



ODYSSEY ORACLE



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MOMENTS OF COURAGE



A moment of courage in my life was after childbirth. I knew what I wanted to do but still had a bit of doubt of success in my heart. I was facing a s***load of post-partum emotions, along with being a stay-at-home mom. I really doubted

myself when it came to wanting to get back into school, working, and still being a mom. After being accepted into Odyssey, I knew it was just the beginning. Even though we have class only once a week, I told myself I am doing an awesome job with maintaining work and being a good mom at the same time. This is just the start. After graduation, IT WON'T STOP! I am going to make sure my success won't stop until, in my heart, I know I've reached the top . . . and with my greedy self, that probably won't be enough! LOL

(Diamond Clay)



A moment of courage in my life is when I found out that I was going to be a mother and gave birth to a BEAUTIFUL, HEALTHY, and ENCHANTED baby girl. I call that my moment of courage because after my very first car accident, I was told

that if I was to ever get pregnant (because I messed up the whole left side of my back) I would die from the pregnancy; that I wouldn't be able to survive the pain. But I am glad GOD is MY TRUE DOCTOR and proved the doctors wrong.

(Quishanta Cary)



A time I would say that I showed courage would be getting out of a toxic relationship. A lot of times it's easier said than done, but I had the courage to say enough is enough and take my power back. I must say it took a while. A lot of bad things

had to happen for me to realize this isn't normal. This isn't how things are supposed to be, and

certainly this isn't love. I'm not sure exactly what I was holding onto. I guess I was hoping one day things would change, but instead I found myself trying to change myself to please someone else. I found myself acting a certain way and distancing myself from those I loved to please someone else. I felt as if I were walking on egg shells. I never in my life experienced or felt like this before. My only option was to break away and free myself from this control I let someone think they had over me.

(La'cee Webster)



I've always had those moments of "if men can do it, I can do it!" About four years ago, I had an opportunity to accept a job my father and two of my brothers worked at. My father would always come home and tell me about his day, and half the time

I had no idea what he was talking about. Of course I would still listen and ask questions, and his job really sparked my interest. It sounded like a tough job that only men knew how to do, but I wanted to see for myself. I wanted to challenge myself.

A few days later, I was officially hired and started my first day. The physically hard labor was not something I was used to, but I adapted quickly. Four hours into the work day, and I was sweating ridiculously, my legs and arms were extremely weak, and I almost fainted. Eight hours went past and I completed my first day with no issues other than a sore body.

Needless to say, I've stuck with that same company (landscape; snow removal) for a little over four years. Quite honestly, I've shocked my own self. Never say never, and never think you know the outcome of any situation. Because of my courage, I stepped outside of the box and tried something a "woman" can do very well, like any "man." ☺ **(Cheyenne Pete)**



A time when I had to really show courage was when my mom was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. That was a time that took all the strength out of me that I had. I didn't want to show it in front of my children. I didn't want my mom to see how bad I was suffering inside. I had to be strong for her and my girls.

As time went by, I began to become weak. My facial expressions showed, and my eyes showed how much I tried to be strong. May my mother rest in peace! **(Erannia 'Rana' Potter)**



I had two kids at age 16. Things were not so great being a single mother at that age. I dropped out of school three times because of childcare problems and because I felt I wasn't going to make it through with two kids, no father,

and no other support system. I gave up on myself at that point, but for some reason I couldn't sit around and do nothing. I called Omega School, a school with childcare, and got accepted. I left Omega a few times, too, because I didn't believe in myself. Oscar Mireles wouldn't let me give up, though. He made sure I did everything I needed to get my GED. On October 5, 2012, he called me just an hour before graduation and told me he got my scores back for my last test and that I had passed. I was welcome to attend graduation. That day was my daughter's first birthday, the day I got hired as a customer service representative at Walmart, and the day I graduated, so October 5, 2012 was one of the best days of my life. I didn't think I was going to ever get my GED, but after three years of Oscar's motivation, I am blessed to say I MADE IT! **(Candace Howard)**



I display courage everyday just getting up out of bed and trying to do better than I did the day before. I have never had it easy, so many doors closed in my face while watching others basically having things handed to them. I

strive to be successful no matter what the circumstances or hurdles that continue to come my way. I will never give up. I keep my faith and I know my day will come. **(Queeneice Creamer)**

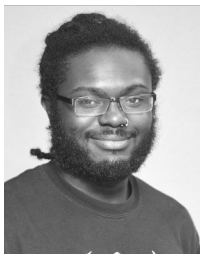


I have always had the desire to go to college. It has been in my head since I came to this country. I remember thinking to myself, I don't want to work in the field or the factory for the rest of my life. I want to pursue a higher

education, go to college, get a diploma, and not let anything stand in my way.

I had taken some ESL classes here and there, and I even attended some college classes in 2006. However, for various reasons I always ended up not continuing. I started my journey to get my HSED in 2010, and by 2012 I got my diploma. After that, I started to work towards my Associates at Madison College. It took a lot of courage on my part to not give up. I did not think my English was up to the point of taking regular college classes. However, I decided that nothing was going to stop me, not even my fears of language or my status. My legal status has always

been a bump in my life in this country, but I have learned to cope with it. I graduated from Madison College with a 3.5 GPA! I worked really hard for it, but I was so proud of myself. It has given me confidence and made me believe I can achieve anything in this country, even with my status. I will keep looking for my opportunities and keep looking for the open door that will take me to my goal. **(J. Luis Pérez-Olguín)**



The first time I ever performed a piece of poetry I wrote, I was a nervous wreck. Before I got onto the stage at Goodman, my palms were clammy from all the sweat. My mouth was as dry as the Sahara desert, no matter how many times I stopped at the water fountain. When I was called up to the stage, I basically crawled up the steps. The bright lights on the stage scorched my forehead and blinded my eyes. My family was in the crowd, though, silently cheering me on. I took a deep breath, stretched my arms, and read my poem. My biggest fear was that no one would like or relate to what I had to say. That thought was quickly shattered after I got done with my poem. The amount of love I got for my poem was unprecedented. How could someone love something I thought was “meh”? From there, I’ve written many more poems.

(James Horton Jr.)



It is that moment when every emotion races within, as if at a race track. As he approaches, my heart palpitates faster and faster. Will I allow this demon to hurt me again? The rage starts to consume my helpless body with every single

beating. Lights and images flash through my mind, only to question “will I see my family again?” The adrenaline kicks in, and all I can think to do is “fight back, just fight back!” Get to the escape, and never look back. **(Sandra Zintzun)**



I worked at One City Early Learning Center for my brother. In the beginning, I enjoyed my time there. I was blamed for two things: first, a community member said I was on my cell phone, and that was untrue; second, I wasn’t able to print out the newsletter due to no toner. So I was written up, and I was fed up. I felt like a

failure, and I resigned. It was a hard choice. I hid my feelings. I left with my head up high. I chose my new path in life. I made a sound decision that it was best for me to choose a different space to continue my passion and love of teaching. Today I’m still working in the profession and am teaching pre-K. **(Carmon Caire)**



In 2004, I decided to leave for the U.S.A., leaving behind my four year old and my whole family without knowing whether I would be able to see them anymore. When I left home, my whole family and my four year old came

to see me off at the airport. My mom and dad were in tears. I was just flooded with tears, hugging my son. I had a very hard time letting go of his hand. Then my dad hugged me and said, “We will meet again. Don’t worry about your son.” I had to leave then. I said my final good bye. I went back home in 2008 and brought my son back with me. **(Yangchen Lhamo)**





I believe that every person, man or woman, gay, bi, or pansexual, should be treated equally at work, school, etc. I find myself as a person very open to different people and their beliefs. At a job, there was a female but her pronoun was a he. Even though she didn't much look like a he, I respected it. A lot of people at the job would make small comments or jokes, calling him by the name he was born with. Normally I mind mines, but this made me feel different. I explained to my coworkers the importance of pronouns and how even just calling a person by a name they wish to go by can make them so happy. There are so many people who commit suicide because of sexuality and judgment. It made me feel good. Even if I didn't make a difference, I made others more aware and stood up for others who don't always stand up for themselves. It's probably a day I'll never forget. **(Breonna Hawkins)**



I had no idea I had a fear of heights until I was in my early thirties. It was 1981, and Cable TV was coming to Milwaukee. I had a chance to be part of its genesis because I worked for the oldest Civil Rights organization in the world, the N.A.A.C.P. There were 10 to 12 cable companies vying for the contract to wire the city with fiber optic cable lines, and they were courting and wining and dining every group and organization in the city. I was in the mix but then a year and a half later I was out, as the funding for my position as Branch Coordinator was cut.



As a dislocated worker, I was eligible for re-training, so I signed up to become a cable TV installer, which meant I had to learn to climb ladders and telephone poles and more. To learn to climb telephone poles, I was started on poles that were about eight to ten feet high. No problem, but then we came to class one day and all the little poles were exchanged for the real deal. It took a while, but I eventually made it to the top of the pole, strapped the safety belt around the pole, fastened it, rocked back into the gaffs hooked onto my work boots, and locked myself into my position. I was shaking like a four year old, but I looked out over the city, put fear aside, and found my comfort level. I was no longer afraid of the heights, but I found out I didn't want to be a cable TV installer. **(Muhammad Abdullah)**



Being courageous is not something easy. I can recall an incident that happened to me four years ago where I had the courage to stand up for myself. I was riding a Van Galder bus from Chicago to Madison. I heard behind me two individuals having a conversation about Africa. For some reason, they were saying that Africans are dumb and ignorant. I was shocked. I couldn't believe what I was hearing, so I had to intervene. I told them how offended I was by their conversation because I am from Africa. I asked them what the factual basis was of their calling us dumb and ignorant. I told them to stop saying this rubbish because they don't know anything about Africa. They tried to apologize and said they didn't mean to offend anybody. That day, I was really mad and happy at the same time. I was happy because at least I stood up for Africa and for myself.

(Hezouwe Walada)



I was given three choices: termination, let nature take its course, or surgery. After learning my first born child had a heart defect, I was 20 weeks pregnant and stuck with a major decision to make. What should I do?

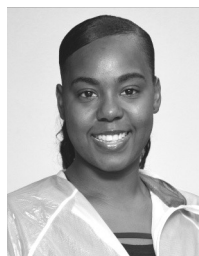
“What should we do?” I asked my child’s father. Despite the choices I was given, I made the decision to give my child a chance at life. I knew God gave her to me for a reason. He trusted me to protect her and care for her fragile heart. Even though my baby girl lived for only 11 days, she made me become strong. Because of her, I’m more understanding.
(**Galeca McCain**)



I was only 19 years old when I gave birth to my first child. He was 7 pounds 15 ounces at birth with a head full of straight black hair, the same as I had at birth. I named him

Jeremiah, the name his father and I had agreed upon during my pregnancy. Even though his father was not present at his birth or for much of his life afterwards, I still chose to give him his father’s last name. I think it’s when I was sitting in my hospital bed filling out birth certificate paperwork that I realized I would be my son’s primary parent. Being a single mother is exhausting, to say the least, and I was just that up until I met my now-husband when my son was 18 months old. (**Zataiya Gober**)

The best thing to do was to listen, learn, and follow directions, but it never seemed inspiring to me. I always wanted to learn things my own



way because there is not only one way of learning. So after being put out at 17, I learned so much more.

I learned how to get what I wanted out of older men because I was pretty. I learned how to make, sell, and distribute cocaine and heroin without being caught because girls are never suspected. I learned how to use my cute baby face to project innocence to confuse men’s minds to get what I wanted. There were VIP sections everywhere I went and after parties filled with moneyed men with everything to give.

Fast forward. How can I be this woman and be a mother? How can I be separated from a man who kept me on the straight and narrow but also was breaking me down? My mother was the person to help me, talk to me, and guide me back into the light of being me again. Asking my mom for help: boy, that took courage! (**Ebony Anderson-Carter**)



I remember hearing the most heart-wrenching cry for help as my cousin came running over to me carrying her lifeless baby. His lips were blue, and his skin was pale. She threw him into my arms and continued to cry

hysterically. She kept yelling, “I don’t know what’s wrong with him!” My first instinct was to check his airway, and to my surprise I felt a coin reaching deep into his throat. I pulled it out, and he took the deepest breath. Then I think we took our deepest breaths. While waiting for the ambulance to come, all I could think was thank God that we were all in the same place at the same time. (**Alice Ramirez**)





On April 4, 2017, I walked into a funeral home to get ready and say my goodbyes to my only brother. My brother was 51 years old and passed from a six-year bout with prostate cancer. My brother was six feet seven inches, a Marine, a college graduate, a business man, and an awesome dad. He had six children.

Four and a half weeks prior, he was put on hospice with only five to six weeks to live. Family rotated trips in groups. My turn was on March 30th, but he passed on March 28th. I had pushed my visit back from March 23rd due to needing childcare for my nieces, so a big regret has followed me. Walking into that funeral home and up to the casket was one of the longest walks of my life! I leaned over and hugged him, rubbing his forearm to see if it was real. It must have been at least 20 minutes before I left the casket. This was one of the hardest things I've had to do. I'm praying he's comfortable and in a great place.

My brother was my surrogate father and someone I looked all the way up to. He taught me and protected me. All my friends had crushes on him. He was so funny and passed his sense of humor on to me. When I think of him and his courageous fight with cancer, I stand up straighter. I will live for him since he no longer can. **(NatuRa Warford)**



What encouraged me to work hard between the years of 2010-present was the time when my father decided to leave the country during my junior year. I think that was one of the moments where I was able to mature more quickly. During my final years of high school, I worked hard to

graduate, but I fell short by 12 credits. I couldn't graduate with my class.

After high school we moved in into the trailer park on Park Street. Living there was a dark time in my life. I needed to find a job to support my family, so I worked at the McDonald's on Park Street. I also enrolled at the GED/HSED 5.09 Completion Program at MATC Downtown, but I failed to complete it. During that year, my older brother, Adrian, made very bad choices and one night committed a crime by trying to steal a woman's purse. My mother tried to fight the case anyways. I remember her saying, "I worked so hard to bring him into this country, and I won't give that up." Unfortunately, his case was reviewed by Immigration, and he was deported. Since I earned \$7.50 per hour working at McDonald's, I wasn't able to help much with any of the house needs. Then for the second time I enrolled at the GED/HSED at MATC South, but I again failed to do so. I couldn't focus on school or work because my work hours were always rotating. I hated that! Things were getting worse by that time. We ended up getting kicked out of the trailer because we failed to pay rent money for three months. At that point I just needed to work and take a break from school.

I have always worked in restaurants starting with McDonald's, Popeye's, Potbelly, and Dickey's Barbecue Pit.

(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)

I

DICKEY'S
BARBECUE PIT®



was born in an extended family with eight brothers and two sisters. My parents struggled very hard to pay for our school fees and to take care of other family issues as farmers. There was a rule my parents had that each of us must get very good grades to move on to the next class from grade 7 to 11. If any one of us failed in any of the classes, we must leave school because our parents could not afford to pay for a failing student.

In eighth grade, I failed because of a suspension. I was putting on a school demonstration and got suspended. I missed a lot of class work and written tests, so my parents couldn't afford to pay for me to repeat the same class again.

I decided to engage in obtaining donations by going from shop to shop, from lumo (weekly market) to lumo, seeking to raise the amount of money to pay for my fees. Unfortunately, I couldn't raise this amount. I went to the area council, governor's office, and even the regional education office to seek support, but with no success. Then one day I met a Peace Corps volunteer by the name of Miss Kingshill. She was a teacher at the high school, and she often visited my sister, who was a friend of hers. She observed that any time she made a visit, she would find me reading or writing.

She inquired about which school I was going to. My sister explained everything about me to her. She promised to do something about it. After one month, she came back to say she had secured a scholarship for me and that I must get to school. I was very happy and thankful. Miss Kingshill came from

Texas, a very good teacher who supported a lot of poor children in my community. **(Abdourahman Sallah)**



On Feb. 8, 2017, I arrived in Madison, Wisconsin, by way of the Greyhound bus. I was all alone and felt hopeless. I had just left a 21-year marriage. I had a broken heart and knew that my husband was either

high or drunk off pain-killers, prescription drugs, and alcohol when he hit me or dragged me across the floor of our apartment in Garland, Texas, a small suburb outside of Dallas. I can truthfully say I was afraid of him, being the slim, petite woman that I am. I overcame suicidal thoughts.

I'm a very religious person, and I finally had enough. I got on my knees and prayed to GOD (in the name of Jesus) to give me the courage and strength to leave him. When I left, he was in jail for the third time for domestic violence for beating on me. I know God gave me courage. When I packed and got on the Greyhound bus, I never looked back. He often told me I would not make it without him. I'm so proud of myself because now I have my own beautiful apartment and at 68 years old am back in school to get my bachelor's degree. **(Joyce Johnson)**





Around the age of 16, I realized that my voice carried a power no one else's had. Before then, I would always complain about the state of things at my high school between the educators and the students. I didn't realize that I, along with my peers, had the power to change the scenery. One particular event opened my eyes.

My senior year, I decided that I wanted to attend a football game with my friend Jaylah. Her mom agreed as long as we took her two little sisters with us. Since Jaylan lived down the street from the school, we all galloped down the street, strutting in our maroon and grey, laughing, excited about what was to come. When we got to the front of the admissions line, an administrator stopped us because we had two minors with us. We tried to explain that I already had turned 18; therefore, I was the adult to chaperone them. The teacher's face turned red with embarrassment as she weeded us out of line, yelling obscenities at us. We remained peaceful but stuck to our original point: we'd done nothing wrong! Fed up with our pleas, she called the police officer to where we stood. At this point, Jaylan's sisters were hysterical, and we were irate. The police officer grabbed Jaylah and slammed her into the fence in front of a line of 30 or more people. He twisted her arm like a twig, yelling all the way. In the end, Jaylan was not arrested, but we missed the game. We came to the realization that we didn't matter. None of these people stood up for us. Their faces were like a monotone as they paid their way into the game and went on their way.

That Monday, Jaylah and I took it upon ourselves to set up a resolution meeting with this woman. As we spoke our truths openly to this woman, she went from eye rolling to eye opening.

While the actions would never be forgotten, we got solace in the fact that we shared our narrative and changed at least one person's perspective. **(Kayasia Blake)**



Courage is the ability to do something that seems important or takes strength. It can be physical or moral. My own life looks pretty strange to me, lost in my mind and weak in my body. But I still stand upright and fight any kind of situation that comes up at any time. In the past I think I was more courageous than now. I could climb any kind of walls. My family and friends were even scared of me and telling me sometimes in the past that I was too strong. But now I am working on showing my courage. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**



I have a really hard time thinking of what I did to have a moment of courage. I remember that when I was in Mexico while my parents were here in the U.S., I had to go get milk at a farm. I was nine years old back then. I was afraid to go get milk because the farm was 30 minutes away from my grandmother's house. The reason I was afraid to go get the milk was because the street dogs were wild. When I went to get milk, I used my bike. I already knew where the dogs were, so when I was getting close to them I would go full speed. I would put pedal to the metal so if they saw me and started chasing me I would make it hard for them to get to me. I had to deal with this once a week, sometimes twice a week. I feel this was really courageous to do. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**



AFFIRMATIONS

POSTED ON CHAR'S TREE OF LIFE

Every day you wake up, you have another chance! (**NatuRa Warford**)

If you ask with all your heart, the universe will answer! (**J. Luis Pérez-Olgún**)

Get some sleep and analyze life! (**Sandra Zintzun**)

You're not alone, even when you feel lonely. (**Galeca McCain**)

Self-motivation, honesty, love, and good vibes only. (**Diamond Clay**)

Keep at it. Don't stop working. Keep at it. (**James Horton Jr.**)

Love, togetherness, faithfulness, courage. (**Carmon Caire**)

Don't be too hard on yourself! (**Ricardo Marroquin Santos**)

Stay focused. Don't Give Up. You can do it, no matter what! (**Candace Howard**)

Be happy with yourself and love yourself! (**Savannah 'Rose' Perry**)

Wisdom at all cost. (**Hezouwe Walada**)

I had eight reasons to not come here, but I came
anyway. I'm holding on because someone told me if I
let go, it will hurt twice. Here is I! (**Muhammad
Abdullah**)

Times may become hard, but you'll be stronger when
you finish! (**Kayasia Blake**)

To be different is to be beautiful! (**Cheyenne Pete**)

I'm staying positive and continuing my education.
(**La'cee Webster**)

Just keep swimming! (**Zataiya Gober**)

Stay focused and pray always! (**Martina Mitchell**)

Education is the best option. (**Abdourahman Sallah**)

Don't doubt yourself. The loudest person in the room is
most courageous. (**Ebony Anderson-Carter**)

Believe! (**Alice Ramirez**)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2019! The first letters in my name are JOY. 'Tis the season that
brings us joy. Love to all. (**Joyce Johnson**)

Be strong and courageous. (**Tchallassi Edo**)

Be Proud! I will not be afraid to give my opinion. (**Juan Carlos Abrajan**)

My Goals: Graduate from Odyssey with an A or B. Get a house. Take and pass Kevin's writing class. Teach
my daughter all that I'm doing and accomplishing. (**Quishanta Cary**)

Always be you because no one can do it better than you! (**Queeneice Creamer**)

Believe in yourself! (**Oroki Rice '07**)



CHANNELING FREDERICK DOUGLASS

It is 1852, and escaped slave Frederick Douglass has just read a review in The Southern Quarterly Review stating that slaves cannot dream of liberty because it is “a conception which belongs so naturally to the white man.” The essay goes on to argue that it is “a cruel task to disturb him in the enjoyment of that life—slavery—to which God has destined him,” that slaves “bask in the sunshine and are happy,” and that “Christian slavery . . . is the brightest sunbeam which Omniscience has destined for his existence.” Frederick Douglass responds:

Dear Editor:

I was flabbergasted to read your editorial on Christian slavery saying that black people were destined by God to be enslaved. I found this statement nothing but false, malicious, derogatory, and discriminatory. Black people lived in peace, enjoyed their God-given rights and freedom for thousands of years before the invasion of white people, who lacerated families apart, put them in chains and shackles, and reduced them to the lowest animal. This was the most heinous and grossest human rights violation and injustice ever meted on people of color. White people are nothing but legalized kidnappers, murderers, and rapists who sailed thousands of miles from their poor countries only to rob Africa’s wealth and human resources for their selfish interests. **(Abdourahman Sallah)**

Slavery is the greatest sin of America. I remember not knowing my age or the ABCs or how to spell the simple words I am using today in this letter. Will you try to be me for a day? I am sure you would not last one hour, one measly hour, in the soles of a slave or the duties of a slave. Yes, let me watch you as you bask in the sun, whip marks shining so beautifully in the sun as you prance around in pain and despair, treated like an animal released from a cage. Slavery will no longer be forced upon us because together we are strong, together we are happy, and together we are one. **(Breonna Hawkins)**

Ask yourself if it was meant for humans to be slaves, do you not think there would be white slaves as well? Does my education offend you? Education gave me the same book it gave you. The Bible speaks of love. I see no trace of love in the beating of fellow men until they are raw. I urge you to redefine liberty to include faces like mine. On God’s green earth where we all reside, we all should be seen as the same. **(Kayasia Blake)**

The Negro dreams of liberty like the white man dreams of buying and selling slaves off like livestock. We get whipped, beaten, and even raped if we refuse to do what the master tells us, while you hide behind the Bible to justify your cruelty. We pray to God to set us free. Negroes are not content with being slaves; we must obey our masters or be sent to our graves. A life as a slave is no place to be; if you think I am insane, you should try it, you see. **(Zataiya Gober)**

I see by a light to which your disease of racism blinds you. I see by a light, the truth, which obviously escaped you. I am free, and you are the caged one. **(Muhammad Abdullah)**

With indignation, I deplore this no-sense newspaper news. I do not think my people read this newspaper; today, they are too weak in their bodies and minds after long days of labor to please their masters. Most cannot read because their masters decided to keep them in the darkness. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**

First off, put yourself in our shoes. If someone of color was to steal you from your homeland, beat you and your family, rip you all apart, give you little to no clothes and little to no food, and have you working their fields to benefit them, how would you feel? What in your right mind made you feel slavery was destined for us? You all kidnapped us, and that WAS NOT destiny! **(Candace Howard)**

How dare you assume we enjoy slavery and use God to justify wrongdoings? You use white privilege and power to manipulate us and force us into misery, taking us from our homelands and beating and chaining us to make us work in ignorance. Our creator did not make us slaves or put us on this earth to serve as laborers to these so-called “masters.” You have stripped us of our rights as people but will never take away our spirits. Are we not human beings? Have we not the same entitlements to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Did our creator not make us equal? Have we all not an appearance before God to answer for the deeds we have done? **(La’cee Webster)**

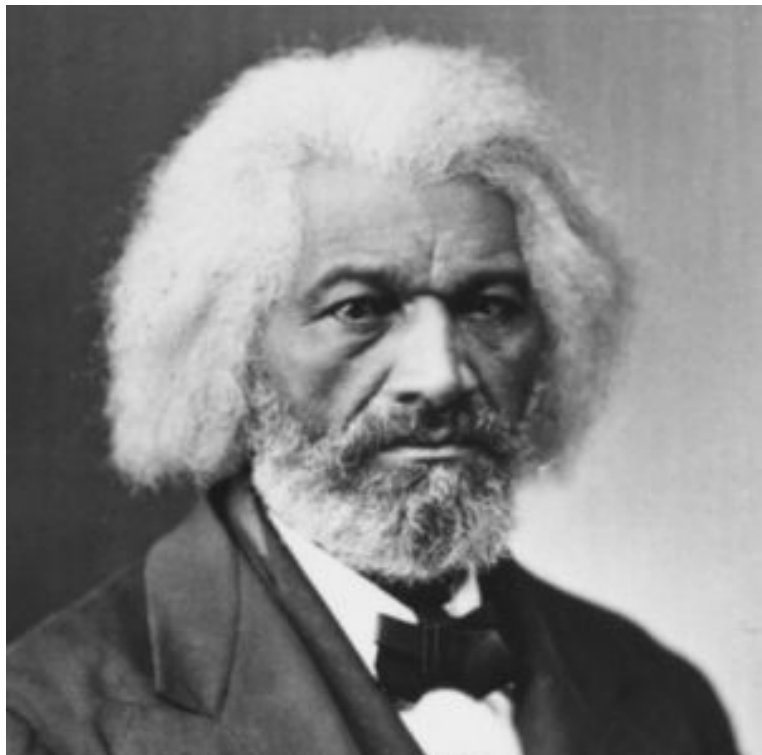
The sun you speak of us basking in shines bright like hell on earth. Picking cotton, bruised and bloody, and malnourished: this is the endeavor of slavery. You smile as you steal souls. You may see me as a threat. But the true threat is the wolf behind sheep’s clothing denying human rights. **(Ebony Anderson-Carter)**

Since my youth, I have dreamed and longed to be free. At times the deep sorrow I felt over being born into this terrible life made me contemplate suicide to escape the wretched pain. So the claim you

make that a Negro left to himself does not dream of liberty could not be further from the truth. Not only can I grasp the conception of freedom but I also contemplated strategies to emancipate myself from it. To read, write, and walk uprightly as a free man is the opposite of cruelty, just as slavery is the opposite of enjoyment of life. I serve a righteous God who created the earth and everything in it, with all men created equal. Would a righteous Christian God destine one race to be above another? Would a righteous God destine half His children to be sold, beaten, torn away from families, raped, and starved while even the animals were given enough to eat? Slavery is a moral and political injustice.

(Martina Mitchell)

I have worked so hard to educate myself and my people. Slavery was not an option; we were forced. Every night and every day, I would hear slaves being whipped and tortured. Why do you not think we should be equal? **(Erannia ‘Rana’ Potter)**



How dare you say I do not dream of liberty? Who does not dream of such a thing? We have different lives, but we are in the same country. I am a hard-working, self-taught, bright individual, and I will not be ashamed of the life I am living! We may have different beliefs, but we serve the same God. We were all



put on this earth by the same creator, so you are not better than I am! What makes you think so? We are as smart, if not smarter, than you; we are as beautiful, if not more beautiful, than you; and we work hard, if not harder, than you! **(Cheyenne Pete)**

In the Bible as in the Declaration of Independence (which was written by white men), it does not speak of color or mention the idea that white men's conception of liberty is better than that of the Negro. It is written in the Declaration of Independence "all men are created equal." I did not find the sentence saying that only white men are entitled to life and liberty. We all have the right to the pursuit of happiness. "Do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12). Who gives white men the right to treat others the way they have treated my brothers? "If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to you, do not make them work as slaves" (Leviticus 25:39-40). If you consider yourselves to be Christians who follow the word of God, why not follow its passages and

do unto others as you would have them do to you? **(J. Luís Pérez-Olguin)**

We did not ask to be enslaved. We were peacefully living in Africa when the white man came along, bought us, put us in shackles, and shipped us to America to work on the plantations. The conditions in which we were shipped were inhumane. I have lived in slavery. Why should slaves be treated as less than nothing? Are we not also the children of God?

(Hezouwe Walada)

Being a slave was long and dark. We worked in fields of cotton and corn, and it was unpleasant under the hot sun, with bugs, sweat, and passing out. Slaves were beaten up and really suffered. Put yourself in my shoes.

(Carmon Caire)

We are as much human as you are because we have the same good feelings for our families that you have for your families. You say we are in favor of working in the fields. I say we are not. In our songs we describe how miserable we are working in the fields and feeling the heat of the sun.

(Juan Carlos Abrajan)

God did not intend for black men to bow down and be mistreated, abused, disrespected, and scorned. For what have we done to cause anyone to hate us? My prayer is that we all do what is right by God. We want again to be the head of our homes, husbands to our wives, and fathers to our children.

(NatuRa Warford)

Whatever you think slavery was, it was not at all. We were not treated fairly nor with any type of respect. As slaves, we were not at all happy! How could we be when we were treated worse than pigs and given slop to eat? How can you say we were basking and happy in the sun when we got beaten, kicked, or both? **(Quishanta Cary)**

What God would create one man superior to another? I am dangerous because I want for my brethren what every white person does not think twice about in their privileged existence. Slaves have been subjected to blind ignorance, and you have cast your white Christianity upon them. Would you have to beat someone who was eager to do your will? **(Queeneice Creamer)**

My fellow men and I wish not to be slaves. Instead, we wish to be liberated from your cruelty, and we wish to be freed from your mental chains. The concept you say belongs so naturally to you was never taken from you or threatened. We, in the sunshine, suffer from heat related illnesses; we suffer from anxiety, the unpredictable reality that we can be separated from our families at any given moment. Your god has not bestowed this lifestyle upon us. You, the white man, in your glory, in your big home, in your ignorance, have bestowed these undesirable conditions upon us. You, the white man, are afraid

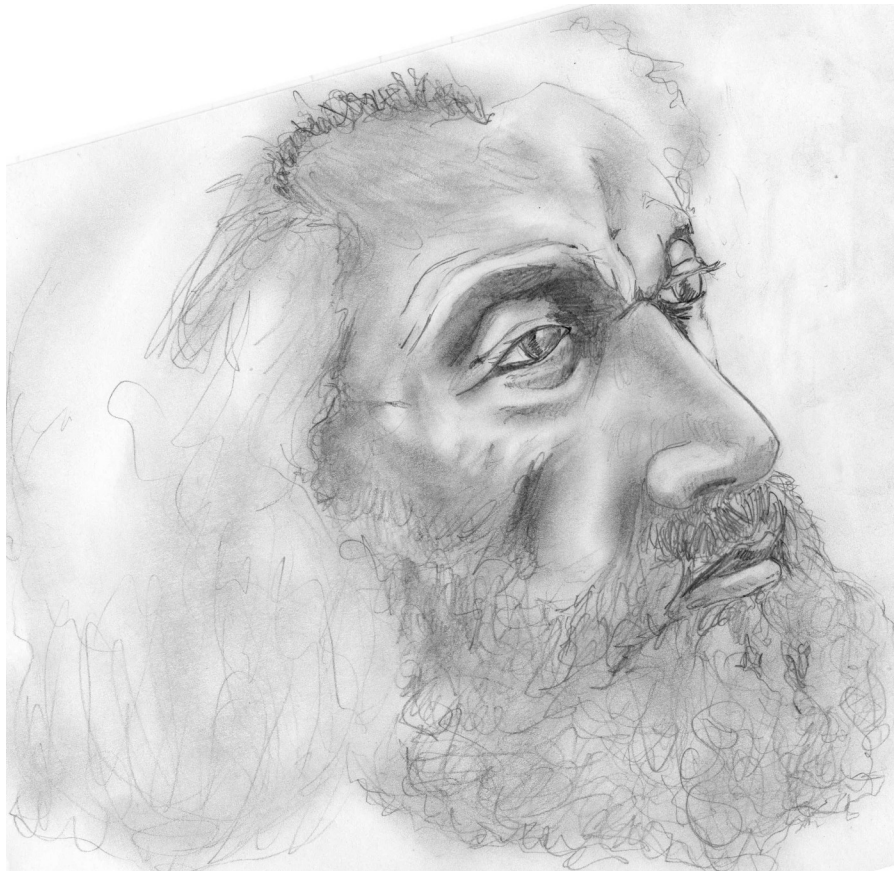
of what your life would be if we were to be liberated from these conditions.

(Monica Mims)

Does a man regardless of color not dream the same dream, the dream of a long, happy, prosperous life? Are the slaves not worthy of the same God you praise, the same God that wrote, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself, and commit no murders nor adultery"? How can people of color be happy living in fear, constant authority, and treacherous conditions? Perhaps you would trade positions? Step into the life of a slave, and then and only then will you realize what "enjoyment of a slave" is really like.

(Alice Ramirez)

*Sincerely,
Frederick Douglass*



Sketch by Stanley Sallay '07

CARMON CAIRE'S CREATIVE CORNER



Bubble Bath

Lavender Epsom salts melt under warm water
The Isley Brothers play in the background
The window open, warm wind blows
As I soak and feel bliss
I sing along to the Isley brothers
One of my favorite groups
Getting out dripping wet
I start to dry off and get dressed
And ready for my day
I love bubble baths

Fall

Colors of bright orange, crimson, and
gold leaves fill the trees
A cool breeze fills the air
Fluffy cotton ball clouds fill the sky
The smell of fireplaces burning to warm the house
The smell of homemade baked goods filling the air
The sound of birds chirping as they prepare to fly South
The laughter of children and families surrounding the
Farmer's Market around the Capitol square



FINDING PLATO'S CAVE TODAY



The prisoners are our own infantile beliefs or perceptions of the world. The prisoners represent the paradigm or early orientation that we receive before traveling or moving beyond the world we

grew up in at a base level. We only know what our sensory organs can tell us, e.g. what we can see, smell, taste, touch, and what we've heard from our parents and those in the world around us.

What keeps us in our caves is the safety and comfort of what we know. To grow, which is why we are here, we have to venture out of our cave and learn about other things and other worlds. . . .

As a chaplain in the Department of Corrections, I have met young men in their teens who have made life-altering decisions, such as firing a weapon for revenge, gang initiation, drug turf, or someone "mean mugging" them, and they are in prison for the rest of their lives. They have never travelled out of the city of Milwaukee or Wisconsin, not to mention to other regions of the country or abroad. When a man or woman travels outside of the world that birthed them and returns to try to convince the former patriots of the world outside, it can be perilous. They are likely to run into individuals or groups who feel threatened by their newfound knowledge or paradigm and may harm or kill them for attempting to upset or threaten their order.

I have had the experience of trying to coax someone from drug dependence, domestic violence, or child abuse, and the person will remain in or return to that environment or the

abuser because they fear the unknown, or their low self-esteem will cause them to think they are unworthy of something better.

(Muhammad Abdullah)



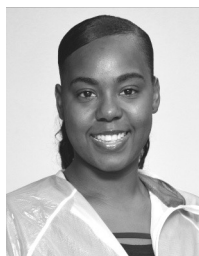
My cave was that I wanted to be liked by everyone and could never say no. . . . I learned being nice is not always the right way to go. It's OK to say no when I feel people want to take advantage of me. "*Yo era*

de los que daban un brazo por un amigo y ahora que faltan los dos no me abrazan I conmigo," said Ansolikito, or "I was one of those who gave an arm for a friend and now that the two are missing, I can't hug myself." With this sentence, I can pretty much describe myself. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**



Caves are often described as dark spaces that are hard to get out of. In my opinion, the word "cave" is an accurate word to describe my depression. For instance, most days I can find the rope and rescue myself.

However, some days it feels like I'm the forgotten treasure, unable to be found and therefore discarded. It can start with something as small as being late for an event or something as difficult as a death in the family. While most people are able to speak against their issues, attempting to work through them, that was always a problem for me. While I come off as cold or disconnected, I think it's because I'm scared someone will judge my experiences. I can allow myself to live in pain, with no exit plan. I'm working on expressing more and trusting that not everyone will hurt me. **(Kayasia Blake)**



Around me I see a cave that millennials are in, not knowing they are slaves of fine dining, nice cars and clothes, and (worst of all) social media. They are lost to actual communication, feelings, and reality.

(Ebony Anderson-Carter)



When people go to prison for a long time and get released to the real world, sometimes they do something to go back to prison because the new world is so scary and different.

(Carmon Caire)



Yes, I have been in a cave looking back at my own life. My own personal cave is my depression, which is mainly from losing both my parents and oldest sister. The light I see in my cave is me trying to deal

with them being gone, and as I'm slowly trying to get to that light I start to feel the cave rumbling (my depression, sadness, anger). The boulders (my tears) all start to fall and cover up my light, and I'm starting to feel the hurt

and sadness, again. **(Quishanta Cary)**

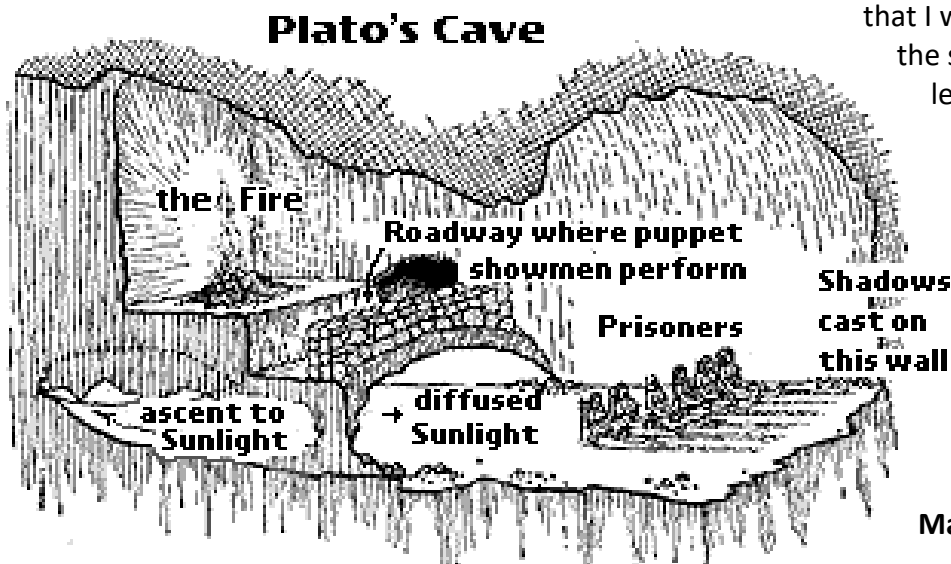


I see that a lot of black people are stuck in the cave of ignorance. They don't see the world and judicial system for what it is as it pertains to blacks. The world has been strategically designed so that

we can't succeed, and if we do there are traps or stipulations meant to bring us down. I see blacks also as in a cave where they oust each other and compete with each other. There is rarely any unity among the African American race. So much could be done and changed if we did. **(Queeneice Creamer)**



My own experience in caves or trapped situations was being ignorant about my immigration status and the way society viewed it as illegal. I was a prisoner of my own prison for believing this form of life was indeed the life I should live. The image of the cave represents a life in the shadows. I felt I couldn't relate to the other kids who lived outside the cave.



The reason I left the cave is that I was tired of living in the shadows. I later learned about the DACA program during the period of enrolling in the GED/HSED completion program. I do not want to go back to the cave. **(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)**



Prisoners are citizens who need to get out and know or live reality. I see people in the same area, for example in my original country of Togo, who have different attitudes and personalities and are in groups by ethnicity, language, religion, race, social and economic class, and more. Those differences are like the caves Plato describes in *The Republic*, a book he wrote almost 2,500 years ago. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**



I was in a relationship 20 years ago that resulted in one of my sons being born. His father was killed in 1999. That moment was hard for me. This was my son's father, my lover, friend, everything, and he was taken from us so violently. I was so distraught after that, yes, I was in a cave—trapped there mentally and taken over physically by alcohol and fast times. The only way I knew how to deal with my emotions and feelings from the murder was by drinking, and I (to me) was a functioning alcoholic. I went to work every day, but when I came home it was on—I had to get me a drink. It was the same thing, day in and day out. I thought by drinking I could numb the pain, the thoughts, and everything I had gone through. I even had mixed feelings

and rage, thinking about my son's father's love for me when we were together. "Was his love real? Or was it just the drugs? Why did I take all that crap? Why did I accept that behavior from him?"

So all of these thoughts were brought up in my mind after the murder. I was an emotional train wreck! I would snap at the drop of a hat, then cry right behind it. I was not the mother I should have been. I didn't love myself or others, and I put myself and others at risk for danger. And, yes, getting out of those situations and standing here today has made me stronger and wiser. **(Erica 'Cocoa' Gentry)**



I lived in Garland, Texas, from 2015 to 2017. I felt like I was in a cave while living with my husband. I was physically abused and a prisoner in my own home. My husband would always threaten me. He also said he would cut up all my fur coats. He would hit me in my chest with his fist. He said he did not want to hit me in my face because he did not want my children or our friends and neighbors to know he was abusive to me. I prayed to my Lord and Savior for courage and strength. . . .

I came on the Greyhound bus. I was homeless at the Salvation Army, DAIS-Abuse Shelter, and Belmont Nursing Home and suffered from heart attacks, strokes, and seizures. Now, in 2018, I pay my own bills/rent, and I learned how to cook for myself. I learned perseverance, character, and dignity, and now I am on my way to getting my bachelor's degree. I saw the light and so "never darkness so more." **(Joyce Johnson)**





I think the prisoners represent those that are trapped in a dark place, mentally. It could be caused by some sort of trauma, loss, anxiety, or depression. It is always fueled by one's own fear: fear of

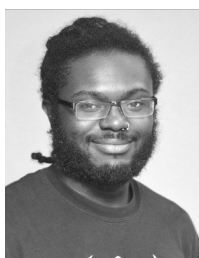
change, failure, or the unknown. Until you obtain the courage to face the necessary battles in life, you will remain trapped in that dark place, like the prisoners. . . . The first step to freedom is always the hardest, but once you take it, it's impossible to turn back.

(Zataiya Gober)



A cave is when someone is in a dark place, maybe blind to something. Two years ago, I was in a bad relationship, but I was used to it and thought it was love. Sometimes you can get lost in caves, only hearing

your own thoughts and being blind to what else the world has to offer. It took me a while to understand that, but reading this passage has an underlying message that is easy for me or anyone to relate to. **(Breonna Hawkins)**



Growing up I was different from most other African American kids. If it was up to my father, the second I came out of my mother I would've had a book in my infant hands.

Needless to say, I grew up around knowledge. I was constantly learning. In respects to the analogy, my father and mother took me out of the cave at birth.

However, that was not the same for my peers. I feel like the black community, especially the kids, are stuck in the cave. The shadows are of easy money making, stereotypes that they feel they need to follow or else they are not

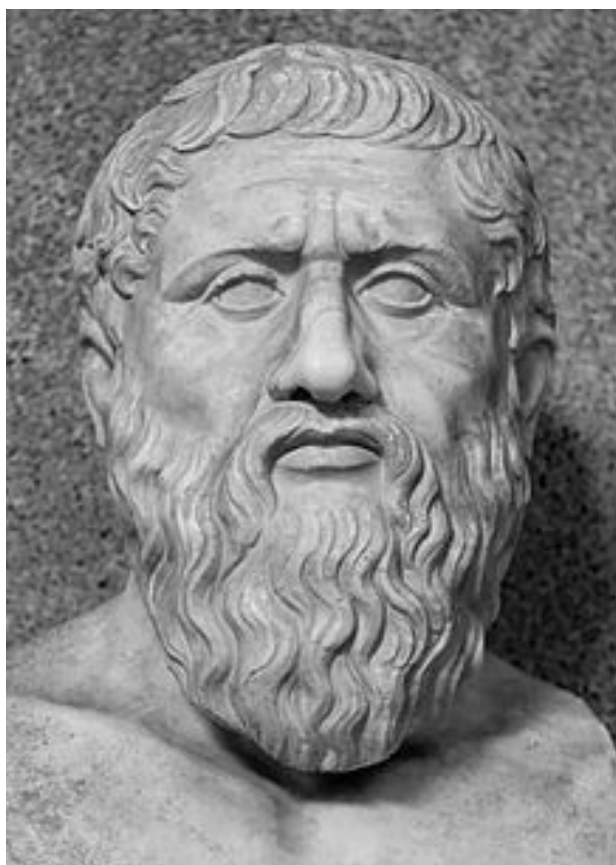
truthfully black. They attribute reading and education to that of a white person and look at you crazy whenever you tell them reading can be enjoyable or that they can be more than rappers, athletes, and gangsters. That's all they're shown. **(James Horton Jr.)**



This one is hard for me to put into words. My darkened room is like an ongoing merry-go-round. I've always kept my feelings, depression, and whatever else I go through to myself, but only when

understanding the "Allegory of the Cave" did I realize I am my own prisoner. Because I am so afraid of reality and what else can go wrong, I stop myself from learning and growing through wonderful experiences.

(Savannah Rose Perry)





Yes, I'm living in a cave now. Cave = Babylon = USA. The cave I'm in is lack of knowledge. . . . Now I'm learning more about the most high and my history, the TRUTH about my history, where I come from, and who I actually am! **(Candace Howard)**



My first job was a live-in nanny in the USA. All I cared for was a place to live and little bit of cash to survive. I was underpaid, worked from 6.30 am to 8 pm every single day for very minimum pay, and was treated poorly. Did any of these things bother me then? Not at all! I accepted that culture and became part of it. I was happy that I had a job. It was normal for me because I was an undocumented worker in the city.

As months passed, I picked up a nice TV from the street and asked my boss if it was ok to have it set up in my room in the basement. My female boss agreed and helped me connect it to the cable. Each day I explored different TV channels, and eventually I stuck to news channels mostly. I learned a lot about immigration, and it opened my eyes to have new hope. I was scared to get out and seek for help at first. I lived in confusion for months and months together, not knowing if I was doing it right or otherwise. I somehow decided to come out and start my paper process. It took about 13 years to be where I am now. **(Yangchen Lhamo)**



When I was trying to decide to go to college, I was the first in my family, had no idea what to expect, and had no one to help show me the way. I had a small baby, had just escaped an

abusive relationship, and had just moved into my own place. The FAFSA was the most intimidating part; I was able to find help with that but lost some of my "support system" — you know, the cousins and friends that I hung out with regularly, the cousins and friends that I drank and smoked weed with daily, the cousins and friends that I stayed up all night doing nothing then sleeping all day, the ones that aaaaaalways wanted to borrow money. . . . Yeah, that support system! So I had to do most of it on my own, and by the time I graduated I had no one. My mother had gone to prison, my dad died four months after that, and only two family members besides my daughter came to my graduation. I'm a far better person now than I was then. **(Monica Mims)**



Growing up I always believed in Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy. However, once I got older I realized these were only illusions. It was never the truth, only a lie my parents told me. **(Galeca McCain)**





“Generational curses” was a term loosely used in my family growing up. I didn’t notice back then, but every time I heard it, it was building walls of insecurities and self-doubt, training my thoughts in a pattern that was

mentally unhealthy. I always heard that I would be just like my mother and grandmother, that men were no-good, lying, cheating abusers, that my children were destined to be raised without fathers, that I was to be seen and not heard, that there was no way out of drug addiction or poverty, and that was just how things were and always would be.

Through the years, the walls in this cave started suffocating me, howling and screeching, saying I would never amount to anything. It pushed me to the pivotal point of escaping out of my cave and breaking protocol. . . . I learned how to manifest my own truth that was deep down inside of me. . . . I started doing the opposite of everything I saw around me. Getting out of my cave of despair and having the courage to go down a path lit only to me earned me the title “black sheep” of the family. Rightly deserved, I carry it as a badge of honor because nothing is better than being free! **(Martina Mitchell)**



I can write a book about my own caves, but I want to concentrate on gender roles. I was born in Veracruz, Mexico. I love my culture; in fact, I am proud of the richness of my culture and its diversity. . . . I

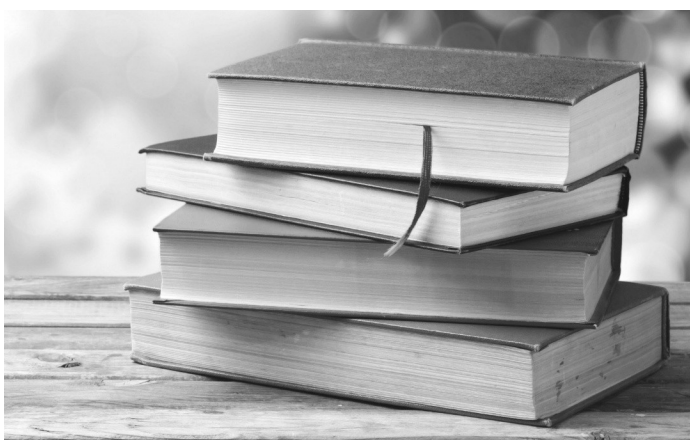
learned that women were mainly in the kitchen, and men were the providers. . . . The expectation of getting a higher education was not as important as working the farm or staying at home. . . . I remember my dad saying that school was important and that I should study, but he

never sat with me to read, write, or help me with homework. When I think back about it, I like to say it was better he didn’t sit with me to help me with my reading . . . because I feared him. My grandma was the one who would sit with me to “help me” with my reading or homework. Often she ended up calling me names or hitting me to the point that I was forced to read or was not able to read because I was crying. . . . I was a very bad reader, and every time I would not pronounce or read right, she would slap me in my head. I realize all of this had been holding me back at many levels of my life. For example, it kept me from being able to communicate and made me lose interest in reading.

Therefore, I needed to start working towards getting out of that cave. I obtained my HSED in 2012; a year later I started my associate’s in Business Management and graduated in May of 2017. . . . Finally, my dream of obtaining a higher education was happening, but I felt the desire for more. . . .

Odyssey not only gives me the courage to continue learning but also the tools to learn from others who were able to break chains and get out of their caves. Thus, through their experiences, they became a better version of themselves. I believe becoming a better human is a nonstop learning process.

(J. Luis Pérez-Olgún)





Growing up living with my mom, I watched her and my stepfather become physically abusive towards one another. It was something I got used to, unfortunately. They would go out almost every weekend and

come back arguing. I never understood why my mom stayed with him, but I learned they had a strong love for each other—maybe too strong. When I was 13, I would argue with my stepdad because he would pick little fights with me for what I thought was no reason, or maybe he didn't like me. After one specific argument, I had had enough so I called my dad and was living with him from that day forward.

When I was in high school, I dated a few different guys and my most recent, from about four years ago, became abusive as well. He was what I called an alcoholic, and that's when he became the most violent. When we first started dating, everything was okay until I noticed he had a bit of a drinking problem. I tried to move past it, but one day we got into an incident, and I saw him and his cousin talking to two other females late one night while we were visiting his cousin and his girlfriend. After I called them out in front of the females, I stormed upstairs and they followed after. I was very upset. I smacked his phone out of his hand, and he began to shove me against the wall. The following day, he apologized for his actions and I forgave him.

After that moment in time, he became physically aggressive when he drank to the point where I almost lost my life, or I could have if I hadn't escaped. I wasted so much time and stayed around way longer than I should have because I grew up not knowing what real love should look like. Instead, I

trapped myself in a cave until I had the desire and determination to do better and get out of the situation. I'm grateful I learned the courage to leave and not look back because those experiences have taught me so much about the truth to what love and being in love should and should not look like.

(Cheyenne Pete)



I remember being with my kids' father—the deepest darkest cave I have ever been trapped in. After I unexpectedly got pregnant, physical and mental abuse became the norm for me. I was dying to leave but

too ashamed to “not have a father for my children”; that was my excuse. The older my son got and the more he was aware and understood what was going on, the harder it got on me. After so many miserable years, I finally worked up enough courage to climb my way out. Only then did I realize that's not at all what life was about. I never did understand how I let myself get so comfortable adapting to this toxic lifestyle. **(Alice Ramirez)**





My uncle comes from a poor family. I remember him saying over and over again that he wanted to be happy, but in order to achieve that he needed to have a lot of money. Since then, he has been

working like a crazy person. He had four jobs—three full time and one part time. However, I don't know if he forgot that he had a wife and three children that needed care and attention . . .

So he continued working like that until the day his wife got tired of being forgotten and left behind. As a result, she packed up their kids and left him. Thus my uncle was broken and sad, and he realized that family has to come before anything else.

Today he has money and owns a company, but he is not happy because he didn't listen to what his friends said to him. After all, money doesn't give happiness, though it can contribute to it. My uncle was trapped in a cave and didn't know how to get out of it. (Hezouwe Walada)



I can relate to the Allegory of the Cave in so many ways, the first being a sensitive situation in which I got in some trouble

in 2016 and am still going through the ropes with that. So I honestly felt like I was in this "hole" that I was almost out of. I was able to see the "light" but was pulled back into this hole where I can barely see the light, so I'm just trying to make my way and keep climbing out of this hole. (La'cee Webster)



As a child, I put myself in my own cave to seem ignorant to the things happening around me. If I stayed locked up, I would be safe from the womanizing witnessed by my innocent eyes. The pen,

paintbrush, and paper were my chains keeping me in to avoid what was out that door. I kept to my space to reflect on what would be my purpose— to be silent, or to speak up for the ones that wouldn't?

Years passed and nothing had changed. I kept to my cave and found another place of refuge at school. So many were trying to find a way out, but here I hid like a coward. Not wanting to see the light, I just wanted to make it through one more year. There were so many people willing to listen, so many resources, and so many paths out, but I wasn't willing to interrupt the cycle because of what others would say.

Just as I thought it would, it was my time to be subject to the womanizing. Now what? It was finally time to break the chains that kept me

silent—time to put an end to the ghosts that tormented me all these years; time to find that light that would lead me away from the ignorance and give me a voice to say, "No, this is enough and will not happen to me!" It is such a liberating feeling!

(Sandra Zintzun)



NIGHT OF THE LIVING HUMANITIES

October 25, 2018: A Benefit for the UW Odyssey Project



