough. Lots of people were honored to be chosen, and it changed lots of lives. **(Queeneice Creamer)**



I feel blessed to follow in their footsteps. I have had a lot of opportunities to learn as well as teach. I've overcome most of the challenges of the students I read about. I know learning is lifelong. . . . It has been a goal since I was in my early 20s to obtain a college degree, and I don't want to use children, employment, substance use and abuse, people, places, or things to get in my way. I know there will be challenges, but . . . I am artificial substances free, I love my job, and I don't go to or among people, places, and things that can be an impediment to me completing this course and getting to the next level at a post-secondary institution. **(Muhammad Abdullah)**



our lives. It's not a competition; there is no catch. The teachers are really just there to help us succeed in our lives. **(Alice Ramirez)**



After reading the Oracle, I feel like most of my concerns and worries about this course in

terms of me being capable have diminished. At first, I was nervous and feeling like I didn't know what I had gotten myself into. Reading all the

encouraging words from others who have been in my shoes before was comforting. **(Zataiya Gober)**



Bruce Moore really touched my soul as I was reading his story because I too remember feeling as if I were stupid because I felt like I was the only person who would have to sit and re-read a story two or three times to fully

understand what was going on. I also remember pulling up to the parking lot for the first time and not being sure if I could walk through the front doors because my anxiety was getting the best of me. My two boys were in the back seat confused, wondering if we were going to go in, and me thinking to myself if I'm going to start anywhere, it might as well be here and now. Bruce writes, "I put my big boy pants on, got out of my car, and walked through the doorway and into the next phase of my life." That was exactly what I needed to do, and I did. I've never felt so proud as I did that day, knowing that I have it in me to change my own life.

By reading the Oracle, I've learned that this is pretty much the first step to improving all of



After reading the Class of 2018 letters in the Oracle, I felt that I've made a great choice to be here! I was feeling a little iffy at first, like am I smart enough to be here? Will I make it through? But when I read about other

battles they faced and how they first felt, it made me more comfortable about being here. I love the quote by Anthony Jefferson—"Odyssey is the pencil with which you rewrite your life." I can't wait to have the feeling of accomplishment like they have. **(Candace Howard)**



The Odyssey Project seemed to make all students feel emotional. This is my turn for the journey. I feel an extraordinary adventure is coming for me also. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**

HOW IS THIS CLASS AN ODYSSEY?

odyssey: *a long wandering marked usually by many changes of fortune; from Homer's account of Odysseus's ten year journey home*

I think the course is called the Odyssey Project because it's intended for us to experience many changes, open our minds to new ideas, and start a never-ending journey of life. This class will be an odyssey for me because I expect to grow and learn beyond my imagination. **(Monica Mims)**

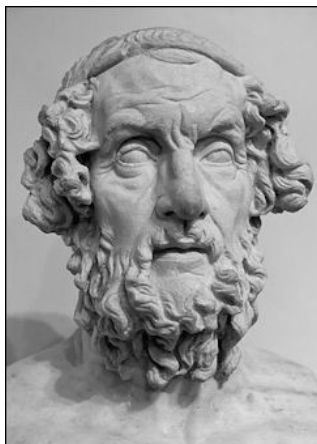
I think the class is called Odyssey because it will be nothing like our usual classroom setting. This class will teach me a lot and send me down a different path, and I will meet some very interesting people. **(Queeneice Creamer)**

This course is called the Odyssey Project because with all the Wednesdays and all the different people and personalities, the outcome of watching how we will progress will be an adventurous ride or journey for those who really want something out of this opportunity. **(Diamond Clay)**

The Odyssey Project could be a cross road that can lead to many open and new roads to explore. **(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)**

All the students that come to Odyssey are wandering at the surface to find a path to get out of whatever situation we are in. At Odyssey we are all going to take this journey by helping one another side by side. **(Yangchen Lhamo)**

What Odyssey means to me is transition. I feel it will be a journey from one place to the next. I believe it will be physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. My journey at this time is transitioning from wife to widow. I'm looking forward to the new woman who will emerge as I enjoy this Odyssey journey! **(Martina Mitchell)**



Just like Odysseus, we will go on a journey that is long yet rewarding. During this journey, we will face events that will be challenging; however, we will overcome and not only learn but grow. **(Galeca McCain)**

This class will be an odyssey for me because it will be something I can work towards--a class that will allow me time and space to study. **(Erannia Potter)**

I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because it will be a life-changing journey as well as a process for all of us to grow into better individuals. This will be my own journey to gain more knowledge and to create the changes I need to as well as to become/grow into a better person. **(Cheyenne Pete)**

It will be a journey for everyone. We might have different trials and tribulations, but the project will affect us all in a good way! We may get lost on this journey, but it will help us learn how to proceed and be greater. **(Savannah Rose Perry)**

This course is called the Odyssey Project because it is like a journey where students have to learn about others' life experiences and the professors will help them understand reading and writing. It will help me grow intellectually and will allow me to get accepted into UW Madison. **(Hezouwe Walada)**

For most of us it is a new journey where the unexpected will happen. This class will be an odyssey because new challenges will come to my life. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**

The Odyssey Project guides students along a path to success. It is an adventure that gives hope to students and their children to strive hard to realize their potential to achieve their goals. It is a journey to transform lives, give hope, bridge academic gaps, and thus break the cycle of poverty. It also serves as a model for helping students turn their lives around and find a career path. **(Abdourahman Sallah)**

It's a journey, and on that journey there are so many teachings and sights we will learn. Throughout the year, we will be challenged and will learn more about ourselves. **(Ebony Anderson-Carter)**

It took every individual an amount of "wandering" time in their life to get to where we are now. I personally spent a lot of time nursing my failures before I was completely ready for a new journey. **(Kayasia Blake)**

The journey will be a long one, but we will go through different changes in how we learn and understand things. The journey may become difficult and may even feel long but will change us along the way. **(Breonna Hawkins)**

It's giving people that have had different misfortunes in life another chance. It will give me the chance to accomplish getting a degree—the start of getting my degree! **(Erica 'Cocoa' Gentry)**

It represents a wandering in my effort to achieve my goal of coming nearer to self-sufficiency and self-actualization. I think the authors and originators of programs like Odyssey saw the need and had the empathy, understanding, and awareness to take the steps necessary to make this blessing possible for non-traditional students like myself. **(Muhammad Abdullah)**

Odyssey can take you places and show you things, even teach you some things you have

never been taught before. Odyssey can open up my mind to information and knowledge like never before. It can take me out of my comfort zone and take me where I've never been before. **(Quishanta Cary)**

It's a new journey in life, learning about different historical events and people who were alive and made changes in the world. It will be a new journey in my life as I am older and have matured as a young adult in today's society. Going back to school at the university level is a new and exciting feeling that I have always wanted to experience. Being from here, I was frightened to go to the UW because of the size. But I'm feeling more confident now that I was able to take part in this wonderful program. I feel the sky is the limit, and I want to continue to go all the way and get an actual degree. **(Carmon Caire)**

This course should be the beginning of our long journey towards getting a college degree. This class is an odyssey for me because this is the important first step for me to get into the groove of going to class and doing homework. After the Odyssey class, I plan on continuing my college path. **(James Horton Jr.)**

This program is very exciting and will help me to experience new and adventurous ways to receive a higher education that will lead me to my goal, which is my dream and vision of getting a bachelor's degree in the humanities. **(Joyce Johnson)**

We are about to embark on an epic voyage. It seems very far for me personally to even think about attending college, even more pursuing a higher education in such a great institution as UW-Madison. My dream has come true, and my new odyssey starts now with this program. I'm a little nervous and scared but also excited, as I know this new adventure will not be easy and will require me to be prepared mentally and

physically. I will need to be as smart as Odysseus was to overcome every obstacle on his odyssey. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus wanted to get home. In this Odyssey, my goal is to soak up as much as possible from this course and to finish with excellent grades. **(J. Luis Pérez-Olguín)**

All of us will overcome many changes and challenges over the next few months that will lead us on a fulfilling adventure, or voyage, in Odyssey. The choices I make will influence events in my and my children's life going forward. Not knowing the outcome is somewhat frightening but exciting. **(Sandra Zintzun)**

I think this course is called Odyssey Project because what is taught here takes you on a journey you've probably never been on before or ever seen yourself being on! This class will be a new journey to me reaching my goals. **(Candace Howard)**

This course is called the Odyssey Project because each person selected has overcome many obstacles in life thus far. I have been through a lot in my 30 years on this earth, but through it all, I remain focused and resilient. **(Zataiya Gober)**

I think this course is called Odyssey because "you're writing your own book," meaning you are on a path to further your education, and you have the power to take it as far as you wish to. It is a journey, an eventful journey as to how far you have come, the things you learned, new skillsets obtained along the way, and so much more. I'd say my mind is

always wandering. I am young, curious, and anxious to learn, so for me this is the foundation and the guide to my journey. There is so much I want to do and learn!! **(La'cee Webster)**

Through this project and what is taught, your mind should be able to wander and travel. This project is set to take people and their new drive to places that weren't known. This is set to be a fantastic voyage! :) **(NatuRa Warford)**

The Odyssey Project means an adventure you plan to do and wish to get done. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**

Like Odysseus, we all started this new journey together, and there will be lots of obstacles we need to overcome to eventually get where we want to be. I believe this class suits me perfectly because it is the beginning to my journey. I know there will be obstacles that I need to overcome myself to be where I want to be in life. **(Alice Ramirez)**



Romare Bearden, "Siren's Song"

ESSAY CONTEST: WHY VOTE?



J. Luis Pérez-Olguín

We are getting closer to the date when we get to vote and have a say in who gets elected. Like me, many others feel discouraged and

disappointed by the people elected to represent us. We need a better system with people in office who won't let us down and who care about the greater good and not just the wealthy. Why vote? Many wonder why even bother. To you I say YOUR VOTE DOES MATTER! It matters because we get to choose who will represent us. Not voting can set us back in time to when kings inherited their power or took everything by force with their armies. Not long ago, women and people of color were not able to vote. To you I say take advantage of the right that was given to you! Let's educate ourselves about the people running to represent us and learn who has the best interest at heart for the greater good. Changes might not happen right away, but one step at a time will give us results. Get out and vote!



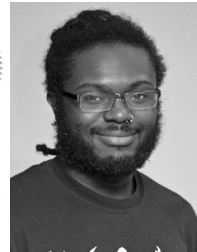
Joyce Johnson

I was 13 years old in 1963 and watching our black and white TV with my family. I saw Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Civil Rights

Movement protestors being attacked by dogs, sprayed with water hoses, spit upon, beaten with clubs, and jailed by white policemen filled with bigotry and racism. Rosa Parks applied at least five times before she was finally given her voter's registration card. The white clerk told her she had to learn the U.S. Constitution and the



Bill of Rights, which was totally unfair since whites received their voter registration cards without having to learn that. Laws have been changed because our ancestors fought and died for us to have the right to vote. Vote to help change laws for better conditions! Vote to stand up and be counted as citizens! It doesn't matter if you vote Democrat, Republican, or Independent. People of different races, religions, and backgrounds still have a long way to go, so go vote! The ballot boxes are not rigged, and your vote will count.

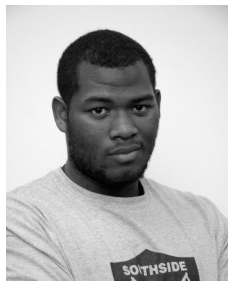


James Horton Jr.

Vote for those who came before you who didn't have the liberty to choose or whose voices were not heard at all. Vote for women and

minorities who fought their hardest to make it so that they could vote and so that future generations could have the opportunity to select who governed them. Vote to put someone who thinks the same way you do in power—someone who wants to make the changes you want to happen. We talk about how the world may never change, but it *could* change if we put similar-minded people in a position to *make* change. I haven't voted yet myself. I myself have fallen in line with thinking that my vote doesn't matter. Now that I pay a little more attention to what's going on around me, I

know even if I feel my vote doesn't mean anything, I need to vote in order possibly to change this world into a place where the ones making the rules care about me, my family, and our world.

**Run Barlow**

Hello, all non-voting Americans. I just want to say thank you for allowing me to represent you in this great seat in our great government.

Although I did not gain your vote in this past election, you did not endorse a candidate that would better represent you and your ideals. I'm going to raise your taxes, I may cut funding to your children's education, and I definitely won't require your companies to pay you decent wages for your services, but I will keep every promise I make to you today. I promise I am not your candidate, and you will soon regret you allowed me into office. I am greedy, and I have only my own interest at heart. My biggest promise is that I will work hard to make America great again for me. None of this would be possible if it were not for you. Just imagine what could have been had you voted. I sincerely thank you, non-voting America. This is your future!

**Brian Benford**

Why the heck should you vote? Hidden under a cloak of a false democracy, male, pale, and stale politicians have stripped away our

rights, our abilities to reach our full potential, and our voices. Once we were shackled, beaten, raped, and degraded under the umbrella of slavery. Today we suffer the same afflictions (despite American claiming "all are free") because of our reluctance to participate in reshaping democracy or **VOTING**. Voting gives us not only a voice but a tangible, real life means to counter the injustices that many in our communities endure. Vote to deliver a knockout punch to the system that demands your inaction.

**Finalist: Muhammad Abdullah**

I voted the first time when I was 30 years old around 1980 after I became branch coordinator of the Milwaukee NAACP. One of the NAACP's mantras was, "If you don't vote, that's two

strikes against yourself: the one you didn't cast, and the one those oppose you did." I have not missed the opportunity to vote ever since. It is not only a civic right for which Americans of African descent have marched, fought, and died but also a responsibility for all those who are able. Did James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman commit suicide, or were they murdered simply for registering and educating African Americans in Mississippi to vote (June 21, 1964)? Have you not seen the images of people in parts of Africa, Asia, etc. standing in long lines in the hot sun for hours just to cast a ballot? Vote as if your very life and the lives of your family members, friends, and neighbors depend on it because it really does!

**Finalist: Candace Howard**

I will be honest: I was one who always felt voting was pointless. I always felt it didn't matter and was just something the government had set up to make people feel they were a part of a system controlling their lives.

Now the more I learn about politicians, the government, and history, I know it's best for everyone to vote. When citizens elect a president, governor, or mayor, they influence every aspect of our lives, from health care to schools to housing. By voting, you choose who you want to have control over your wellbeing and human rights. Voters play a central role in shaping the government and their very futures. Fight for your rights! Don't let just anybody come take control over your wellbeing. Get out and vote!

**Finalist: Tchallassi Edoh**

Voting by definition means a formal indication of a choice between two or more candidates or courses of action, expressed through a ballot or a show of hands or by voice. Voting is the

opposite of solitude, isolation, seclusion, sequestration, withdrawal, and segregation. Any human being has an important role in this world. The world today is full of fear, sadness, and inequality, and it's time to change this situation. Fix things right before your children wake up from their cribs and see the shameful lives we live. Get off your chairs and sofas and away from your televisions and go proudly to vote!

**Honorable Mention: Lolita Phillips '13**

Why vote? How do you think change is considered? How do you think changes can happen? I vote to inspire my kids and my grandkids to voice their opinions. I explain

to them that when they grow up and vote, sometimes changes happen and sometimes they won't, but that change will never happen if they do not get out there and vote. Vote because we have a voice. If we don't vote, we don't have a right to a voice at the table. We vote because our ancestors were killed fighting for justice. Vote because Martin Luther King Jr. started a dream for us all. By voting, we can finish making his dream come true.

**Honorable Mention: Monica Mims**

Honestly, I initially wanted to start voting when I was 21 because I anxiously wanted to be selected for jury duty. After watching many episodes of Law and Order, a

friend and I were convinced we'd be great jurors. It got more interesting when I started researching whom I should vote for. Knowing more about them personally made them more human to me. I dug a bit further and started understanding the history of voting and voting rights. Women weren't allowed to vote until 1920 (not that long ago). America's Civil Rights Movement was the influence behind blacks being able to vote, and that right wasn't guaranteed until the Voting Rights Act of 1965—only 53 years ago! Now I vote because I can, because it's my right, because I want to be heard, and because my life depends on it.

**Honorable Mention: Abdourahman Sallah**

In The Gambia we had a dictator rule for 22 years. During his rule there were serious human rights violations, extra judiciary killings, disappearances without a trace, rampant arrests, and jailing without due process until the 2016 elections when the dictator lost to a coalition body. We succeeded in leadership change but not system change, and if I have to vote again I will vote for system change. Politicians are like prostitutes: they go after their interests, don't keep their promises, and are not reliable and trustworthy. It is important for any patriotic citizen to vote and be part of the decision making process.



**Honorable Mention:****Char Braxton '06**

The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1870 prohibited the government from denying or abridging the right of citizens to vote on account of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude." I was a colored black male considered three fifths of a man. The blood was curdling down the side of my mouth, and the cuts across my face stung as my eyes were sticky and closed shut from unjustified beatings. Racial slurs bounced in the background: "We'll burn down your house with wife and kids too," "Black voting rights are not allowed here." Black codes were used in the South as a legal way to take voting rights away from blacks! I just wanted to vote. I just wanted to be seen and heard as a voice that could make a difference.

and that means voting and making your voice be heard.

**Honorable Mention:****Carmon Caire**

It is important to vote because it is freedom to stand up for your rights in today's world. Voting is especially important for women because in the past we couldn't vote. When women were able to vote, we could voice our opinions about freedom and world peace. Voting can help to make positive changes in the community and in the world, like feeding the hungry, finding clothes, and helping with housing. Vote in order to have a president who is more caring and compassionate and whose views could change the world for the better.

**Honorable Mention:****Victoria Patterson '17**

Why vote? Are you seeing and hearing about the times we live in? We have moved back in time rather than forward, with so much cop and Caucasian crime against African Americans. So many citizens and public figures are saying and doing racist things publically because they know there will be no real repercussions. Why vote when the "supposed-to-be President of the U.S." has more time to tweet about who said what about him rather than run a country? I am left speechless. My heart aches for the future generation and the direction it's headed in, when immigrants are being ripped from their children and we as humans think that's OK. If we don't want to be a part of the problem, we have to be part of the solution,

**Honorable Mention:****Juan Carlos Abrajan**

Even if you don't know the candidates or their real objectives, you should still vote. You can do quick research about them so you can make a decision. You might even say

that one vote doesn't count, but think about all those people that think or say the same as you. That one vote could turn into thousands. Just remember that voting is a privilege, so don't throw your vote away. Make it count. You wouldn't throw a hundred dollar bill away.



ALUMNI CORNER

My Journey

By René Robinson '08

I was born in Chicago, number eleven of fourteen children. At one point in my life, we had ten people in a three-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment. It was lively, challenging, and sometimes disappointing, but never a dull moment. It was family, my family. I didn't have a choice in the matter.



We were poor. How poor were we? We were so poor that my uncle, who worked at the Campbell Soup Factory, would bring us cans of soup that couldn't be sold because of flaws (bends and dents). The cans didn't have labels but contained numbers, which identified the type of soup. We memorized the numbers because we had to. If you didn't know the numbers, you were stuck with the soup no one wanted, which in our house was the tomato soup.

Survival, that was my life. Not only did I have to survive on the south side of Chicago, in the ghetto, the low-end as we call it, but at home as well. Can you imagine fourteen children vying for attention? Fourteen children wanting to be loved? Fourteen children striving to be better than the next?

It wasn't all good but neither was it all bad. We were taught principles, morals, and Christianity. We were required to excel in school. You would think that such an upbringing would produce upstanding and productive individuals, and it did for ten of us. Unfortunately I was one of the four who didn't quite meet the challenge. I was persistent at taking the wrong path and making poor decisions. I had my oldest son at

sixteen and was forced to attend a high school for pregnant girls. I married at seventeen and had my second son at eighteen. It was a blessing to have a husband who was also the father of my children (Where I come from, that was a unique happening in itself), but unfortunately with that came physical abuse.

I could go on and on about the many ups and downs due to the poor decisions I made over those thirty years, but I want to talk about the good news! I made it out of that

situation and relocated to Madison, WI. I got a job, an apartment, then a used car. I joined a church that made me feel at home, and then I heard about the UW Odyssey Project, one of the best decisions I have ever made.

Odyssey is for people just like me; those who wanted to do better but couldn't for whatever reason. Having made so many poor decisions in my life, I feel I'm somewhat of an expert in understanding how easy it is for people to mess up, to make mistakes, and choose the wrong paths.

Odyssey gives you the feeling like the little red engine we read about in elementary school, "I think I can! I think I can!" It releases the "Wow" factor as in "He did that? She did what? Really? They left Britain to do the same thing in America? I didn't know that." Then it begins, the desire to know more, the desire to understand, the drive and tenacity to do better and to critically think, analyze and understand what you are reading. And what's so fantastic about Odyssey, it's generational. I tell people that all the time. Not only does it change the lives of parents, it changes the lives of their children, which will change the lives of their children, etc. Odyssey is a "Mind Opening Experience"!

Before Odyssey, if someone had asked me to write a poem or told me that I would be analyzing Socrates, Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, and Frederick Douglass, I would have rolled my eyes up, down and sideways. But there I was, at my Odyssey graduation, earning six UW Madison credits and reading this poem I wrote about the value of lifelong learning:

My Journey

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



Josephine Lorya-Ozulamoi '08 came to the U.S. as a refugee from war-torn Sudan. She calls her time in the Odyssey Class of 2008 her "passport to higher education." Josephine became a U.S. citizen and went on after Odyssey to earn both her bachelor's degree and Master's of Social Work (MSW) degree from UW-Madison. She calls it a difficult journey as she juggled school, work, and motherhood. Just this Monday, October 1, Josephine finally began what she calls her "dream job" as a full-time social worker for Dane County Human Services.