



# ODYSSEY ORACLE

## ODYSSEY MOMENTS



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# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

*What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.  
—William Shakespeare, "Romeo and Juliet"*



My own definition of Savannah Rose is "a beautiful mind grown in a prickly bush." My delivery nurse gave me my

middle name. My dad passed on my last name. My first name has no special meaning to my family as far as I know! (**Savannah Rose Perry**)



alternate meanings I found also describe who I am: glamorous, a hopeless romantic, always wanting to look breathtaking for that special moment, assertive, a great leader (many would see as bossy, but I take pride in

leading and helping others), tough, for I am not easily broken, impartial, a great arbiter between my kids and siblings (growing up in a household of 16, it was a must!). Adaptable: I can easily adapt to the many things that get thrown at me. With work, school, and kids, there are always changes with schedules. This kind and cruel world is full of challenges, all of which have made me the person I am today.



I was very intrigued by the findings regarding my names. In Greek, the meaning of Sandra is a feminine form of Alexander meaning "defender of men." In English, the meaning is "unheeded prophetess," a heard

or noticed but disregarded prophet. Some of the words that I found that best describe me are ambitious, live life to the fullest, introvert, and successful in business. I would agree with many of the meanings. As the oldest with many brothers, I have always seen myself as their defender. I am a very ambitious person, always wanting more, probably because I gave up most of my life to raise two of my younger siblings, and I married young. I am currently studying Business, which seems odd since art was my love since I can remember.

Gatica is my maiden name—from a place called Gatica in Biscay, Basque Country, in Spain. The last time I looked up the origin of my last name was in high school. I found that it derived from the Italian word "gatto," meaning cat. I found it is most used in Latin America and Mexico. Some

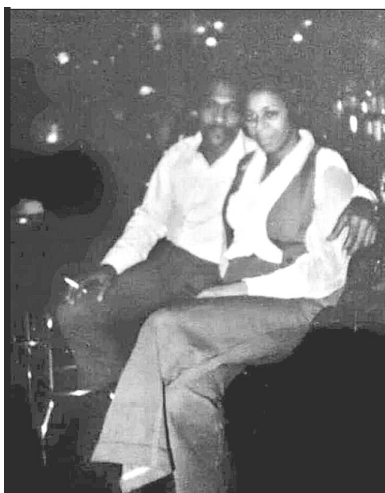
Zintzun is my married last name, which my son wanted me to keep. The name is of Aztec (Nahuatl) origin and means 'hummingbird.' I encountered many ways it was spelled and how it changed over the years. I do recall my ex-husband telling me that it was originally spelled as Tzintzun, and that the "T" was lost over time. The Purepecha were one of the tribes that arrived to the Patzcuaro Lake area in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and formed the capital of Tzintuntzan. As I dug into the meaning of Zintzun, I came across many things that describe my youngest son, Zinedine. His zest for life will provide him infinite possibilities. His gifts of speech and enthusiasm make him notable. His love for nature and family unity is admirable. I see many achievements in our future! (**Sandra Zintzun**)





Martina: what's interesting is there was a St. Martina like St. Mary. It is the feminine form of Martin and represents Mars, the

Roman mythological god of war. I also learned it means "dedicated to God" and I have psychic powers! I should have known!



I also googled my name, and what I found was a little shocking and a little true. I'm not sure if the urban dictionary is a good source, but the meaning for my first name sounded exactly how I am personally. It talks about how I'm shy (which I am), outgoing, keep to myself, and don't like talking about personal things. I thought it was pretty crazy reading that because it was almost spot on. I also googled the meaning of my name and found out "Cheyenne" is

Marie: Adee Marie Strong was my grandmother's name. Friends and family called her "Marie." I proudly carry the name on since she passed June of this year. My mother gave me her name, and I have since passed it down to my youngest, Makiyah Marie.

Mitchell: Mitchell was my grandfather's last name. My grandfather was a very hard worker. He made a life for his family and himself out of nothing. I very much admired and respected him, so much so that when I married, I kept it and gave it to my firstborn child as well. I found out that it also means "gift from God."

Red: Red is a nickname my family still calls me. Red is short for "Red-bone," a term often used in the "hood" to describe a very light-skinned female. **(Martina Mitchell)**



My mother chose my name, Cheyenne Lashay Pete, while my dad, grandmother, and aunt gave me my nicknames. My mother once told me that one of her friends gave her the idea for my first name. She really liked the name, so she went

for it! My mother chose my middle name all by herself. She was trying to go for another uncommon name. Lastly, I got my last name because it is my dad's last name as well as four of my other siblings.

a member of an American Indian people formerly living between Missouri and Arkansas but now on reservations in Montana and Oklahoma. It was interesting to read because a while back I found out my dad's side of the family surely has Indian in them. Not quite sure if I do, but just to know that and also find out my name is the capital of Wyoming was really cool!

My nicknames—Chey, Chey baby, and Chey moo—were given to me when I was younger. My grandma says she used to call me Chey Moo because when I was younger, I was a chunky baby/toddler that sounded like a cow. To this day, I think it's the funniest nickname. **(Cheyenne Pete)**



I was named by my great-great-grandmother, whom I never met—or at least I don't remember meeting. My name is said to have come out of a newspaper and apparently belonged to a white lady in Mississippi. She gave me my middle name as well, "made up off the top of her head." My family's maiden last name is Williams, but my grandmother married at age 15 and we became Creamers. I don't have a real special story to my name, even though it's very unique. I googled it, but nothing interesting came up. And that's fine with me as well. **(Queeniece Creamer)**





Candace comes from Candi, my mother's best friend. Candace also comes from an ancient African queen. Candace is the name for strong women.

Women with the name Candace are always powerful women. Candaces are hot headed at times, too.

Shante comes from my biological father's name, Sean. Shante is that sweet part of me. She keeps Candace in her right mind when Candace is about to lose it. Shante is very calm and understanding. She builds people up the best way she can.

Howard is the family name of my dad (who raised me). Howards are loving and very caring. They accept people for who they are and never judge; very welcoming. This name was chosen for me over my biological father's name because my dad was there for me. **(Candace Howard)**



Names in African culture have unique stories behind them. From the day the baby is born to the circumstances surrounding the birth, several factors influence the names parents choose for their

children. For example, in my culture (northern Togo), the name given to you by your parents can have a lot of impact on you when you become an adult. My full name is Hezouwe Poulaude Walada. For my last and middle names, my great-grandfather was a hunter. One day he went hunting and stayed for a week. The day of his return, he had with him a lion and two eagles that he had killed. At the village, everybody was so proud of him that they named him Poulaude Walada, which means in my dialect "the great hunter who is

not afraid of the dark." Since then, the names have been passed on from generation to generation. Besides, it holds a good reputation in the entire community.

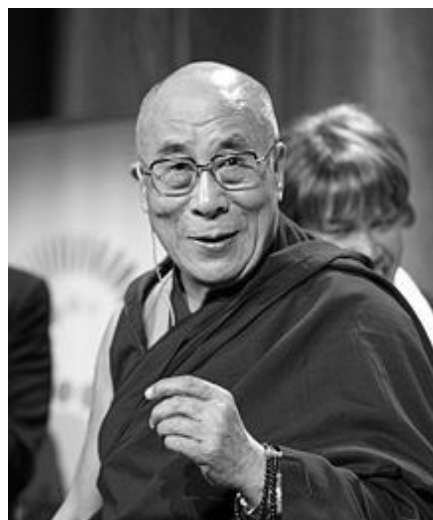
My father gave me my first name, Hezouwe. He explained to me that the reason is because he had a tough and sad life growing up, and he wishes that none of his children would go through what he has gone through. He told me my name will bring me peace in any situation and will open doors for me wherever I go. He said not to be afraid of anything—I will be fine.

I am really happy about the names that have been given to me because it is like luck for me everywhere I go. **(Hezouwe Walada)**



Yangchen is a Buddhist name meaning "sacred" and is a very common Tibetan name for girls. Lhamo is music and dance performed for centuries in Tibet. It is still performed in exile every year during the

Tibetan New Year and is similar to opera in the U.S.A. My name was given by H.H. the Dalai Lama, so I take it as a blessing. When someone calls my name, it reminds me of H.H. the Dalai Lama's visions. **(Yangchen Lhamo)**





Monica is simply the best name on the planet!

I'm one of two. My twin sister was born almost a half-hour before me, and her name is Monique. Momma initially wanted all "Z" names but couldn't find anything that appealed to her (thank God). She said that she had "Zeina and Zelda," but no one liked the names. Again, thank God! After thinking about it a lot, she decided on the name Monique but didn't know what would go with it, so she decided that the first of us two would be named Monique.

It took me a while to be born because I had stuff on my mind, and you can't rush perfection. Anyway, I finally decided to grace this world with my beauty, and it still took her hours to name me. So we were just Monique and "her." A very smart nurse came into the room to bathe us and decided to call me Monica because Momma hadn't thought of anything yet.

Mims is my last name, derived from the Creek Indians in rural Alabama. Fort Mims was created in the late 1700s. . . . On August 30, 1813, almost 1,000 Creek Indian warriors were slaughtered . . . the largest and most brutal Indian massacre in American history. The British, the Spanish, and the French captured and enslaved most of those left. A group of over 70 slaves ran away together with Harriet Tubman. Some stayed with her, and many others settled in rural Mississippi where my mom was born. **(Monica Mims)**



My full name from my mother, father, grandpa, and one of my uncles was Tchallassi Deborah Marta Issaina Naiolia Lola. I have all those names in my baptism booklet but not on my birth certificate.

I am from a country of pure dictatorship. The president of my country, Togo, made a law when I

was born not to use a name from another country besides Togo or from other civilizations like Europe, Asia, or America. Even our parents changed their names when that president, Gnassingbé Eyadéma, took power from 1967 until his death in 2005.



My first name is Tchallassi. It's a set up name for my family, my ethnicity. You get that name when you are the first girl born, and it's the name of the circumcision on your face, symbol of the ethnic group.

Deborah is a name I got from my father meaning a strong woman in the Bible. Martha was on the calendar the day I was born, July 29. Issaina, Naicha and Lola are my other names and are also from the Bible. Usually on my father's side they call me Deborah, Martha, Issaina, Naiida, and Lola, and my mother's side calls me Tchallassi, Deborah, and Martha. At school in my country, teachers, professor, and administration call students by their last names.

I think it is always important to give a name with an important meaning to a child. Names have powerful meanings in our life. It is who we are and where we are from.

As a child or teenager, I used to complain to my parents about my name, Tchallassi. Everywhere I used to go, people had a smile or guess of who I am or where I am from, and that always embarrassed me. But as an adult I started to understand and look to the meaning of my names. I see more of my personality.

Edoh is my last name. My father told me that the name was written wrong by the settlers. It's supposed to be Idoh. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**





I will start by saying that I like my name, but at the same time I don't. I like my name when people or the two persons that gave me this name say it completely: Juan Carlos. I don't like to be called by Juan or Carlos. I don't like to be called Juan because there are a lot of people who I know are named Juan. Just on my soccer team there are five Juans including me. When the coach yells "Juan," all five of us turn and see each other with confusion. I don't like Carlos because when my grandma was upset with me, she'd yell, "Carlos!" These are the reasons why I don't like my name if people just call me by one.

I like Juan Carlos because it sounds cool, and I don't know any others named Juan Carlos. I am the only one named Juan Carlos in my family, so that makes me feel unique. . . . (**Juan Carlos Abrajan**)



My mom told me that she and my father argued for months about what my name should be and couldn't make a decision. Finally, my mom combined the name I would have had as a boy, Kat, and a name they both thought was okay, Asia. When my mom told my grandfather what my name was, he was visibly upset. Not understanding, he furiously asked my mom why she would name me after a spice. He could not pronounce my name with his southern tongue. He just couldn't. So he chose to call me Kayasia (pronounced Kaysa) and it stuck. . . .

At school, all my teachers had difficulty pronouncing and saying my name. I remember them mispronouncing my name on the intercom. From then on, I started to resent my name. It made me stand out too much, and it made me "that black girl." I found myself shortening my name to satisfy people around me, or maybe because I just wanted to be remembered for something other than my "unique" name.

Part of my growing and maturing made me realize

that my name is only mine. It carries my personality, characteristics, and my smile. I now know that I can't change pieces of me to make others comfortable. I just have to be okay with standing out. (**Kayasia Blake**)



My mother was in a room with another woman, who was also having a baby. My parents weren't sure what to name me, and the lady told my mommy that if she didn't have a girl, my mommy could name me Quishanta. And that's just what she did. The lady who also was pregnant had a little boy and named him Quincy since everyone in her family had names starting with Q.

My last name, Cary, came from my daddy's side of the family. There are a lot of us (or were), but the main ones that can help me explain where my last name came from and how it all started have all passed.

Since I have such a long first name and at Catholic school they want you to write your entire name (including middle name), my parents didn't give me a middle name.

I have numerous nicknames: Quin, Shawn, Quincy, Q.C., Q-Dog, Number 1, Quishanna Baby-lump lumps, Heaven Eyes, Lush Q, Suzy-Q. Most of my nicknames came from my first name alone. . . . With a name like mine, you would need to give me nicknames. (**Quishanta Cary**)



My name is Erannia, which I never really cared for. I also have three brothers, and their names begin with the letter "E." My aunt supposedly named me, but I have no idea where she got it from. I also have a unique middle name, Entonice. No, I don't know where that came from either. The best thing that came out of my middle name is that my niece was named Entonice. (**Erannia 'Rana' Potter**)



My birth name was Lester Joe Smith, according to my birth certificate from May 18, 1950, in Sanford, Florida. It lists my mother's age as 14 and my father, who I have never laid knowing eyes upon, as 31. However, thanks to Lori Bessler, genealogy and local history specialist at the Wisconsin Historical Society, I know my father was actually 41.

All through elementary and secondary school, I would be called Lester Joe Letherwood, which was my stepfather's last name. I knew there was something wrong, but I didn't know what or why. I became conscious of the fact that my father's name was Curtis Smith after my stepfather was electrocuted on his job with the City of Milwaukee. I didn't obtain a copy of my birth certificate until I was an adult. I became a Muslim and a follower of Elijah Muhammad circa 1970, when I was 20 years old. When he died five years later, I followed his son, W.D. Muhammad, who recommended the name Muhammad Abdullah. . . .

I did not know when I obtained my birth certificate and filed a petition changing my name and my children's names from Smith/Letherwood to Abdullah (servant of the Lord in Arabic) that Islam does not permit a Muslim changing family name and lineage, even if in response to a child born by its slave owner. . . .

The most popular name in the world is Muhammad, but when I first changed my name, I was given a hard time by many of my family members, former friends, and associates. . . . Because of some of the Nationalists' beliefs and fear that some had of Muslims, you had to have a thick skin and an intellectual and diplomatic style. My late mother was fearful of my becoming a follower of Elijah Muhammad, but later I earned her respect, and she was one of my most ardent defenders to family and others.

**(Muhammad Abdullah)**



My first name comes from my parents' favorite gem. My mom wears nothing but real diamonds. The purpose they gave to my name is the belief that I will be true to myself and also "diamonds are a girl's best friend."

They couldn't decide on a middle name, so they combined their names: De (Dad's nickname and D for Damen) plus Angela (my mom's name) into DeAngela. Clay is my dad's last name. My nickname is Fatgirl from being a fat baby.

**(Diamond Clay)**



My mother chose my name: Joyce Leila Johnson. Joyce came to my mother because she said the first three letters described me as a bundle of JOY. My mother chose Leila, my middle name, because the last two letters (la) meant music and singing (la la la la). I just love to sing, and I love all types of music. Johnson, of course, is my last name because my mother married my father, Joseph Perry Johnson Jr. My mother's maiden name was Mattie Beatrice Huff. Both my loving parents have been deceased for over 20 years. I'm proud of the name they both chose for me.

**(Joyce Johnson)**



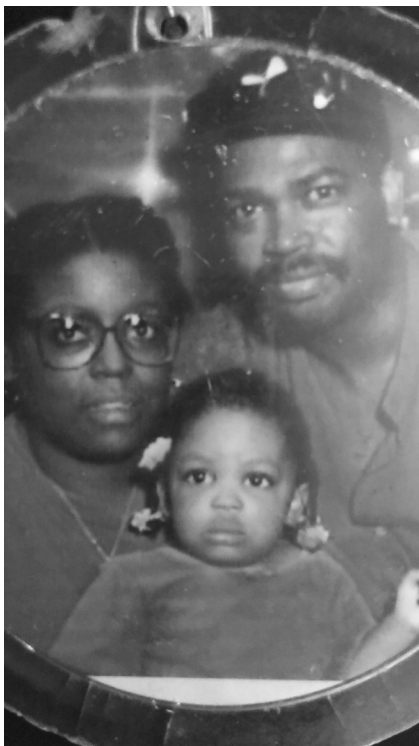


La'cee means "Deep desire to inspire others in a higher cause, strong spiritual views." I asked my mom where she got my name from, and she told me the book of baby names. She and my dad chose that name.

Makalah: I remember asking what my middle name was as a kid and how to spell it because there are many different ways, just like my first name has different spellings as well. Makalah came from Dr. Makalah Quinn, who was a doctor on a TV show. Both of my parents named me, and I love my name!

I've had nicknames, but really only from family. My uncle used to call me "Betty Boop" because I've always had big googly eyes. My mom would call me "Kalah," a shorter version of my middle name, or "Lace Kalah" or "Lace." Some close friends and family would call me Lace as well, but only close friends and family. I don't let anyone who really doesn't know me call me Lace. My second best friend in grade school would call me "Lay-Lay."

I know for a fact that my mom wanted me to have a name that wasn't a stereotype and that people wouldn't necessarily know what my race is based on my name. It's sad that the world we live in is very stereotypical. These days I have



had people say, "That's a beautiful name to be black." What is that supposed to mean—"to be black?" I took that to be very offensive.

Webster: My last name would have been "Bracey" because that was my dad's original name. However, at birth he had been adopted by my grandmother, Pearl Webster, and that's when he became a Webster. I believe there's a Webster St. in Madison, too, and a Lacy Rd., but not the same spelling. Oh, and a Webster's dictionary, LOL. (**La'cee Webster**)



The meaning of my name is unknown to me. I'd have to look it up online to see if there is any true origin. I got my name because my mother, who is an African American woman named Charlotte, liked it. She

says she liked the root of my name, "Tai," so she added the rest to create my name, Zataiya. I've always wished my name had some meaning, other than my mother liked the way it sounds.

The fact that my name doesn't have a specific meaning is absolutely the reason I made sure my own children had names that were not only unique or less common, but also have an origin and meaning that they could be traced back to. I feel your name and its meaning is important and influences your character. For example, my youngest child's name is Jabari, which means "fearless one" in Swahili. He's definitely living up to his name already at two years old.

I have always been told that my name is beautiful and sounds exotic. People always ask me what it means. They tell me it sounds Spanish. Then I have to explain it to them. As exhausting as that may be, I still love my name because it is me. (**Zataiya Gober**)



The name “Abdou Rahman” is a short form of “Alhagie Cherno Sheik Abdou Rahman Banagi,” Arabic words meaning “an Arabic scholar from a community of worshippers who make pilgrimages to Mecca.” These

names are connected to the Holy Quran and the Islamic religion.

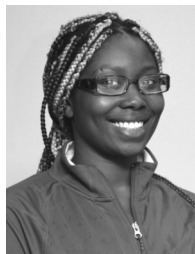
Every bit of my name has spiritual and religious connotations. For instance, the name “Abdou” derives from the Prophet Muhammad’s father’s name (Abdoullah), which means Peace Be upon Him. The name “Rahman” is one of Allah’s names (he has 99), meaning the merciful.

My father named me after his Oustaz (Quranic master), whose names were Alhagie Cherno Sheik Abdourahman Banaji. He was a well-known Arabic scholar who taught over 600 students, including my father. . . . Society looks up to people called Alhagie Cherno Sheik Abdou Rahman . . . as knowledgeable, contented, GOD-fearing, truthful, pious, reliable, and trustworthy; they do not participate in politics or seek worldly riches. They do not take gifts or donations from governments or politicians but live humbly as subsistence farmers.

The surname Sallah is a contraction of Sallahngari, meaning “the man with herds of cattle.” . . . Passed from generations to generations, Sallah is a Fulani surname . . .

My name is the true reflection of who I am, both religiously and traditionally. In the eyes of others, having Arabic names makes us considered or suspected of being terrorists. That has had a negative impact on my personality because of the stigma and discrimination, contrary to the true meaning of my name. **(Abdourahman Sallah)**

My grandmother gave me my middle name, Terri, which is why it’s important to me. I’m very close



to my grandmother and glad I can carry her name in me. Many people say I act like her, so I think that’s cool, too. My first name is spelled differently, so it makes me feel unique and not like others.

**(Breonna Hawkins)**



The name Ricardo was chosen because my dad’s younger brother, Ricardo, passed away at a young age in a car accident. So my father decided to name me after the memory of his young brother. My father told me that if we split my

last name “Marroquin” into two words, he assumed that it came from the country Morocco and kings. My mother decided on my second name, Isaia. I think she choose it because of a divine person from a book.

**(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)**



My name is the Arabic spelling of Carmon. Destiny analysis shows I have great respect for my parents and love my family and my home. Family life is important to me. I am very emotional and interested in the fine arts. I am a reasonable

person. I am indecisive and will always be in the future. I’m smart and successful, interested in the trade business. I am a very closed person who likes keeping secrets and enjoying privacy. I don’t like to explain myself to people. I have great common sense and a higher ability in life. I see things before they happen. **(Carmon Caire)**

كارمن

卡蒙



# PACKING A PUNCH: SEVEN-WORD POEMS

*I wish the rent*

*Was heaven sent.*

*—Langston Hughes, “Little Lyric of Great Importance”*

Don't stop, you might drop or pop! (**Muhammad Abdullah**)  
 Hate can be seen in someone's eyes. (**Juan Carlos Abrajan**)  
 Anger can cause you to lose sight. (**Ebony Anderson-Carter**)  
 I don't understand many things, including myself. (**Kayasia Blake**)  
 Your warm smile melts my heart always. (**Carmon Caire**)  
 To be something without a care, bird. (**Quishanta Cary**)  
 I wish my credit score increased today. (**Diamond Clay**)  
 Emotionally detached, I find myself alone again. (**Queeneice Creamer**)  
 I dream all dreams of my infancy. (**Tchallassi Edoh**)  
 What's the difference between poem and poetry? (**Erica 'Cocoa' Gentry**)  
 Some people pick flowers, others water them. (**Zataiya Gober**)  
 Who would say life was ever easy? (**Breonna Hawkins**)  
 Nocturnal, energized by moon, sleep to sun. (**James Horton Jr.**)  
 Plenty fish in sea, only one me. (**Candace Howard**)  
 You're a better winner once you lose. (**Joyce Johnson**)  
 Family, school, and work is whole me. (**Yangchen Lhamo**)  
 Ghosts can't hurt, but full-fledged humans can. (**Ricardo Marroquin Santos**)  
 Faith gives me strength when I'm weak. (**Galeca McCain**)  
 Great things come to those who hustle. (**Monica Mims**)  
 Enjoy being a child while you can. (**Martina Mitchell**)  
 Perfection can be as cruel as procrastination. (**J. Luis Pérez-Olguín**)  
 My life is mine: mind, body, spirit! (**Savannah 'Rose' Perry**)  
 False hope leads to disappointment and regret. (**Cheyenne Pete**)  
 Love you so can't live without you. (**Erannia 'Rana' Potter**)  
 Memories are a gateway to our past. (**Alice Ramirez**)  
 Money's a good friend but bad enemy. (**Abdourahman Sallah**)  
 I can imagine the world without racism. (**Hezouwe Walada**)  
 Love blesses many, and many bless love! (**NatuRa Warford**)  
 Strawberries, a fruit with seeds only outside. (**La'cee Webster**)  
 Be still amidst storms encountered in life. (**Sandra Zintzun**)



# WANDERING WITH WORDSWORTH

*I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils. . . .  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude . . .*

In Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud," it was very clear that peace was involved, a form of serenity. I felt every line. I envisioned the clouds, the wind blowing the feathery strands of the daffodils floating around. The ability to be in a field of daffodils and sunflowers to me would be serene. **(Erica Gentry)**



It was clear to me that Wordsworth was mesmerized by the daffodils. Also, whenever he is still or vacant of thoughts and he closes his eyes, he remembers the daffodils. The daffodils give him very pleasant feelings. The same way he remembers the field of daffodils, I remember the night sky at South Dakota. **(James Horton Jr.)**

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



My understanding of "My Heart Leaps Up" was that no matter how old he gets or where he is in life, he'll always be happy to see a rainbow. I can relate because I still light up like a kid when I see a rainbow. I'm always amazed like it was the first time. **(Monica Mims)**



# NOTICING NATURE



To me,  
nature is life.  
It is the  
warmth of  
the sun on  
your skin,  
the smell of

rain, and the sound of water. Nature is literally everything. I feel at peace when I'm outdoors. My last trip to the Botanical Gardens with my children was by far my favorite experience. We got to see, smell, and touch so many wonderful things. I remember taking pictures of the vibrant purple, orange, and yellow flowers in one part of the garden. I remember the look of excitement and wonder on my daughter's face when we found a gigantic aloe plant. Then we walked across the ridge, over a calm stream of water, surrounded by trees. We ended up in the Thai garden. It had ebony-colored stone fountains that spilled over clear water. My children giggled as they dipped their little hands in the cool water. Then all four asked for a penny to throw in and make a wish.

That was a good day. I truly enjoy being outdoors and exploring nature, especially with my family. Nature inspires me to build closer bonds with other people.  
**(Zataiya Gober)**



When I had a Big Sister,  
she took me to a  
Milwaukee museum with  
an indoor area of gardens.  
Walking towards the big  
glass doors steamy from



the humidity, I couldn't wait for it to be over. We pulled the doors open, and the thick white steam danced out as the air rushed through the doors. I looked around. It looked like a rainforest, with trees everywhere, birds flying every way, butterflies and bees hugging the flowers. I hated every bit of it! My first instinct told me to swat! There were butterflies, bees, and a lot of other bugs I didn't want to get too close to. However, my sister quickly grabbed my hands together and pointed to the sign that stated "Do Not Swat!" **(Lac'ee Webster)**





wet. The ground's smell makes me feel like I want to eat it. What I like about the thunder is its vibration on the ground and the rumbling on the windows of my house. It's incredible how I can't see it, but I can hear it. I like to see the lightning because of its bright, thin line that forms. The drops make me feel calm, and I relax to the point of falling asleep. This is how I feel when I see, hear, and smell the rain. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**



When I was twelve, my mother sent me to Camp Makasobee. We slept outdoors in tents. We roasted marshmallows and hot dogs over the campfire. There was a beautiful full moon and lots of twinkling stars. I saw a

deer, an opossum, and a squirrel. When it rained, we all went into a log cabin and sat by the fireplace. I was cozy and warm as I looked out and saw the rain hitting against the windowsill. **(Joyce Johnson)**



I'm not a nature person. I don't really like the thought of things biting me, running past, sounds, stings, smells—pretty much anything I have no control over. **(Queeneice Creamer)**



I love when it rains. I love it because of the thunder, the lightning, the sound of the drops, and the smell of the earth getting





I love nature and almost everything about it; I appreciate nature for what it was before

human destruction and for what it has become. Watching documentaries about nature is one of my most favorite things to do. I've watched every

episode of Planet Earth and Planet Earth II, more than once.

I wish more humans could see the stress and inhumane treatment that we've bestowed upon our world and animals.

Elephants are my most favorite part of nature. They're giant, graceful, and only ill-tempered when provoked. Elephants are also extremely smart and emotional; they respond to death, joy, and stress very much like humans. They are also very nurturing and will care for an orphaned calf as their own. . . . Did you know that a group of elephants is called a tide?

**(Monica Mims)**



I have always adored nature and felt connected to it. I assumed it was linked to my love of God. God so loved the world that He created the magnificent Garden of Eden for us to live in! Have you ever

considered how many different flowers, birds, trees, or insects there are? In the details of nature, I see the love and beauty of a heavenly father. Everything in nature has a part to play, fitting perfectly into the puzzle of life.

The water is my favorite part of nature! Going out on a boat, swimming, or just sitting on a riverbank causes me to reflect on God's grace and goodness! I could sit and gaze upon it for hours. Every ripple and wave as the tide comes in and out speaks to me; it says things like bountifulness, more than enough, peace, serenity, and power.

Nature keeps me mindful of God's provision, protection, and amazing love! **(Martina Mitchell)**





When I was five, my family and I lived on a little island named Isla Mujeres (Island of Women ) off the coast of Can-Cun. One of many moments that I remember was my family renting a small fishing boat to go snorkeling. I had always enjoyed swimming, so I was very excited when we got to the boat. On our way to the snorkeling spot, I was so excited by the different fish swimming at the bottom of the ocean. There were different colors! The sand was as white as white quartz crystal.

When we arrived, I couldn't wait, so I jumped into the water! It must have been about eight feet deep. I dived in and opened my eyes: it was another world! I saw and touched a sea star, sea turtle, and sea urchins. I saw fish and sea horses but could not grab one because they were too fast. Everything was so colorful, as if I was in a perfect, peaceful world, full of colorful creatures. Even the sand had different colored little stones.  
(**J. Luis Pérez-Olgún**)



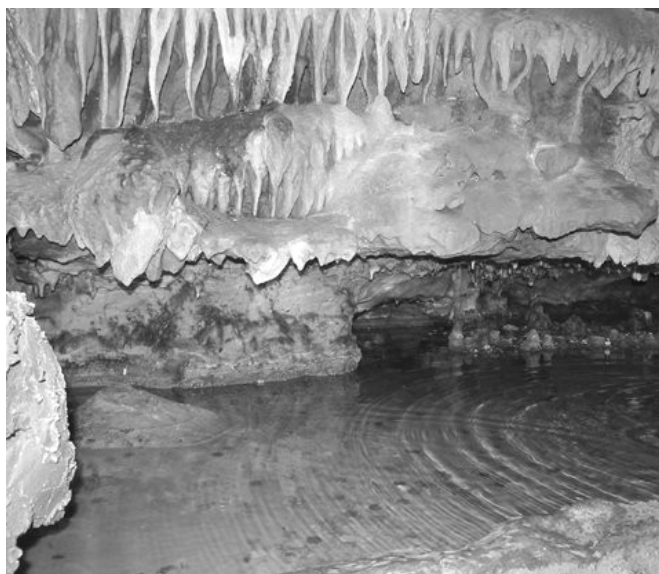
I have never been a big outdoors or nature person, but during the late 90s . . . I visited Ruby Falls and Lookout Mountain in Chattanooga, Tennessee . . . with my daughter and then-wife. We got our tickets and waited for the previous group to return from the 1,120 feet beneath the mountain's surface.

We were in the first group to fill the elevator with our guide. Once we got off the elevator, he took us a short distance underground, stopped, and announced that we were to wait there while he took the elevator back up to get the other half of the group. When he started to walk towards the elevator and was about to get on, my wife took off like a female Usain Bolt, caught



up with our guide, and boarded the elevator with him. The people in the group, which numbered about 25, were looking at me for an explanation, and I was without speech. I had no idea that my wife was claustrophobic.

My daughter Yasmeen and I took the tour, which was magnificent, with the stalactites and stalagmites, numerous waterfalls, caves, etc. When we returned to the surface, my wife was upset because she felt I should have aborted the tour and come up to comfort her, but I had no idea she was claustrophobic. More than that, I had no idea she could run so fast. Later on and even now, I wish I had had a cell phone with a camera to submit it to ABC's Funniest Home Videos. (**Muhammad Abdullah**)







Similar to William Wordsworth's poems, I used to work on farmland in nature. My family farmland is located two miles from where we live and is surrounded by tall grass and trees. First, the land is divided

into three acres of open land. You can see animals grazing on the shining emerald grass everywhere you look. Also, behind the land you can spot two mountains that hide the sun at dawn. You can also smell fresh air when you are on that land. I really like being there because it makes me forget my problems. Second, on the land we grow different crops: corn, beans, and sweet potatoes. . . . My family farmland is the most beautiful place in nature. **(Hezouwe Walada)**



My first time going camping was quite an experience. I am scared of bugs first off, so the idea of sleeping outside where they can attack you endlessly was frightening. However, my sister was prepared for

anything. She had bug spray, bug wipes, fly swatters, and all! The kids enjoyed themselves and kept busy trying to ignite logs they found. The fire kept going out, so they gathered more wood and sticks, also newspapers. It finally worked. They finally started the fire, and it stayed lit! It burned all night, giving me a sense of warmth from the blazing fire. The fire kept the bugs away and gave us security also. The fire was bright and hot!

We roasted s'mores and hog dogs. The gooey cream from the marshmallows along with the rich chocolate candy smushed together to make the perfect sweet snack! My son Tariq couldn't take it



anymore and grilled one big juicy burger on the log! We laughed about that, mainly because the grill near the campgrounds was not operable. Yay for Tariq!

I really enjoyed the camping life that night. I was able to gaze up at the brightly lit stars, make a couple of wishes, and say a few prayers. That was my sense of serenity that night. **(Erica 'Cocoa' Gentry)**



We sat next to a table with three older women eating fish fries on a bright, sunny, breezy, and warm day. The restaurant was on the rooftop surrounded by Lake Superior, Madeline Island. The lake was busy with ferryboats, chartered boats, and sailors.

**(Yangchen Lhamo)**





As I walked through the zoo, I smelled the animal-scented air, bugs flew in the air, the sun filled the sky, the

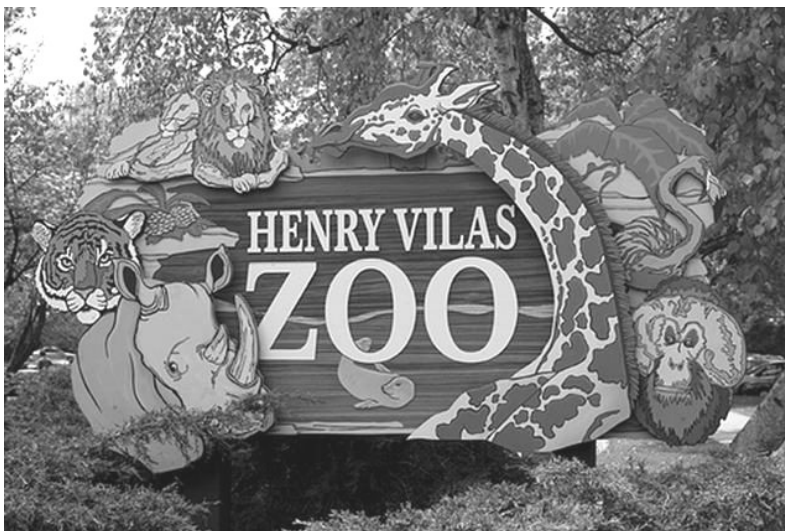
clouds were big, pretty, fluffy, and white, kids and families were eating together, babies' cries filled the atmosphere, lovers were kissing on benches holding hands, showing love and togetherness, families were sharing a meal, children and adults were dancing to music, and laughter filled the scene. It was a beautiful, fun-filled summer day as I strolled around the zoo. I felt like I was in a twilight zone filled with nature and sun-filled skies, happy as a lark. It brought back memories of my childhood growing up in Madison as a small child. I love nature, and I truly love animals over flowers, except roses. **(Carmon Caire)**



We shrub prune at my job, which means we shape different kinds of green and colorful flowered bushes. The small baby blue jay chirped so loudly as our equipment came close to him for the first time. I

felt horrible, but luckily we didn't harm the little guy! As time went on, more clouds started rolling in fast. The beautiful breeze now turned into a heavy gust of wind.

As the weather switched and we were still working, the drizzling rain came down. I felt the most painful pinching sensation,



looked down, and realized it was a giant swarm of bees! The pinching sensation happened a few times due to my being stung repeatedly. Shortly after I was stung, the rain started coming crashing down. It was a rough day, and I will never forget it. **(Cheyenne Pete)**



I used to go to a monks' village called Sobgeban in Togo. I went there to feel nature and get spiritual peace. It was a nice, wonderful place where you felt the power of calm and serene nature. I walked down and up on the mountain, admiring the gardens, the high forest, the clear water on the lake, and the blue sky with free birds flying.

**(Tchallassi Edoh)**



The winter season is by far the best moment in time when I feel the full effect of nature. In fact, winter is so unnatural, from another world. The neighborhood I first lived in after arriving from Mexico

wasn't that pretty, but the untouched snow that covered the pines made the neighborhood look like a Christmas card. I knew then I was in the North. **(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)**

# MEMORABLE PLACES



I was blessed to make the pilgrimage to Arabia in the year 2000 with about 200 Corrections chaplains, mostly from the eastern U.S. The experience itself was

peaceful, strange, and awe-inspiring. We spent the first three days in the city of Medina, where Prophet Muhammad is buried and where he fled to escape persecution from his family and others in Mecca. It and its people were so peaceful that when it was time to leave, my eyes filled with tears, as if I was leaving my home, never to return. It was awe-inspiring because I saw people who were very wealthy and had traveled and were able to stay in the most luxurious accommodations and others who were so poor they had walked, slept on the ground, and had to depend on charity to eat and drink the whole time.

**(Muhammad Abdullah)**



Being at my grandparents' house, just by walking in the front door, you feel love. That welcoming feeling and joy from my grandparents makes you forget about life on the other side of the door. The amazing

food, clean house, tears of joy from the facetious jokes from my grandfather, knowing that behind my grandmother's smile she's thinking, "This idiot," long conversations, and the joy of having my family together makes everything better. **(Diamond Clay)**

The hospital room is cold, and everything is white and tan. The room is filled with unfamiliar voices and faces that assure me everything is fine. I want to talk, but I can't. I



look at the clock. Days have passed. I am not aware of what is going on or where I am, and I am scared to close my eyes again for fear of not waking up. A small, familiar face is placed upon my chest. His skin is so

bright, with jet-black, straight hair. He is perfect; my son is here with me. I haven't seen him since he was three days old. I held him and cried because I thought I would never see him again. **(Queeneice Creamer)**



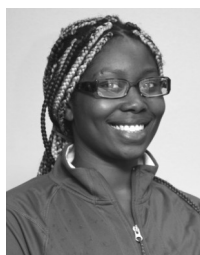
My special place would have to be the Tenney Park Rock Island. It's actually just called Tenney Park, but I put "Rock Island" at the end because of what it means to me. I grew up in Chicago on the lakefront, so

water and old rocks aren't new to me. While dating, Zachary, my husband, would take me to that park. It was where we sat and talked for hours, looking up at the darkness in the sky or gazing at the blaring sun while soaking up some vitamin D. I fell in love with Tenney Park Rock Island. The sound of the lake water splashing against those gigantic rocks is calming and peaceful to me. **(Erica 'Cocoa' Gentry)**



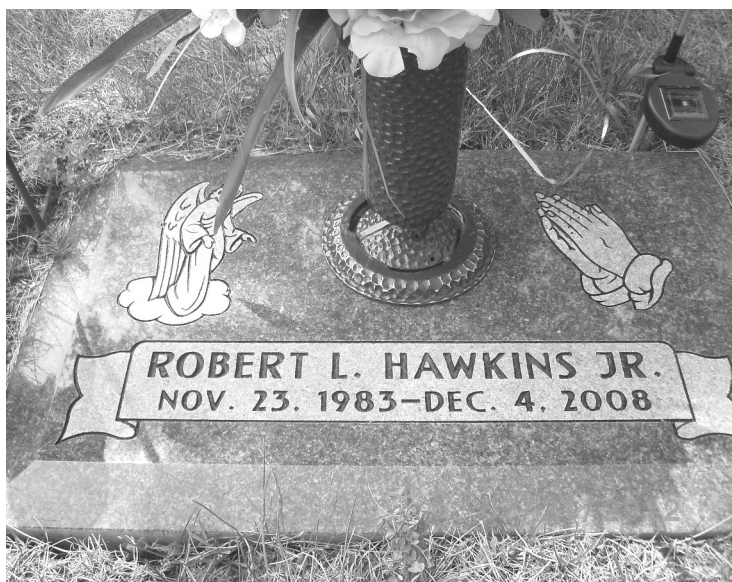
When I am at home, I am at peace. It is my sanctuary, my safe place, and an escape from the outside world. As soon as I walk in the front door, I am greeted with the calm scent of lavender. I love using smells to enhance my

mood and energy, so lavender is my go-to. Candles and faux-floral arrangements occupy my table. I love candles and the relaxing vibe they bring to a room. Next, I play music. Depending on my mood, that could be anything from Bach to Lil Wayne. To me music is life; it's uplifting and inspiring. This is why my taste in music varies and depends on my mood at the time.  
(Zataiya Gober)



I walk onto the path. Death surrounds me, but for some odd reason I feel soothed. I look around at all the flowers, green freshly cut grass, and wind blowing through my hair. I take a seat on the prickly grass and

touch the marble. It slides on my fingers like smooth butter. The name reads Robert Hawkins, my uncle. I will miss you forever.  
(Breonna Hawkins)



The sun was bright and hot, the air smelled familiar, and I felt like I had finally arrived at home as I exited the airplane in Gambia, Africa. As I exited the airport, there was a row of young African girls wearing different outfits of

the same fabric. They danced and sang in sync with huge smiles on their faces. There was a long taxi ride to the village of Sukuta, where I resided for the next few months. I was initially culture-shocked, but I adjusted well over the first few days. When it was time to go home, I didn't want to leave. I stayed up all night from anxiety.  
(Monica Mims)



I have a walk-in closet in my bedroom. Inside the closet is a full-sized bathroom. This is my personal sanctuary. It is where I go to rest, rejuvenate, and recharge. It is here that I have created my very own oasis. I've

lined every inch of wall with brightly colored paper, and on it, written in bold black letters, are my most inspirational and uplifting scriptures. This space is decorated with plush rugs in rich colors of maroon, pink, and grey. A matching shower curtain reads, "Hello Gorgeous!" There are different colored scented candles down the sides of the tub and counter. At the end of a busy day, I go in and fill the tub with warm water, adding a teaspoon of salt to detox, coconut oil to soften, and a sprinkle of Calgon to add a dash of blue to the water. Next, I light the candles, pour a nice glass of red wine, slip into the warm, bubbly, blue, soft water, and let it melt all the stressors of the day away. As I smell, swish, and sip the wine, I allow my eyes to drink it all the positive reinforcements written on the walls. This is my favorite place. (Martina Mitchell)





Many unique memories come to my mind when I think about the times I spent at my grandparents' house. I spent part

of my teenage years with my dad's parents in their native town, Atoyac. High in the mountains, Atoyac is a rural town with a population of about 20,000 people. Every morning was always the same exciting routine, and I was happy for breakfast. My grandpa was a farmer. The coffee and corn we used at home came from his land. I would usually wake up to the sound of birds, roosters crowing, the supreme smell of coffee, the delightful smell of bread, and the incomparable sound of my grandma making tortillas by hand . . . So, every morning before going to school, I would have a couple of fresh tacos with salt or fried beans and two whole sweet breads dipped in my big cup of coffee. **(J. Luis Pérez Olguín)**

Growing up I got into basketball at a young age. That's my special place. During the



season I would come into practice excited and eager to learn. I would walk into the gym, see those shiny floors with those half circles and big rectangles that make the court. I would watch the older

teammates scrimmaging, repeatedly running up and down the court while their shoes made the floor squeak. The brown hardwood floor would creak as the team ran down the court. After the other team's practice, it was our turn on the court, and warm-ups were first. All

thirteen of us would grab our round, bouncy orange balls and start the drills. We shot on all sides of the rectangle that sits right above the hoop. For my very first shot, I grabbed my ball, arranged my hands on the ball as if I was serving a volleyball, and all I heard was a soft "sweesh" as my ball fell into the net. I miss those days, and I should get back into it. **(Cheyenne Pete)**





We spent three months at the site. During this period, we were trained or prepared both mentally and ethically, and we were taught bravery, respect for all, love, self-discipline, singing, poetry, idioms, special sign language, and dancing . . . On graduation day, we dressed in special clothes depicting bravery and wisdom before heading to the meeting point where the mega event took place before we were finally integrated into society.

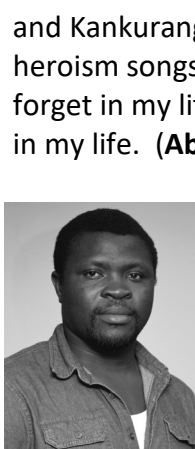
The day was characterized by Jambadong



There is a place called 'Tinyansita' in my hometown (Janjanbureh). I call it a 'Homemade School,' a place I will always remember in my life because it has special meaning to me. It defines who I am and everything I do. The place

was named after a big Baobob tree by our forefathers some decades ago, and it's been handed down from generation to generation for the continuation of tradition and cultural practice for the people of Janjanbureh . . .

Under this Baobob tree an initiation rite takes place every five years in the form of circumcision. Children between the ages of six and ten years, regardless of tribe or clan, were enlisted to fulfill our traditional, cultural, and religious obligation. At the age of nine, I was part of a cohort of over two hundred boys who underwent the process successfully. As custom requires, a day before the circumcision all enlisted candidates were gathered at the home palace of the head chief so he could give his blessing to those who would be circumcised and remind parents about their requirements for the ceremony . . .



I still have a fresh memory of my trip to Togo where I visited the waterfalls of Kpime in Kpalime. It was Mediterranean blue and magical. You could see the water swishing over the rocks joyfully and thundering down into the

pool like a gigantic waterspout. When it toppled into the ecstasy pool, it foamed at the bottom.

The rest of the pool was as clear as cellophane,

enabling me to see down into the rocky bottom. In addition, the fronds of forest green plants waved gently in the depths, allowing the sight of the waterfall, which looked like a sheet of blue velour as it swished down. Also, its edges were hemmed with whipped-white lines . . . I was really surprised to see all this beauty around me, and I was so happy to discover that wonderful place. Maybe that is the reason why I call it "My Beautiful Heaven."

(Hezouwe Walada)





After being homeless, on and off drugs, and in and out of county jail, I was sentenced to two years in prison. My last year was at minimum [security], and for the last four months I was on work release. At this point, I was given

my own room. I had pictures of my children on the wall. It was a warm, cozy room. My powdered Tide had the entire room smelling like fresh laundry.

Two months prior I began preparing my list of "To Do's" when I got home: anywhere from cleaning supplies to nail appointments to jobs and so on. Almost daily, I'd add and revise. These things, along with having money from working, made me able to move into my own apartment again after five years. Music kept me calm, focused, and happy. Every morning I'd wake up and say, "Thank you, Father!"

Going to prison was a blessing and one of those things I say happens for a reason, even when you don't like it. **(NatuRa Warford)**



The place that makes me feel good and comfortable is my car. If I'm at work and feel tired, during my lunch break I go to my car. I am a printer technician; I repair and refurbish printers and other printer accessories. After

learning how to repair them, it becomes routine to the point of exhaustion.

So at lunch break I go to my car and put the seat all the way down so I can lie down. I'm lucky that the seat is comfortable and soft. I put music on to relax me or raise my spirits. If it's to relax and

take a nap, I play instrumental music at a low volume. If it is to raise my spirits, I play club music, rock (AC/DC, Scorpions, GunsNRoses, etc.) or cumbias. Whenever I do this, I can feel how my body relaxes. I feel as if a ton of fatigue is falling away from me.

I also did this before meeting my wife. But I would do it at night, if the sky was full of stars or there was a full moon. I would drive away from the city lights to appreciate the brightness of the stars or the moon. Doing this made me have peace within me. I felt as if the moon and stars were my very good friends.

Now I don't do it often because of all of the parenting I have to do at home. So I consider my car as the one place where I can get to be me. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**



I remember walking into Lowell Elementary, day after day, hand in hand with my mommy and daddy. I would cry hysterically every time they dropped me off. My teacher, a sweet old lady with white hair and a sweet

smile, would rock me in her lap until I had calmed down. I remember the classroom was full of our art projects hanging so proudly. The smell of fresh brewed coffee and crayons filled the room. Making new friends and playing is all we would do. **(Alice Ramirez)**





I come from Chicago, IL, Robert Taylor Project Homes. To me, Robert Taylor Projects was one of the best places I lived.

Although most people would call the projects “the ‘hood,” it was home to me. I stayed on 43<sup>rd</sup> and State, with three 16-floor buildings with ten apartments on each floor! There were stairwells on each side of the buildings and elevators for going to and coming from your apartment. There was a lot of gun violence, killings, fights, and drug selling. It was not really the place for raising children, but being from those projects made me strong. I loved the many different candy stores in each building. My elementary school was just a block away. I had many, many friends there.

They started knocking down the buildings in 1998. Chicago Housing had everyone move so they could tear them down and build better houses. I so miss the juke parties and block parties, with lots of food, games, and families. The news reporter used to come out and film the block parties. One time I saw myself on TV, and I felt famous. **(Candace Howard)**



This room has a TV and new closets, a dresser, two nightstands, and a fluffy queen-sized bed with eight big pillows and soft cotton sheets with a matching blanket set. This is my place of comfort, where I can

detach from the world. I can cry if I need to, laugh, and talk to myself. I can take perfect selfies or pretty pictures in my full body-length mirror, scream, or sleep. This is my sanctuary! **(Savannah Perry)**



My room has always been my place of peace. No matter where I lived, my room meant so much to me. Inside of those four walls, wherever they might be, was and still is the only place I could be myself. My favorite

one of all is in my mother's home.

The blue walls I painted remind me of how easy it was to live then. It didn't matter that they were poorly painted. I was proud that I did something on my own. The windows facing the street brought the light into my life every single morning: rain, sleet, or snow. It didn't matter if I didn't want to get up. The day break gave me no choice. It was like the light slipped through all my troubles of the days before and pulled me to safety. The night, however, was the opposite. Living as an insomniac since an early age, I would let the darkness swallow me. Soft music would play as I sat in my bed wondering what would become of me. I used my flashlight to maneuver through my room, not wanting to wake my family. I'd trace the bumps on the wall, writing my name or lyrics to a song only I knew.

Good or bad, it was my place. When I left home, I didn't appreciate how important that was. **(Kayasia Blake)**



# FOOD MEMORIES

Since childhood, I have had a love affair with sweets, mostly candy, cookies, cakes, etc. Since 1970, I have adopted what could be called “healthy eating habits,” like kosher



meats, organic dairy, fruits and vegetables, and alkaline water. One of the greatest things about Hajj, for a poor person like myself, was that my entire trip was sponsored, which included travel, lodging, and the most tasty and gorgeous foods of Middle Eastern cuisine. I still love sweets, and one of my favorites is Madjool dates. Along with three meals a day, we were also provided with fruits, drinks, and snacks. They had cookies, filled with Madjool dates in the center, that I can still taste and visualize after 18 years. **(Muhammad Abdullah)**

The food that I have in mind is the traditional Cemita Poblana (it's a sandwich). The bun is freshly baked with sesame seeds on top. If the bun is done right, it'll be a little crunchy and have this golden color with a nice smell. What is inside the sandwich that makes it special? There are a few varieties, but the one I'll talk about is the best one for me.

The Cremita is made with a crispy Milanese beef, lots of shredded queso Oaxaca, leaves of papaloquelite (papalo), chipotle sauce, and slices of avocado. When I take a bite I can taste the sweetness of the bread and hear its crunchiness. I can smell the Milanese and feel its

warmth inside my mouth. I can also smell the unique smell of the papalo. While chewing, I can taste the queso Oaxaca mixing with the avocado and the sweet and mild flavor of the chipotle sauce.

This Cemita is one of the foods that I remember because it wasn't something I could eat on a regular basis. They were sold in the city of Cholula, Puebla, and I grew up living an hour away from the city. When I was a kid, if my mom took me to the Mercado and had extra money after buying groceries, we would stop at a restaurant. I don't remember the name of the restaurant (it's been twenty years since this last happened). However, what I do remember is that the restaurant was small and it had four tables to eat inside. If we were lucky, we could eat inside. Otherwise, we just took it to go.

You have probably seen the name Cholula on a hot sauce bottle, and Puebla is a state of Mexico located in the center of the country. Cholula is about as big as the city of Chicago. Cholula has one of the biggest pyramids in the world and has a lot of churches. When I go visit my hometown again, the first thing I will do is stop in a restaurant and eat one of those famous Cemitas. Just talking about it makes my mouth water. This Cemita is a true piece of art. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**



When I was in kindergarten, I would get off the bus and walk home to a loaded baked potato everyday. The microwave would go off as I was walking through my granny's door, seeing the steam smile with her as she cut it open. Hot! Hot! Hot! Butter made silent whispers, "Hi, Ebony," as I would go looking for sour cream that aided in my digestion. Salt and pepper were dancing around my plate. "Not too much," grandma would always say. Boy, do I miss those days. **(Ebony Anderson-Carter)**



that looked like an ocean at sunset. The top held the best part, which was an actual spinning Barbie fairy. That day my mom became my hero. **(Kayasia Blake)**

As a child growing up I spent 70% of my time with my grandparents. My grandma and grandpa taught me how to cook and clean at the age of five. I learned how to clean, batter, and fry chicken and make

homemade gravy and rice. I have several memories of cooking in the kitchen. Since my grandpa was from Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, and my grandma was from Gurdon, Arkansas, I was taught how to cook the best southern soul food. I cooked fried chicken, homemade gravy and rice, macaroni and cheese, fried green tomatoes, among so much more, but my signature foods are curry chicken, fried chicken, rice onion gravy, and fried green tomatoes. I cooked this meal with my grandparents mainly Saturday evenings for Sunday dinner after church. Each Sunday, church members came by to have dinner after church for many years. The smell of onions and fresh garlic filled the air as we prepared onion gravy as rice boiled on the stove. There was the scent of goodness, home sweet home aromas, and the smell of cinnamon in homemade apple pies and rhubarb crisp. I miss my grandparents. I still cook today, and I love to cook. **(Carmon Caire)**

My mother always gave these over-the-top birthday parties. Family would come from all over to help us celebrate our special day. Coming from a big family, we always had lots of food. If I close my eyes, I can remember the baked macaroni, fruit trays, and whatever else people brought to the party. It was the one time during the year where we didn't have to remember all of the bad things. My favorite thing was the cake.

This particular birthday was special because it was my golden birthday. I was turning 10 and couldn't have been more excited to grow more. When I walked in the decorated living room, my eyes were immediately drawn to the enormous cake! It was like a princess threw the contents



of her life on a cake. I was mesmerized by the pink frosting that seemed a mile high, filled with sparkles and candy bows. The second tier had purple ripples





The food I remember is the big breakfast my daddy used to cook. He'd be listening to Stevie Wonder while making egg omelets with the works: cheese, onions, tomatoes, lunch meat, salami, and seasoning. Then he made some nice, smooth, creamy butter grits. On top of that, my daddy would also make homemade French toast, waffles, pancakes, and biscuits. The meat choices were bacon, fried hot dogs, and sausages. My daddy always cooked real big breakfasts on the weekend, especially Saturday mornings, while jamming. With a huge family of seven (now only four of us are alive), we would all eat on a hot summer early Saturday morning around a large dining room table in our old family mansion home, which was given to my parents as an anniversary present from my great-grandparents. Last, but not least, each place and room had a story to tell. **(Quishanta Cary)**

Meatloaf is one of my FAVORITE dinner options because of the many ways it can be made. I've even made my own recipe, but you can always freestyle depending on your favorite spices and other ingredients. When it comes to sides, there's no going wrong, whether you choose Mac and cheese, green beans, cornbread, greens, broccoli and cheese, or mashed potatoes. Meatloaf has always been on my family's dinner plates and will continue being that way. **(Diamond Clay)**



I remember growing up and always being in the kitchen with my grandmother as she cooked holiday dinners. I loved helping her with big meals. It made me feel like a woman that was preparing a meal for her children (my brothers). We would pick the leaves off the stems of mustard and turnip greens and wash them in the sink until there was no dirt left in the bottom of the sink. Then my grandmother would put the greens in the pot with a smoked ham shank. I loved the smell of the greens filling the house. I could smell all of the onions, garlic, celery, and other seasonings

throughout the house. It seems just like yesterday when I would ask to lick the spoon after she was done beating the cake batter, so sweet and delicious. Although a stomachache was sure to follow, I never cared. I was my grandmother's personal taste tester, and she was my teacher.

**(Queeneice Creamer)**





meal flour. After mixing well and cooking for 10 or 15 minutes, we got a food called akoumé. We went to the dining table and had a happy time. There was a hot and steamy homemade meal on a cold, stormy, rainy day for all the family. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**

Growing up in my house, my grandmother always had someone over, and her quick meal would sometimes be her beef casserole. The savory taste of the ground beef cooked in onions and

It was a strong, stormy day, and my family and I were home and could not get out for any shopping. It was windy and rainy all day long. My mother called us, my two sisters and me, to help prepare the meal. We didn't get a chance to get groceries the days before, and we had nothing concrete at home to make a real meal. We looked in the freezer and the food pantry: just fresh tomatoes, onions, lettuce, and corn meal flour. We put everything we found together, and my mother started to think of how to mix the condiments and make a meal. We ground the fresh tomatoes, some onions, and started to cook. After stirring for a while, we puréed the tomatoes and onions, and we added three cups of fresh and clean water, ground ginger, ground red chili, garlic, basil, and homemade fish broth.

We cooked everything for twenty minutes, and my mother's last minute cooking magic was to throw big slices of fresh onions in the sauce and be done. We then put clean water on the stove to boil. We made corn meal by mixing the boiling water and the corn

different seasonings was the starting ingredient, followed by the tomato paste, spinach, cheddar cheese, shell pasta, and her secret seasoning. I have tried to make this recipe several times before, but it doesn't taste like my grandmother's recipe. I've asked my grandmother about the full recipe, but due to her dementia she doesn't remember. I should have written down the lessons and recipes that she showed to me numerous times to ensure they wouldn't be forgotten. Just writing about this dish has made me very hungry for it, so I will be making it again. The spinach beef casserole that I make is not bad at all, even without the secret.

**(Erica 'Cocoa' Gentry)**





Sunday dinner with my family is by far my favorite food memory. I love the smell of good food being prepared combined with the sound of laughter and chatter as the family gathered in the living room just enjoying one another's presence. I can smell the aroma of the fried chicken frying after we had washed it

and seasoned it and thrown it in a brown paper bag full of flour. The flour slowly rises up as you shake the bag, and a little bit gets in your nose. It tickles, so you sneeze. Finally, the food is all done: fried chicken, baked macaroni and cheese, sweet potatoes, and collard greens with cornbread. Everyone comes to the table and joins hands for prayer. We are thankful for our feast, but most of all we are thankful for each other. **(Zataiya Gober)**

Laughter echoed through the halls as my grandmother finally took the glazed golden turkey out of the oven. I could swear it was calling my name. She cut into the turkey. I could feel the heat as it fogged up my glasses. I took the first bite, and juice burst into my mouth, dancing around my taste buds. I took a bite of mac and cheese with all the cheeses fighting for the win to



my soul. I'll say cheddar took the win. If anyone asks what my favorite holiday is, it will always be Thanksgiving.

**(Breonna Hawkins)**

This year's Thanksgiving was special. My mom, dad, sister, and I all packed ourselves up into our beige Cadillac. Our destination was Chicago.

As soon as we opened the black gated door to my great-grandmother's house, the aroma of turkey, ham, greens, cornbread, sweet potatoes, and more filled our nostrils. Those, however, were not the main attraction this Thanksgiving. Our mouths watered for my great-grandmother's famous smothered pork chops. My great-grandmother would deep fry pork chops to a fine light brown crisp. Then she would smother the pork chops in a very sweet gravy. The soft texture of the gravy plus the crunch of the fried chop could bring tears to a man's eyes. The sweet fat from the pork chop and the gravy blends together perfectly. Every time we went to Chicago for holidays, my great-grandmother would have all of the relatives, including my cousins, uncles, and aunts, lining up single-file to get a taste of her famous smothered pork chops. **(James Horton Jr.)**



Catalyst House has weekly group meetings, and at these meetings one of the participants brings lunch for everyone. One day, Tamesha made her famous Mexican rice/ yellow rice with fried chicken. I wasn't a



fan of rice until I tasted hers, which included all kinds of different Mexican seasonings. She had chopped up ham in the rice with veggies; it was so good. The way she fried her chicken without flour was so new to me, but man, oh man was it good! I love lemon pepper on my chicken, so I added a little. It was delicious, with a nice cold Tahitian treat soda.

**(Candace Howard)**



was going to burst. At each family reunion, I would always get a blanket and spread it across the grass under a tree. I was so relaxed; I didn't have a care in the world, so I always took a nap. I always had such a good time as I watched the ducks and ducklings on the pond, the rabbits hopping, and the chipmunks running around. These memories will always stay with me. **(Joyce Johnson)**

I can close my eyes and remember the family reunions that I went to as I grew up on the south side of Chicago, Illinois. The family reunions were held every two years. This occurred from the 1960s to the 1970s. My mom and my grandmother prepared such a grand feast. There were over 50 people related, such as cousins, aunts, uncles, my sister, my five brothers, and, of course, my dad and grandfather. They had two tables sent up with barbecue ribs, fried chicken, greens, cornbread, candied yams, macaroni and cheese, corn on the cob, ham sandwiches, sweet potato pies, and cakes.

We all were at Washington Park on 51st Street and South Park, which is now called Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. We arrived at 9:00 AM and stayed until the moon came out. After I ate, I always felt like my stomach

Last weekend, I visited a family friend for dinner. There I ate MOMO, known as dumpling in English. It tasted marvelous, which reminded me of my mother's magic hand on her specialty in Momo cooking. That juicy, spicy, soft and aroma-filled Momo left my mouth watering for more. It was well cooked. At the end, not just my stomach felt satisfied, but it also became a memory to take away. **(Yangchen Lhamo)**



Crunch! That was the noise that unleashed the strong spicy flavor carried by the seeds of a green bird's eye chili pepper that I bit at age five. The spicy taste was burning and sensitive to the touch. My body's reaction was feeling really hot, to the point of sweating and having watery eyes and nose. I also breathed through my mouth as if I was trying to put out a fire inside my mouth. **(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)**



The night before Thanksgiving, I remember my sisters and I prepping Thanksgiving dinner. Our father was usually playing some old tunes on the stereo while our mother gave my sisters and me instructions on which meal we were each going to prep. As I took a break from cutting the bright green bell pepper, I noticed my sister, Alesa, singing along to the music while measuring the correct amount of flour for the cake. Every year it would always be the same: my job was preparing the dressing. I remember cutting green bell peppers and constantly rubbing my eyes from chopping onions. Even with tears forming in my eyes, I continued to laugh and joke with my family. **(Galeca McCain)**



It was the first time that I had chicken and waffles together. It didn't sound very appetizing at first, but after a two hour flight

in turbulent rainy conditions on an empty stomach, anything was worth a try. The thigh that laid on top was perfectly seasoned with lemon pepper, garlic powder, and seasoned salt; its breading was crispy and steaming hot. My waffle was as big as my plate. It was crispy on the outside and warm and chewy on the inside, and it was sprinkled with powdered sugar and drizzled with warm maple syrup. I ate every bite and have never missed the opportunity to have chicken and waffles since. **(Monica Mims)**





I remember living in hot sunny San Diego, CA as a kid. Just behind my complex was a fence that stretched on for miles. Over the fence was a pomegranate tree. My friends and I would climb over the fence and up the tree to find the pretty and unblemished super fruit. After obtaining the succulent prize, our scraped knees and scratched elbows were quickly forgotten. After everyone was satisfied and had selected the perfect one, it was time to revel in our victory. As we sat under the tree allowing it to shade us from the smothering California sun, we unraveled the red ball of deliciousness. We savored each tiny little burst of juicy flavors. Beyond the tree was a colony of Chinese immigrants. As our pomegranate tradition continued, we ate and watched the small-sized people carry big bags of rice on their backs and baskets on their heads. They often squatted on the ground and ate with their hands. It was there, sitting under the pomegranate tree with my friends, seeing how this other culture lived just behind my fence that I started to realize how big this world is. **(Martina Mitchell)**

Many unique memories come to my mind when I think about the times I spent at my grandparents. I spent part of my teenage years with my dad's parents in their native town, Atoyac. High in the mountains, Atoyac is a rural town with a population of about 20,000 people. Every morning was always the same exciting routine, and I was happy for breakfast.

My grandpa was a farmer. The coffee and corn we used at home came from his land. I would usually wake up to the sound of birds, roosters crowing, the supreme smell of fresh homemade coffee, the delightful smell of sweet bread, and the incomparable sound of my grandma making tortillas by hand. The preparation for breakfast would start the night before with getting the corn ready for the tortillas. The corn was placed in a pot with water and lime\*. It was then boiled for about 40 minutes and left overnight to soak. The following morning, my grandma would rinse and drain the corn through a colander and put it in a bucket. Then, my grandpa would take it to the local store that had a special grinder to turn the corn into dough (masa). After getting the masa, he would then stop by the bake house to get the fresh made sweet bread, and bring the sweet bread and masa for my grandma to start cooking.

Thus, my every morning was waking up to the sounds of birds, roosters, my grandma making tortillas, the fresh smell of coffee harvested by my grandpa, and the smell of sweet bread made every morning. Every morning before going to school, I would have a couple fresh tacos with salt or fried beans, and two whole sweet breads dipped in my big cup of coffee.

\*LIME: "A white caustic alkaline substance consisting of calcium oxide, which is obtained by heating limestone and which combines with water with the production of much heat; quicklime." (J. Luis Pérez-Olgún)



Becoming an adult in poverty! I remember coming to my first apartment after working 20 hours with a full week of working two jobs. I remember the refrigerator and the fridge were bare, the cabinets were empty and dusty, and, by the grace of God, the only thing I had in the pantry was a box of instant mashed potatoes and a bag of homemade gravy. I



remember this because of how hungry I was. It tasted like a Thanksgiving feast. The moral of this story is that it was a very good meal. **(Savannah Rose Perry)**

I remember coming home on those cold and chilly days during the rough winter season. The moment I stepped through the door, I came into a spotless home. My family had been crowded around in the living room watching TV and talking about their day during the commercial breaks. As a whole family, we would put dinner together almost every day while singing and listening to music on my dad's Bluetooth speaker.

One specific night we decided to make seasoned shredded chicken in the crockpot. It was one of my favorite meals that we made quite often. First, we would sear both sides of the small chicken breast until they were nice and golden brown. Next, we would toss the chicken breasts in the crockpot for an hour and a half until the chicken was soft and juicy so that we could shred it with our two forks. After the chicken was finely shredded, we would add this salty seasoning with a

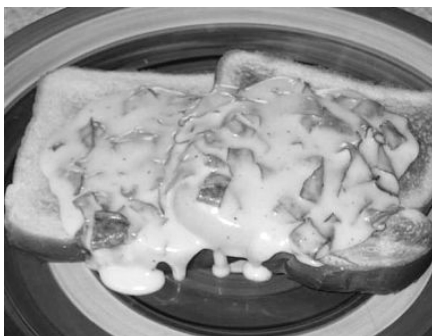


hint of spice that made your lips smack together after tasting it. As we let the chicken continue in the crockpot, my sister and I got our fresh red tomatoes and diced them into small pieces. After the tomatoes, we grabbed the freshly rinsed lettuce and finely shredded that into quarter-sized pieces. My mouth was watering by the time this was happening. Lastly, we took our baby white onions and diced those into small pieces until our eyes watered.

Once everything was complete, it was go time. I did the happy dance while fixing my chicken tacos. **(Cheyenne Pete)**



My grandfather had a dish called “slope” while I was growing up. It was basically corn beef in the can and milk. He made it from scratch. We would eat that with toasted bread. I made it a couple of times, but of course it didn't taste like his. The way he made it was delicious! The bread was toasted, and then we would put the “slope” on it and add salt and pepper. **(Erannia ‘Rana’ Potter)**



Back in Texas on the east side of San Antonio there is a little yellow shack. The name Mittman is painted in cursive above the entrance. The smell of fresh homemade tortillas fills the air as you pull into the parking lot. Entering the restaurant, you're greeted and welcomed like family. The food is prepared by little old Mexican ladies that put their heart and soul into making the perfect carne guesada (cubed beef and gravy) tacos, refried beans, and Mexican rice. Just to top everything off, they have ice cold, freshly brewed southern sweet tea. **(Alice Ramirez)**

One day I decided to travel to the village without informing my family that I was coming. I just wanted to pay them a surprise visit. After several hours of voyage, I finally arrived home and met Raky Njie, my brother's pregnant wife. My father was away and the rest of the family members (mother and brother) were attending a meeting at the village Bantaba (platform) summoned by the village head. I was exhausted

and hungry, but there was no food left in the house. Family provisions ran out that day, and my father had gone to buy food supplies. He wasn't expected to be back home anytime soon, according to Raky Njie.

As hunger deepened in me, I decided to go to the kitchen to see if there was something available to consume. Fortunately, there were a couple of dry fish, one cube of jumbo, one onion, and a small amount of peanut butter trapped at the bottom of a bottle. Then I decided to cook “Nyankatang” (special diet cooked with peanut butter mixed with palm oil, chive, beans, dry fish, jumbo, netetu, onion, cassava, and habanero), but I needed a few more ingredients for it to be a perfect Nyankatang. Luckily, I got a few of the items from my brother's wife and the rest of the ingredients from our neighbors.

One and a half hours later, the Nyankatang was ready. It tasted a little spicy with its yellowish and muddy look from the effect of palm oil, and peanut butter makes it even more appetizing and easy to masticate. After gyrating the rice from left to right, on the surface of the rice appears okra with pieces of fish portraying itself all over the cooking pot helplessly. Without delay, I unearthed a full plate of it (Nyankatang). Within minutes, I wolfed it down and took another dish for the second time before I could invite my brother's wife to join the eating spree. The food was really delicious, and I loved Nyankatang. **(Abdourahman Sallah)**



Have you ever had a meal that got stuck in your mind for years? Well, that was my case. I still remember the first time my grandmother cooked me the “West African Peanut Sauce with Fufu” (pounded yams). It was on May 31st, my 15th birthday. To surprise me with something special, she decided to cook her famous peanut sauce with Fufu.

The whole meal is divided into two parts, and each part is cooked separately. The recipe to prepare the meal is really complex. To do it, she laid out on the kitchen tables several ingredients, such as peanut butter, onions, spices, goat meat, tomato base, and yams. The first part of the cooking is to make the peanut sauce. She started by heating up the peanut oil in a large pot over medium high heat; then she cooked the onion, garlic, and ginger in the hot oil until softened. I remember sitting by the pot, and the aroma had me lick my lips every thirty seconds. Then, she let the whole thing cook for five minutes before adding goat meat and stirring until everything turned completely brown. After that, she seasoned with the crushed red pepper, salt, and black pepper followed by an addition of chicken stock over the mixture and brought it to a boil.

You couldn’t imagine my excitement that day, waiting for the food to be ready. My grandmother kept on telling me to calm down because the food wasn’t going anywhere. Moreover, after letting the soup boil for fifteen minutes, she added the tomato base and the peanut butter. Next, she covered the pot partially and continued cooking for another twenty minutes. Finally, she told me that the sauce was ready. When I looked into the pot, I spotted a yellowish sauce topped with goat broth. I was really happy.

The last part of the cooking is to make Fufu. My grandmother went about doing that by peeling four yams and cutting each of them into small pieces before putting everything in a big pot. She brought the pot to a boil for seventeen minutes. Then she let me know that we would have to pound the cooked yams. I set myself as a pounder, and my grandmother was the driver. She sat by the mortar and me; I was holding the pestle. In addition, when she was adding the pieces of yams, I was pounding them until they all smashed. Next, she added water to make sure that the yams didn’t stick. Ultimately, the yams became soft, doughy balls. That is when she removed it and served it in a separate bowl.



Everything was all set. She served me Fufu topped with the peanut sauce and goat meat. I couldn’t believe my mouth when I took the first bite. It tasted so good that I finished two bowls of Fufu. Since that day, the memory of that Fufu and peanut sauce has stuck in my head. I always tell my grandmother that I am really missing her food due to the fact that I live in the U.S. now.

**(Hezouwe Walada)**



Sausage and rice! This may seem minor, but I will explain. My brother, sister, and I were raised by our mom as vegetarians. However, our mom was very

inconsistent and unstable. It appeared she put working as an artist and jazz singer first, which left us often moving around and living with other people. With her, we didn't have meals on a regular basis. The best memories of my childhood come from the times we were with our grandma.

One winter, maybe 1981, we went to a winter camp for about a week. At this time we lived in the same building as our grandmother. We came home and our mom wasn't there, and no food was either. We immediately went to our grandma's, and she made sausage patties, rice, and toast! It was like a five-course fine dining meal! For over 30 years, I speak of how my grandma made everything special. She could make a sausage and rice meal for dinner, and it was everything. She gave us something very important: a meal. **(NatuRa Warford)**

It took me a long time to think of a food memory. However, talking to my cousin the other day made me think of a time in particular when we were kids. When we were younger our granny would watch

us, and I remember she would always drink Slim Fast, particularly three different flavors: vanilla, strawberry, and chocolate. We would always be drinking them, of course, and they weren't very good.



We thought they were "shakes" LOL. Then, we got the idea to make our own "shakes" for her so she would have more flavors. Funny thing is she would always try them. We would mix things like pineapple or mandarin oranges with vanilla yogurt or milk and add ice. She supported our shake business! We would mix all types of fruits and just blend it together. We would have stuff everywhere with all of the cabinets wide open from two eight and nine-year-olds who could barely see over the counter in the kitchen trying to make shakes. As my granny waited for her shakes, she tasted each while watching her "soaps." We just laughed. It brought back so many memories. **(La'cee Webster)**

The smell of boiling beans in bacon and onions was the start of the morning, and we all knew what was to come. We had what seemed to me like a simple Mexican Paella, which was a big pan of warm fluffy rice and veggies topped with tender shredded chicken. It was that home comfort food that would bring us all together for inviting conversation. All the yelling of the little ones muted at the sound of the lard sizzling on the hot cast iron skillet. Knowing only one will be chosen for the next step, they squabbled over the massacre de los frijoles. As the hours passed, everyone waited around the table for the cloth filled with rolled, warm, home-cooked flour tortillas just to smother them with the tastiest refried beans. The joy, laughter, and conversation bring us home. **(Sandra Zintzun)**



# MOVED BY MUSIC



I love music. That's a true statement, but it's also the title of one of my favorite songs by one of my favorite R&B

groups, the O'Jays. I grew up in a home where there was always music. My late mother, who passed last year, had collected music from as early as I can remember. From the age of ten, I recall the album by Aretha Franklin, who passed recently. "I ain't never loved a man" was one of the first things you saw when you walked into our home. I just finished reading an unauthorized biography of Aretha by David Ritz, very revealing.

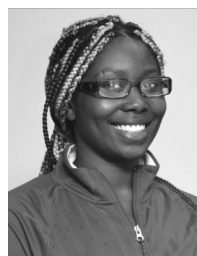
I have been blessed to see most of my favorite artists perform live. One difference from back then was we got most of our music from radio, from DJs who were personalities on and off the air, like WAWA's Dr. Bop, O.C. White, and Jim Frazier. There were local and national stations, like WLAC in Nashville, Tennessee, that played R&B/ Soul, or jazz stations like WJMR with Ron Cusner or a station from Rochester, New York, with Bill Ides, "Ides against the Night." You listened to new music, and you raced to the record shop the next day to be the first to get something by Coltrane or Freddie Hubbard. "I Love Music." (**Muhammad Abdullah**)

I like all sorts of music. When I listen to a song, my mind focuses most on the sound of the instruments. Sometimes I catch myself listening to explicit songs that I haven't listened to before, and then I think, did I really



just listen to that? Ha, ha!! Most of the time I just go with the rhythm. I am bipolar with music: I listen to music based on the mood I am in. If I feel tired but need to awake, I'll listen to rock, techno, cumbias, rock nacional. If I want to relax, I'll listen to piano music, chill, and valadas.

(**Juan Carlos Abrajan**)



I learned the blues early as a child riding to Mississippi with my grandfather. That was his home, and he wanted me to know it. He wanted me to feel how he felt, and as I got older, I referred back to those songs. I started to have troubles and thoughts of "why was this my path?" Neo-soul became my blues—Jill Scott, Ledisi, Erykah Badu, Outkast. That southern up-tempo that still had the wording of questions about life and trying to survive makes me feel like I'm going to Mississippi myself, in my own way.

(**Ebony Anderson-Carter**)



Music has always been a vital part of my life. It's like the nutrition that allowed my soul to grow. My earlier memories of music come from my mother. On Saturday mornings, I could tell what type of mood my mother was in by the music she played. If I heard gospel blaring through the speakers, I knew it was time to clean. If I heard Mary J. Blige, I knew my mom was going through something at the moment.

As I grew up, the kinds of music I liked to listen to matured. My friends make fun of me because of the older music I listen to. I listen to the Isley Brothers regularly because Ronald Isley's voice strips me of any façade I'm putting up. His falsetto voice makes me tap into any and all things I'm feeling. I know what to listen to when I'm happy and what to listen to when I'm feeling really low. Music has always been there for me, my only friend that lives in sorrow with me, only to later bring me out of misery. **(Kayasia Blake)**



As a child I grew up in the choir. We are a musical family. I received private voice lessons in high school. I won a scholarship for having the best musical voice in choir class.

Music is my life forever and ever. It brings me



joy and lifts me out of depression and sadness. Memories of me singing with my late grandmother in the adult choir bring tears to my eyes because I miss her and singing, too.

My favorite music is R&B old school, 80s/90s mainly. I also love jazz. Some of my favorite artists are Phyllis Hyman, Nancy Wilson, Will Downing, Brian McKnight, and also Etta James. I love reggae, too, and slow songs. **(Carmon Caire)**



Music to me means calm, relaxation, and being stress-free, with no worries.

I love listening to real music. The kind of music I grew up back in the seventies (yes, I'm a

seventies baby, 1972) and eighties is real music because today's music is nothing like how music was back then. You had real feelings coming from the music I grew up on. Nowadays, music just is way out there and doesn't have real feelings behind it. I like to listen to jazz, the blues, country, R&B, dusties, music from the twenties to the sixties, opera, show tunes, music from the old black-and-white TV shows, boogie-woogie, and be-bop.

The memories I have of music from my childhood include hearing and listening to my mommy and daddy sing the songs they grew up on and having my oldest brother grow my youngest brother and me up on rap and reggae.

Music has ALWAYS played an important role in my life because, like poems, I express myself through some/most/or ALL music. **(Quishanta Cary)**





Music puts me in a mode where I am unbothered. It helps me think, work, clean, and sleep. Whenever I need to focus, I turn on my Pandora and do what I need to do. Sometimes, it's like Pandora feels me LOL. I don't know how

else to describe the fact that Pandora can be on point. Listening to music makes me feel like someone understands. Depending on my mood, that's the type of music I would go to—just to hear from other people how they went through a heart-break, lost someone special, went through a hard time in life, and so on. Music is a huge part of me. I will always turn to music if life gets rough or if I just need to take a moment.

**(Diamond Clay)**



I love music. I listen to it daily. It soothes me when I am having a rough day. I listen to it when I'm cleaning or doing my hair and make-up. Sometimes if I hear certain songs, it takes me back to situations I may have been in at

the time I first heard the songs, and it brings back those emotions all over again. I love R&B, but I'm also a hip hop fan. I can pretty much listen to any type of music. I think my son will also have a love for music. He loves to sing songs on the radio even if he has never heard them before. Music is one of the true loves of my life.

**(Queeneice Creamer)**



Music means a lot to me. I sing a lot myself. I used to sing in a choir back home since middle school. We practiced every Saturday and sang every Sunday. It's what made me like the Christmas season. We practiced more and

sang on Christmas Eve, which was very emotional.

Now I just sing for myself, especially when I feel sad or lost. My girls know that, so when they see me quiet or sad, they come to me with my phone and start to play my favorite songs. I start singing and smiling. They ask me why I was sad, but by that time, I have forgotten. Music is powerful and spiritual. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**



When I was a young girl, my grandmother signed me up for piano, tap, and ballet lessons. I don't know why, but I was not excited about the lessons, mainly because I was the only person out of my friends that had to go to

lessons on Saturdays. Back then when I was a child, Saturdays were popping. All the good cartoons were on, kids were outside playing, and here I was walking to the bus stop to head to my lessons. I didn't fully value the lessons that were given to me. I hardly practiced the piano when I was at home. I lost interest in learning how to read the notes. What I could do was have someone sit beside me and teach me the chords that way.

Now as an adult I crave those lessons. If I had dedicated my time and effort toward those lessons, I would be a Beethoven in my own way right now! The drive and determination is here now for the lessons I should have appreciated back then. My love for music is so great now. I love old school songs dearly. My aunt used to have basement parties when I was around six to eight years old. I would sit at the top of the stairs and listen all night until someone caught me.

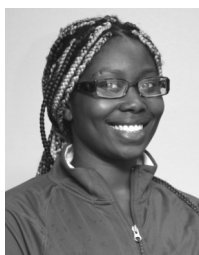
That love for music has trickled down to my kids. When they were little, I would constantly play my music to my kids, whether in the car or cleaning and dancing around the house. The music was instilled in them the way it was in me. **(Erica 'Cocoa' Gentry)**



Music is my escape. It has the ability to uplift my spirits or the complete opposite. Music brings back

memories, both good and bad, like of a first dance or a loved one that's no longer with you physically. Emotion is conveyed almost effortlessly through music and has the power to reach anyone who listens. But don't listen with your ears: you must listen with your heart.

**(Zataiya Gober)**



I used to play the violin in elementary school and middle school, but it was hard to keep up with when I started high school. Music to me is an escape when I don't want to hear everything that's going on in the

world or even just around me. I mostly now listen to hip hop /R&B. When I'm sad, I'll listen to a song where someone is going through something but overcomes it or is trying to. Sometimes I can sit back and collect my thoughts to the right song. I grew up listening to dusties because I was raised by my grandparents. It brought us all together. We would sing, dance, and step (well, I was never a good stepper, but I tried). Music to me is sharing a bond with others around you or understanding other people's lives without even having to say a word to them. **(Breonna Hawkins)**



Music is basically everything to me. I live and thrive inside of kicks, snares, and funky 80s. The first album I ever listened to front to back was Kanye West's Late Registration. It remains one of my favorite albums—Kanye

speaking on how crack influenced Chicago, on



how important family is on "Roses," speaking on how life will try to get you down on "Heard 'em Say". I believe music is the fastest way for people to understand each other. As some music tells creation stories on how the world came to be, other music tells of the struggle of the past, present, and future. Marvin Gaye's famous "What's Going On?" is still relevant today.

Music was the best way for me to make friends. A simple "who do you listen to?" could turn into long minutes of conversation debating who the greatest rapper alive is or laughing at lyrics like "She got a big booty, so I call her Big Booty" (2chainz). I've made irreplaceable friends from music. **(James Horton Jr.)**



Music is everything to me—my stress reliever, my healer, my redeemer! I love to listen to hip hop and R&B, soul, and rap. My dad and brother make music. I've actually made a few songs myself. I've recorded in a music

studio before. I love music because I love to sing and dance. Music has helped calm me at times. Music has helped me find my voice when I was having trouble speaking up or finding the right things to say. Music has delivered messages for me and has also been a message to me. I don't think life would be right without music. I love making music. Music is poetry.

**(Candace Howard)**



I have a great sincere passion for music, just about every kind I can think of. I love Rhythm and Blues (R&B), classical, jazz, ragtime, reggae, rap, soul, country, and gospel.

motivation to work harder to help my fellow Tibetans in Tibet who are under constant oppression and threats to their lives. **(Yangchen Lhamo)**

When I was about ten years old in 1960, my family lived in a basement apartment under my grandparents' house on the South Side of Chicago. My mom and dad had parties every weekend. All my five brothers and only sister were asleep. I was always *nosy* (said my dad) and *inquisitive* (said my mom). My dad said both words to him meant the same. I can still hear the blues and jazz records they played on our record player. I heard songs by Ella Fitzgerald, Blue Roland, Miles Davis, Sonny Sitt, Dizzy Gillespie, Nat King Cole, and Sam Cooke.

As I got older, when I was 16 and 17 years old and a junior and senior in high school, my mom and dad let me throw parties over a pool room in a big hall. I had a professional DJ, sold \$1 tickets, and sold hot dogs, chips, and soda. I even charged guests \$1 to check their coats. I invited neighborhood gangs. There were no fights. We all danced, partied, and had lots of fun, and it was unforgettable. **(Joyce Johnson)**



Music helps me redirect my focus. It makes me feel closer to my own self and makes me love myself. Oftentimes I forget myself between family and work and school. I listen to Tibetan classical music mostly, which gives me strength, courage, and



I like to play the organ by ear and express my feelings at the moment. I own a double keyboard organ with a Leslie speaker. The sounds can be almost magical. The music I remember listening to during my childhood was almost always happy and danceable. **(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)**



The type of music I listen to would be R&B, rap, and gospel. Honestly I would listen to anything that has meaning. Most rap songs today only talk about drugs, money, and sex. I feel like people only listen to

that because the beat is catchy. However, I enjoy singing along to Beyoncé, Monica, and Tasha Cobbs. I find myself listening to gospel music whenever I'm feeling low or confused. It usually makes me feel better and gives me strength throughout the day. **(Galeca McCain)**



I love all genres of music. Reggae is my favorite. I use music to help me sleep, study, work, and feel better.

I'm writing a book about myself and my life. Music has helped me through 90% of what I've written already. When I'm stuck or trying to remember a certain time or period in my life, I turn on music that was popular or often played in my home during that period. All of the memories and emotions flood my thoughts. I struggle to see through my tears while writing. **(Monica Mims)**



I really love music. As a child my mother used to say, "Music soothes the savage beast." It's funny,

though, because growing up I listened to artists like Al Green and The Temptations, and it was all deep love music. Nowadays it seems it's all about "bumpin' and grindin'." I find myself mostly listening to gospel music. When I sing the inspirational lyrics and praise songs, it makes my worship feel deeper. Whenever I clean the house on Saturday mornings or have a big meal to cook, like for holidays, you will know it because praise and worship music is blaring from my apartment, number 8.

**(Martina Mitchell)**



chores while listening to music. I do not have a background of family members being musicians or playing an instrument. However, I have always liked the sound of the piano and guitar. I learned how to play a little bit of classical guitar. Also, I was part of the choir at church about twelve years ago. I would like to learn more about how to read music. **(J. Luis Pérez-Olguín)**

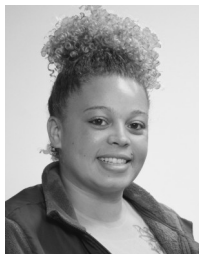


Music has always been part of me. No day has gone by for me without listening to music. From boleros and ballads to Mexican folklore music, I remember my grandma or aunts doing their



Music is my way out of the drama, the sadness, the stress, the pain, or whatever I'm going through. Whenever I get a feeling, I can find a song that explains it. I listen to all kinds of music—reggae, rap, R&B, pop,

jazz, etc. I find the lyrics are what moves me! Music motivates me, makes me cry sometimes, smile, or laugh; music warms my heart. My gospel and R&B honestly make me a better person, changing my thoughts and leading me in a different direction. Music is my life. Without it, I'd probably be a savage! **(Savannah Rose Perry)**



Music has always played a role in my life for as long as I remember. My parents also were fans of 80s and 90s music, especially hip hop and R&B. Something about music makes me sane. It takes my mind to a different place, and I love it. I'm a fan of all genres of music. I love the songs that have a message. The music (rap and hip hop) they come out with today has nothing on the music I grew up listening to. Music has gotten me through tough times in my life growing up. Some songs made me so happy, while others made me feel sad. I've learned not to always cry while listening to the slower songs, though! LOL (**Cheyenne Pete**)



I love music, all types of music. Music relaxes me when I'm down and depressed. I always have listened to music, even when I was little. I'm 44 years old, and I'd rather listen to music than watch television.

Music is always good for your soul.  
(**Erannia 'Rana' Potter**)



My relationship with music started when I was just a small child. I remember early on Sunday morning my parents would wake up my two brothers, two sisters, and me by playing loud Mexican music.

Hearing that, I already knew it was time to clean the whole house.

Now I mainly listen to country music. I guess it's because I can relate to most of it, having a couple heartbreaks here and there. Some of the music is about going through a hard time, and some is about overcoming it. Music will always be a part of my life. Certain songs bring

back a hundred memories. Some music can take me back to when I had no worries in the world. Some music brings back memories of loved ones, and some reminds me of mistakes never to make again. (**Alice Ramirez**)



Music brings me mixed feelings, depending on the kind of music I listen to and its timing. I listen to Nyanyegi (cultural) music, war/battle (bravery) music, and Ndaga music (entertainment).

Music brings me some sense of relief or rejoicing. It reminds me of special events or times in my life. Any time I listen to music, it brings back memories both positive and negative that happened in the past.  
(**Abdourahman Sallah**)







As they say in French, "*La musique adoucit les moeurs*," or "music soothes the soul." For me, music is like a medicine. When I am sad or depressed, I just have to put in my earbuds and listen to music, and my heart is soothed. I don't know how to describe it, but when I hear a melody, my whole emotion changes. If I am really sad, just by listening to music I become happy.

I listen to any kind of music, from oldies to modern music. I don't have any preference. I play a couple instruments myself, but I am self-taught. Maybe the reason why I learned how to play those instruments is because I love music so much.

When I was a child, I remember watching my dad play his trumpet and my mom sing. It was a wonderful experience. (**Hezouwe Walada**)



Music gives me life! I'm serious! It's one of the components that helps motivate me, pull me out of depression, and take me to places I've once been.

Music gives me life! As Emily's dad plays, I have a wave of emotions, missing loved ones that are no longer here. His music makes me grateful! I woke up this morning when some people did not. My heart is fluttering as he plays.

I miss my family coming together! I wish I had more



time with my brother, who passed April 2017. I miss him so much! I tell people once they're gone, you no longer have a chance for a "do over." Live and love now! (**NatuRa Warford**)



I love music, so when Emily said her dad would be coming, I was excited to hear him play. Music has always been influential in my life. Music is another way of expressing your emotions besides reading. Music is powerful and moving, as well as soothing to the soul.

My mom and dad would always listen to music—reggae, jazz, R&B, songs I still remember to this day. I listen to music going to sleep a lot of the time because it's soothing to me. I find myself always singing a song, or even some mornings I'll wake up with a song stuck in my head, either because it's how I'm feeling or just because I'm able to relate to that song/artist. I listen to R&B, rap, and whatever is new. I'm always downloading music and listening to new artists. I learned to be more open-minded with music. There are so many underground talented artists out there, so over time I've learned to explore different genres. (**La'cee Webster**)



Years past, the music was of our culture, the Mexican vibe of guitar, trumpets, accordion, and yells that brought family together. My teen years brought on the mix of pop, bass, and heavy metal for a wild side I didn't know I had. Oh, those twenties, what can I say? The array of clubs with that chill techno sound had me pull my hair up and sweat til' dawn. Now a mother and enjoying the wonder of a little jazz, guitar, and wind symphony, I'm loving that sound my son makes.

I don't think any day of my life has gone by without music. I still ride with that techno that gets me going, enjoying my long ride to somewhere! (**Sandra Zintzun**)





Pablo Picasso, *Three Musicians*; Adolphe Lesrel, *The Musicians*;  
Johannes Vermeer, *The Concert*; Romare Bearden, *Three Folk Musicians*





Michelangelo Caravaggio, *The Musicians*; Juan Gris, *Violin and Guitar*;  
Pablo Picasso, *Mandolin and Guitar*