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BEING DRAMATIC WITH BARON KELLY

Working with Professor Baron Kelly was one of the best experiences I’ve had in Odyssey so far. He was so kind and informative. Even though he’s worked with famous people, he didn’t make me feel like I wasn’t worthy of his time. Baron celebrated the class when we did well and worked with us when we didn’t. I caught myself using breath from my stomach, and it helped me sing louder and stronger, even if it was to myself! I am so grateful for this unique experience. (Kayasia Blake)

My experience with Baron Kelly was very exciting and very entertaining. I really loved his personality and his energy. We started off with a nice silly exercise that put us all in a good spot and gave us tons of energy. Meeting Baron Kelly was a huge honor knowing all of the celebrities that he has worked with and knowing how hard he has worked his entire life, despite where he came from. (Diamond Clay)

As I always say, Odyssey is a program that gives a second chance for those who want to achieve greatness. Last Wednesday, March 6, was a wonderful experience. I never knew that I had such a big voice. With Dr. Kelly’s exercises before the acting class, I was able to gain a boost of confidence and some acting skills. Thanks to him, I have 100% confidence, and now I don’t have any fear to talk loudly in front of people. (Hezouwe Walada)

I was totally nervous and scared to actually work with him, maybe because he’s so famous and well known, and I didn’t know what to expect. It was so hilarious how he had us doing all those funny lines, sounds, and movements! I know that if he ever had a class on speaking/drama and/or theatre speaking, I would take it on the spot, hands down. What I’ll always remember about Professor Kelly is how he taught me how to use my voice with my words and to speak loudly. What I shall take from this experience is that I don’t have to be shy and quiet when it comes to using my words. Finally, I know how to use my voice as I try to say my words. (Quishanta Cary)

My experience with Baron Kelly was AMAZING. He gave me that push that I needed to start an acting career. I enjoyed the activities/games we played, I felt like a real celebrity for a moment (lol). He’s amazing! I’m glad I got the opportunity to meet him. It was truly a blessing, and I’m glad I got the chance to make him laugh (lol). I had a ball. Tell him I’m looking for a manager for my acting career (lol). (Candace Howard)
At the beginning I was so nervous, but as Baron started introducing the warm up exercise and voice training, it calmed me down. The whole section was full of joy and laughter. I was standing in front of the whole class confident at the end instead of nervous and shy. (Yangchen Lhamo)

Working with Baron last week was amazing. He used a technique that almost made me forget that I have extreme anxiety. I love the fact that with just a few words and a couple of fun games, I actually believed in myself again. (Alice Ramirez)

He was something different. I really enjoyed the class. It kind of made me feel like a little kid again. I was a bit nervous when I had to go in front of class with the Macbeth lines, but at the end I felt good. I just wish I could have memorized the lines, but I did my best. I like how Baron put all of his enthusiasm to make everyone participate and make everyone comfortable. One thing I regret not doing that day is to participate in the last part of class. (Juan Carlos Abrajan)

I really enjoyed myself. I was shy but I did it. I liked listening to my classmates, and I got to see them in a different light. I think we all had a good time and enjoyed each other. (Queeneice Creamer)

I really enjoyed myself that night with Baron. The acting we did along with the improv sparked an acting bug inside of me. It came off to me as natural; it felt natural, like I’ve been doing that for years! It sparked interest enough in me to seek out plays and theatre to see what plays are in the area to see if I can join one! It would be a long shot but worth trying! (Erica Cocoa Gentry)

Acting with Baron made me reminisce about being in the Ebony Expressions Reunion Show, playing a slave in the history of African American music. Being freed to put myself out there was refreshing. Reading from the movie “Fences” was great too! (Ebony Anderson)

Dr. Baron is a real actor and entertaining. I actually feel like becoming an actor with our little interaction on March 6th. He has all the required skills and knowledge to become the best actor in his time. (Abdourahman Sallah)
My experience working with Baron Kelly and classmates was helpful because the workout and warm up names made sense to clear out our throats and get in the mood to speak clearly. I’m thinking of practicing those warm up games before doing a speech. I also enjoy the “make up a scene” game. I really liked how the class was different from the rest. (Ricardo Marroquin Santos)

First of all, I want to thank Baron Kelly for his time and teachings. Second, thanks to the whole Odyssey staff and classmates for the support because I felt comfortable enough to be doing the exercises with Baron. I liked the experience of being able to use my tone of voice accordingly and being able to act without feeling weird. (J. Luis Peréz Olguín)

Baron Kelly was great. He was very lively, had everyone’s attention, and kept everyone involved. He wanted us to have strong voices and to make us feel confident. He made sure we weren’t looking down and that we projected our voices out, which was very helpful. I’d like to see him come back. (La’cee Webster)

That class left me with so much energy! The improv was fun! The class was exciting and funny, and Baron is a great teacher. My classmates showed up and out also. Candace, Hezouwe, and Quishanta performed and did a great job. This was one of my favorite classes! I enjoy every single one. I learned speech techniques and a new outlook on improv. (NatuRa Warford)

I was very impressed with Baron’s interaction with us. It was fun and energizing. I enjoyed the acting warm up. I would love to be in a play one day and have a part as his wife. He’s a great man. It would be nice if I could take an acting course from him. (Carmon Caire)

I am Baron Kelly! Laughing out loud, our experience was fun, loud, and out of body. He didn’t really break my shell and fear of speaking aloud, but he did crack it a little. It would be a joy to have him back and try again. (Savannah Rose Perry)

This night at Odyssey on March 6, 2019 was an amazing day. I was very happy and more proud at Odyssey that night than ever before. I never felt that feeling since we started back in September. Everybody was a genius. The participation, the presence of everybody, and the spirits were real and living. I think that Dr. Baron Kelly has charisma because it was a glorious night. (Tchallassai Edoh)
My experience with Baron was insightful. I have never seen those techniques or, better yet, acted them out. This was the most fun class in Odyssey. I really enjoyed getting up, moving around, learning about projecting my voice, and doing the ball technique. Acting out Shakespeare was amazing. I really enjoyed being Lady Macbeth and learning to tap into my evil, sinister, deceitful, and other side. (Martina Mitchell)

Baron was quite amazing. He is not shy, not in the least, or a bit inhibited, like me. He gave great coaching and motivation. He has a lot of fluidity for a large person. Finally, his resumé is incredible. (Muhammad Abdullah)

My experience with Baron Kelly was very fun and exciting. The acting and his presence were wonderful. I enjoyed working with Baron because he had so much spunk and so many ways of making the experience with him fun. I used to do plays and acting when I was a little girl growing up. (Erannia Potter)

A classroom filled with laughter, actors, and actresses with different personalities and nothing but positive vibes is what I witnessed with our special guest Baron Kelly. Although my classmates and I have become comfortable with each other, it was great seeing everyone take time away and not focus on class work or stress about our personal problems. I felt as though Baron brought a lot of joy to Odyssey. He broke the silence of some students who shy away from speaking in front of crowds. During improv, I noticed he released frustrations from a lot of students by pushing them to express themselves more. Overall, we all enjoyed each other, but, most importantly, we enjoyed Baron. (Galeca McCain)
I can honestly say I was so nervous knowing I
would have to say lines in front of the class. I
am comfortable talking, but when the
attention is all on me, that’s a totally different
ball game. The exercises we did were crazy
but very fun. It was very entertaining watching
everyone in and out of their comfort zone.
Baron did a fantastic job explaining the basics
of acting and showing the effort it takes to put
forth a great role. Even though I memorized
my lines, the nerves got the best of me and I
paused a bit. I have been to the theatre many
times and really enjoy the scenery, costumes,
and live acting. I could definitely see myself
behind the curtain transforming the actors.

(Sandra Zintzun)

Baron was a BLAST! He was so cool and down
to earth, and I learned so much from him. We
had a fun night. I couldn’t stop thinking about
it and talking about it. I had never done
improv before, but I have always wanted to. I
finally watched Fences! I could really see
myself in Viola Davis and decided to practice
my part of that scene at home. My girlfriend
said she really enjoyed my performance.

(Monica Mims)

My experience working with Baron was
unforgettable. At first I was nervous, but once
I got past that part, I really enjoyed it. We
worked on some techniques to perfect our
speech. Although I felt silly at first, it was so
fun and helpful! Doing improv was the best
part because you can really be creative if you
allow yourself to let go. This was by far the
best class yet! (Zataiya Gober)

I really enjoyed meeting Baron, the gentleman
from Kentucky, when he came to our class.
We went along with him as he did breathing
techniques, tongue twisters, and improvisa-
tion. I learned so much. I hope one day I get to
meet him again. That will help me decide if I
want to take more classes in drama. (Joyce
Johnson)
WE HAVE A DREAM

I have a dream that one day, all nations will come together. Just one nation will carry the whole world. No more politics, borders, and arguments that divide nations, and all races will be like a giant garden full of colorful flowers. (Tchalassi Edoh)

I have a dream that one day I will wake up and be happy to see me in the mirror instead of being sad over who I used to be. Maybe the sun will feel more welcoming, and the moon will give me a pass to finally dream about it. One day. (Kayasia Blake)

I have a dream to one day be free, Free from worry and stress. I have a dream to be a queen, A golden tiara would suit me best. I have a dream to constantly Be working on becoming a better Version of me, not the rest. (Zataiya Gober)

I have a dream that my kids will be something other than a statistic, that they will have a dream that will be heard like Dr. King, that they will pave the way so the next generation can see better days than they’ll have to face. (Candace Howard)

I have a dream that one day I will wake up to a brighter, more just and equal world. (Queeneice Creamer)

I have a dream of clear clean waters, a dream where skies are clear as glass, where nobody has to struggle or be afraid to be different. I have a dream of the meaning of make America great again. (Breonna Hawkins)

I have a dream . . . I will continue to evolve I will be a leader of change. My family prospers. My family helps others prosper. There will no longer be a need for anything worldwide. There will be peace for all people. People will take care of the environment. And I’m not dreaming anymore. (La’cee Webster)
I have a dream,  
Big like the circumference of Jupiter.  
As clear as the empty wine bottle beside me,  
Meaningful as the Odyssey journey.  
As imaginary as any fairy-tale you’ve seen.  
I have a dream. (Cheyenne Pete)

I have a dream  
of being surrounded by endless fields of evergreen  
awakened by the blissful songs of the birds  
stepping out of my living space  
squinting as my eyes receive the sun’s rays  
helpless against the gleam  
this day as peaceful as the last  
solitude like my house enclosed by a dome of glass  
C.R.E.A.M., no not any longer  
My desire to live happy is just a bit stronger  
I want to dream longer (James Horton Jr.)

I have a dream  
that one day we will all be equal  
that one day we all will be freed. (Erannia Potter)

I have a dream about people being more conscious about their wellbeing.  
I have a dream that ambitious people will use that feeling to follow a healthier path.  
I have a dream more audacious people will join that path of a healthier life and lead the way for others.  
I have a dream people can make this happen for a better world.  
The more we come together as one, the more efficacious we can be for the greater good.  
(J. Luis Peréz-Olguín)

I have a dream of equality for all races,  
Blacks, whites, yellow, red . . .  
We are all human beings,  
We all share the same DNA.  
Why don’t we treat each other with respect and courtesy?  
I have a dream of equality for all races.  
In my dream one day police will not kill or brutalize blacks,  
No favoritism of whites against blacks in all areas.  
I have a dream of equality for all races.  
The world will be a better place without racism.  
(Hezouwe Walada)

I have a dream; the American dream.  
I have a dream; a dream that knows no religion or race.  
I have a dream; a dream I yearn to achieve.  
I have a dream; a huge, challenging dream.  
I have a dream; a dream everyone dreamt of.  
I have a dream; a dream that I dreamt of with open eyes.  
I have a dream; a dream many failed and achieved. (Abdourahman Sallah)
I have a dream . . .
Dream to visit a land of snow
Snow that never melts
Melts my heart dreaming. (Yangchen Lhamo)

Of houses filled with all good things
I have a dream . . .
To fulfill my true calling and being
I have a dream . . .
That I am the lender and not the borrower
I have a dream...
Of cities I didn’t build and vineyards I didn’t dig
I have a dream . . .
To be a distribution center for the King  
(Martina Mitchell)

I have a dream that before I get too old or before GOD calls me to heaven, that I’ll be able to go on a cruise. My pastor and his wife (the First Lady of Mt. Zion Baptist Church) have been to Hawaii and Jamaica. They brought me back a t-shirt and a keyring. My oldest daughter (Joy), her husband, and my grandson have gone to Cancun every summer for the last eight years. My close friend Mother Sharron Hubbard-Moyer (MZBC) and her husband went to St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico last year and brought me back magnets that I have on my refrigerator. I dream about those places every night. I think positive always, and I believe one day my dream will come true. (Joyce Johnson)

I have a dream that one day I’ll be able to sing—not just a little tune or belting out a few melodic sentences, but I mean “Sang.” I want to be able to say these words that Shug Avery said in the movie The Color Purple: “I feels like sanging.” If I could sing, I would be singing at every question someone would ask me. I would sing whenever somebody needed a singer. If someone wanted me to say “a few words in closing” at the conclusion of a meeting or event. I would sing. I would sing answers to questions being asked of me: “Cocoa, where are you going?”(Singing, “I’m going to the store!”) I sing now in the shower, and I swear to you the acoustics in my shower make me sound like Whitney Houston! So, I do have a dream, and it’s to sing!!! (Erica Cocoa Gentry)
The poem “Success” starts with “Here I sit with my belly full / And he who might have been my brother walks hungry in the rain.” Immediately I get the sense that he has a feeling of guilt, maybe from a recent success. He feels like he is well off, but someone he once called his brother is starving and maybe still in the same position. This poem sounds like someone who maybe started with nothing, has it all now, and doesn’t want to share. He talks about a woman he loved having to sell her soul (body) for money while he is well off.

My own opinion is that this person feels like he doesn’t owe anybody anything, even someone that was his brother or lover. He is reaping all the benefits himself and isn’t planning on sharing. He notices people still struggling around him, but he still eats and is successful. He no longer is going to be there for the one he once loved. Success is powerful, but the poem suggests he’s forgotten where he came from and the ones he struggled with. (Breonna Hawkins)

Through his poem “Success,” Langston Hughes exposes both the negative and positive consequences of being successful. He explains how hard it feels to see someone walking hungry while he is a successful person with a belly full. Hughes uses this imagery to show the inequality of wealth in our society today. Also, he continues by pointing out that some women have to sell their bodies because they are hungry. In the third stanza, he means that success allows him to have an easy life. To conclude the poem, Hughes uses a metaphor comparing success to a beefsteak with onions on it that he eats alone. The beefsteak shows the greed of being successful.

Some will say success is when someone attains popularity or profit. I have a completely different view on who to call a successful person. After analyzing Hughes’s “Success,” I come to the conclusion that being successful is not being greedy or showing off your wealth. It is being able to help others in need because now you can afford everything and beyond. Also, when you become successful, you don’t have to be close-minded. You have a responsibility toward others that are living on the street corners without any roof over their heads. You have a responsibility toward orphans who sometimes go by for days without food, clothes, or clean water. Often, people will say, “I work very hard to become successful so I don’t owe anything to anybody.” Even if that is true, you owe it to yourself to do the right thing. It won’t hurt if you can share your extra food with someone who has gone hungry for two days. To be truly successful, be a hero to those who need help getting up. (Hezouwe Walada)
I think “Still Here” is trying to describe how a person can get scared by the hits life has for him or her. All signs of hope can be far apart from each other. The hopes they see in the future can feel far away and can add to the exhaustion. When the author says “snow has frizzed me, sun has baked me,” I take it that the snow symbolizes problems in his personal life which have made him not able to think right. Then the sun can symbolize work. Work has exhausted him and adds to the stress. So when the snow and sun join forces, they can make him not be able to have joy in life.

This poem fits me well because of current events in my life. The arrival of a new baby added more work at home. Then kids getting sick added even more work. Ha ha! Right now as I am sitting here writing about this, it makes me laugh. I guess it could be worse. I honestly was thinking of quitting Odyssey just because the idea of doing homework and reading books made me feel like not coming back. Homework adds more to my full plate. Then I thought about how much fun I had the first semester, and the joy of coming to class came back again. So as the poem’s last phrase says, “I’m still here.”

In “Still Here,” Langston Hughes describes a person who has been treated poorly. When he mentions that “snow has frizzed me and sun has baked me,” I can only imagine a person who is exhausted and wants to give up. As he continues to write about how they tried to stop him from laughing and loving, he is saying someone is trying to steal his joy and turn him into a bitter person.

The reason I chose this poem to analyze was simply because I feel this is something people experience every day. We all have days of feeling like the world is against us. Even though we might feel the urge to give up, we continue to push forward. As we try to elevate ourselves, sometimes the people around us can be negative, constantly trying to discourage us because they would rather see us suffer than win. (Galeca McCain)

“Still Here” refers to slaves or people of color and how they were treated, not just in the fields but in their daily lives. They were mistreated, lied to, abused, and beaten, pushed to the extreme conditions of the weather not only by performing their jobs but also by their living conditions.

No matter where we are or where we go, there will always be people who will try to put us down. There is always someone who will try to ruin our day with his or her bitterness. There will be people trying to make us angry because they don’t like to see us happy. My take-away from this poem is that we all can have a bad day that can make us angry and bitter. If we add to that a rainy, snow, windy, super cold or hot day, it can make us very miserable. However, it is up to us to find the courage, plant our feet in the ground, choose to be happy, and say “I’m still here and nothing will scare me away or put me down.” (J. Luis Peréz-Olguín)
“Still Here” spoke to me. It means when you go through the worst and make it through, it makes you strong. No matter what obstacles get in the way, don’t give up. You can decide what happens in life and choose to fight back. All these bad things may have tried to take over my attitude or my daily life, but I made it. It’s up to us to take a bad situation and make it something good.

I’ve been through what I thought was the worst experience in life, like one thing after another. I was ready to throw in the towel. So when I say this poem spoke to me, it really did. Reading gave me reassurance that I’m not alone. I keep fighting these seemingly impossible battles, and I’m still here. Sometimes it seems like things get worse before they are better. I am glad to say I’ve made it out of every situation I thought I couldn’t, and I’m stronger now. (Cheyenne Pete)

This describes all the hardship, the racism, the suffering black people had to adapt to in the South. No matter how good they were, they always got mistreated. The slaves in the South had things much worse than those in the North. Down South, slaves would go up north to escape the harsher mistreatment in the South.

What I got out of the poem is a lot of history with fewer words used. Sad to say, things unfortunately are still the same down south compared to up north. In 2019, racism is still very heavy in the south. I notice people from the north moving down south nowadays, though. Me personally, I don’t want to move down there because of the racism, but I hear it’s cheaper to start a business there. (Candace Howard)

The South

The lazy, laughing South
With blood on its mouth
The sunny-faced South, . . .
The sky, the sun, the stars,
The magnolia-scented South.
Beautiful, like a woman,
Seductive as a dark-eyed whore,
Passionate, cruel,
Honey-lipped, syphilitic —
That is the South.

And I, who am black, would love her
But she spits in my face.
And I, who am black,
Would give her many rare gifts
But she turns her back upon me

So now I seek the North —
The cold-faced North,
For she, they say,
Is a kinder mistress
And in her house my children
May escape the spell of the South.
As I analyze “The Negro Mother,” it means a lot to me about things I learned about my ancestors born in Africa. It paints a picture in my head of a Negro mother stolen from her family’s land 300 years ago. When I took African-American Studies in Chicago when I was 19 years old, I read about all of the pain and suffering she had to go through as she was beaten and mistreated. I also thought about what I read last semester in Odyssey about Frederick Douglass and slavery. No matter how tough the Negro mother had it and no matter how many tears she shed, she remained a strong black woman who shared stories with her children to pass on to future generations.

“The Negro Mother” reflects my own personal life of stories I was told by my maternal grandmother, Clemmie Brooks, who was born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1910. I remember when I was just ten years old, . . . she told me she moved from Mississippi because of seeing family members beaten and having to pick cotton. Although she had never been to Africa, she experienced being dehumanized in the deepest South. . . . I’ll never forget all the spirituals she would sing to me and all the times she took me to church with her. From her, I’ve gotten an intimate relationship with God. . . . (Joyce Johnson)

“The Negro Mother” refers to the trials and tribulations the black woman had to endure as a slave. In this poem, Hughes uses a lot of concrete words to describe the things the Negro Mother has seen in her lifetime.

I can take away a sense of strength. This poem speaks to me because as black women especially, we go through so much and know how to make something out of nothing. It makes me feel that I should always look at the bigger picture and know my sacrifices will pay off, if not for me then maybe for someone in the future. (Queeneice Creamer)

“The Negro Mother” is a story of a slave mother with dreams of being free. Though she may never make it, her hope remains that her children will.

In my own life, I identify with feelings of despair over the things I didn’t get in life or the things that I haven’t accomplished, but my prayer and delight is in seeing my children go places I never dreamed of and do things I have only imagined. This is fine with me because I get to ride the wave of the rainbow and experience the proud achievements of my seeds. (Martina Mitchell)
“The Negro Mother” starts by stating the unforgettable journey of children of Africa or the life of a slave. She is glad to achieve part of her dream by speaking to the colored children and the world. The images Hughes uses are connected to nature and motherhood.

My personal take-away from “The Negro Mother” is the taste of both experiences—freedom and being trapped—but keeping alive the dream of freedom for all colored children. (Ricardo Marroquin Santos)

God to Hungry Child

Hungry child,

I didn’t make this world for you.
You didn’t buy any stock in my railroad.
You didn’t invest in my corporation.
Where are your shares in standard oil?
I made the world for the rich
And the will-be-rich
And the have-always-been-rich.
Not for you.

In “God to Hungry Child,” Langston Hughes is being sarcastic because the title of the poem doesn’t match the poem itself. We think God is the compassionate one, but in this poem God is money and finds no value in people who don’t have any. Langston Hughes is criticizing our society and how it embraces and values money over anything else. The “God” image is not who we imagine.

My personal feeling is about how he said “I made the world for the rich.” In other words, the rich stay richer and the poor stay poorer. Money is still the root of all evil. Even in this day and time, his words remain true. People still idolize money today. In our world today, it’s about who has the money and the power. This is not what I believe in, though. (Erica Cocoa Gentry)

Merry-go-Round

Where is the Jim Crow section
On this merry-go-round,
Mister, cause I want to ride?
Down South where I come from
White and colored
Can’t sit side by side.
Down South on the train
There’s a Jim Crow car.
On the bus we’re put in the back—
But there ain’t no back
To a merry-go-round!
Where’s the horse
For a kid that’s black?

Reading this poem took me back to the days of slavery [or segregation]. It was saying that the little black boy was from the South, where he wasn’t used to sitting with white people. He was at the carnival where there was a merry-go-round, and he has no other choice but to sit with white kids because there weren’t back seats.

We are still in slavery, just done in different ways. We are still experiencing black/white situations. I still don’t go to certain places and still don’t feel wanted or welcomed. (Rana Potter)
“My People” means he’s proud of his people, where he comes from, as well as the color of his skin. “The night is beautiful, so the faces of my people” refers to his roots and black is beautiful. His people are beautiful. The poem is short and to the point, with word choices making the poem more meaningful. Sometimes you can be just as powerful using only a few words.

People are of all shades—dark, light, etc. He refers to nature and its beauty and compares that to his people. I really liked this poem and thought it was funny it was one of those we could choose to write about because when we originally got the Langston Hughes book, I was looking it over and actually came across “My People.” It spoke to me so much I was going to ask to read it on graduation day! To me, this poem speaks volumes!! (La’cee Webster)

In the poem “Dreams,” Langston Hughes writes that losing sight of your dreams can cause life to be as morbid as a broken-winged bird who can’t fly. Langston Hughes repeats the phrase “hold fast to dreams” to emphasize the value of having dreams. He also rhymes the second and last line in both stanzas (die/fly, go/snow) to allow the poem to flow naturally.

This poem spoke to me because I feel like a life without an encouraging dream could be as cold as a barren field filled with snow. Working without having a goal at the end, working without trying to save your money to allow yourself to do something you’ve always wanted to do, working to work, and giving up on your personal dreams just to live is like flapping your wings without going anywhere. I feel like Langston Hughes explained it perfectly in those eight lines. (James Horton Jr.)

“Dreams” is very short but portrays a big message: to hold onto your dreams. This poem relates the importance of dreams to having a fulfilled life. Without a dream, life is a “barren field, frozen with snow.” Personally, I love the message this poem portrays. I couldn’t agree more that it is important to dream and dream big. However, I believe that dreams should be more goal-oriented so you’re more likely to follow through. (Zataiya Gober)

In “Dreams,” Langston Hughes talks about the importance of dreaming. It is necessary to hold onto dreams in life because, without them, what do we really have to live for? With no goals or sense of ambition, we are simply alive but not living.

For me personally, I agree. While I’ve had my own issues with losing sight of my dreams, I always understood I’d have to go back to them. I was born with a destiny to fulfill. There is no greater joy than being alive and wanting something out of life. (Kayasia Blake)
“Hold fast to dreams”: the first line is very direct and advises the value and importance of dreams. . . . By losing dreams like a “broken-winged bird that cannot fly,” it means that life is damaged without dreams. The only way to elevate oneself to a higher and more adventurous life is through dreams. When people lose dreams, life loses meaning and potential.

I can see myself in this poem. I had always dreamed of coming to the United States, and I did! Ever since I became a citizen of the U.S., I wanted to have a real job or a profession where I can pay it forward to my refugee community in India. I held on to my dreams no matter what. I am now two semesters away from becoming a Registered Nurse. My dream never ends. I cherish my dream of getting a master’s degree in nursing and finding potential and meaning in life.

(Yangchen Lhamo)

Langston Hughes is talking about living your life and not allowing anything to get in your way—stress, sorrow, or anything else. You only get one life, so you have to live like it’s your last—cherish it, grasp it, claim it. If it needs work and change for the better, then work on it.

I relate to this poem. I feel this poem is talking about your day by day life and what you go through—the challenges, the ups and downs, the good, the bad, the ugly, the in-between, the trials, the pros and cons, and all of your emotions, thoughts, and feelings. I relate to “Dreams” because I have many. Some I’m doing now because I always wanted to work with children and families. I always wanted a chance to get my foot in the door to attending the UW-Madison, and I received that opportunity now. Another dream I have is to be my own boss and have my own program supporting children and families. I would also like to move somewhere warm within the next year once I’m done with my next program.

(Carmon Caire)

“Dreams” depicts how . . . life is a journey, a rough journey that requires careful planning and execution of plans. Dreams can be achieved despite challenges.

Dreams are like flowers, which must be watered with hard work, perseverance, consistency, and effort. Dreams are always hooked on chains of heavy anchors stuck at the bottom of the sea. The dreamer must break all barriers for dreams to come true. In a nutshell, dreams can be achieved through hard work and staying steadfast in one’s focus to adequately address goals and objectives.

(Abdourahman Sallah)

My dreams can’t be blocked! Dream fearlessly, and soar. Potential is a waste without ambition. Ambition is a waste without dreams. Dreams are a waste without desire. I desire to dream. My ambitions push my potential to the limits. Just as one goal is accomplished, the winds will rise and keep me blowing.

(Monica Mims)
I did not like missing class on March 13, but my birthday gift from my social worker was reservations for us to hear classical music played at the Overture Center. My Odyssey Director, Emily Auerbach, put me on assignment for the Oracle to review the performance. The “Final Forte” consisted of four young artists presenting their final round in the 2019 Bolz Young Artist Competition. The performance was broadcast by Wisconsin Public Television, so there were cameras all over the auditorium.

There was a warm-up from 6:15-7 PM, with the men and women playing violin, cello, piano, flute, piccolo, tuba, trumpet, organ, guitar, oboe, trombone, bassoon, clarinet, percussion, saxophone, and horn. The concert began on time at 7 PM.

This classical music to me is very soothing, relaxing, and peaceful. I closed my eyes and listened. It took me away to another planet, like Venus or Mars.

The four young adults did their solo pieces. The young people’s ages ranged from 15 to 17 years old. One young 15-year-old male played a piano. One young 16-year-old female played a cello. One young 16-year-old female played a flute. The last young female, age 17, played a violin. The ushers and security guards were very kind and very nice to me. They escorted me to my seat. When the concert was over, they escorted me to my cab to take me home.

I really enjoyed the entire evening at the Overture. I did some investigating and was told by the ticket office that if my classmates want to attend a Madison Symphony concert, there will be an event on April 11 to take advantage of (call 257-3734 to make a reservation). You can call for a FREE open rehearsal to hear music played by Mozart, Strauss, Ravel, and Debussy. I’ve also heard music played by Leonard Bernstein and Beethoven.

During the second half while the judges deliberated on the winner from the four young artists, music by Tchaikovsky was played. The conductor of the Madison Symphony Orchestra, Mr. John DeMain, got a standing ovation. He is a Grammy and Tony Award winner. The winner of the young artist competition turned out to be the female who played the cello.

If you like and enjoy all music as I do, take advantage and call the Madison Symphony office. I love R&B, Blues, Jazz, Country, Gospel, Reggae, as well as Classical. Classical music is a tradition passed on to me from my parents, which led to me passing it on to my children and grandchildren. Music is something we all can pass on to our future generations.
Songs of Ourselves

Song of Carmon
I am Carmon Latrice Caire. Smart, sweet, loving, an educator, daughter, aunt, sister, godmother, nurturer, a true romantic, outgoing, well-loved, a great cook, a loyal dedicated friend, a supporter, an advocate for young mothers, a writer, a teacher for 21 years.

Song of Juan Carlos
I am Juan Carlos. When I moved to the country of the American dream My name changed to One. For many years I was One. Till I turned 28 years old and I was back to being called Juan Carlos. In 2010 I felt the joy of becoming a dad. Now I am the proud father of four. For them I will keep strong so then they’ll continue my name.

Song of James
I am James. Son of James. Grandson of James. Grew up with a ‘lil attached to my name. Born in Chicago. Raised in Madison. Father was a poet. He passed down his powerful pen. Now I write the soundtrack to my life over again and again.

Song of Monica
I am a woman of many faces hated for all the light I give destined to be strong, not a product of my environment.

Daydreams are broken from words of enlightenment and harsh words to break us down to ruin my entirety.

Song of Abdourahman
I am a son of a great scholar A scholar from Fouta Toro Descendant of Hal Puraal A son who’s known for his hard work A true believer and a worshipper of all time

Song of Quishanta
I am the third child and next to the baby of my parents’ children. I’m not a very social person, quiet to get to know you, and like to stay to myself. I really have no friends and honestly like to keep it like that. It keeps out a lot of drama. I was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois, the best city of them all. I have the best eight-year-old daughter, talented, gifted, and amazing. Her name is Blessing Jean Genenia Norris.
**Song of Diamond**
I am from life.
I am a go-getter
Mommy to a baby girl
Granddaughter of a vet
Daughter of the strongest man above
I am from Extended Stay
I am from “Where are we going to sleep tonight?”
I am from “We just have to do better.”
I am from “I need this overtime.”
I am from “You have been approved.”
“You got a raise.”
“You’ve been accepted.”
I am free.

**Song of Savannah Rose**
I am Savannah.
Just as my name, I am long and dried out.
I am naturally a nurturer and love to care for others.
The work I do is back-breaking, stressful, and tiring.
I am a CNA, blessed with a gift to fill others with joy.
My heart is warm and soft, and my skin is rough and cold,
I also am Rose, and expect the same when I get old.

**Song of Luis**
I am an explorer
who isn’t afraid to seek out new places and new cultures
who was afraid of the uncertainty of the new beginnings,
but excited to remove the veil
to have a closer and more personal look at the new faces.
I am an explorer who is following in his ancestors’ footsteps,
an explorer whose journey has not reached its destiny,
an explorer who still has things to do and places to be.

**Song of Breonna**
I am Breonna,
Dark like Hershey’s kisses
Smooth like black coffee in the morning
Soft spoken like a child on the first day of school
Born in Chicago but Arkansas is where I call home. Never had a handout and couldn’t really care less about having “clout.” Work is where you can find me until I climb my way up the success tree but for now I’m just living my best life the only way I know how and that’s being true to me.

**Song of Sandra**
I am Sandra
a woman of obligation
from the field to the factory
being surrounded by smells of labor
now having grown to love with my hands and provide to a greater cause showing my enthusiasm in all I do
from the interpretation of language to artistic styles in my work.

**Song of Alice**
My name is Alice.
But the name I love most is Mommy.
I am the daughter of two very hard-working parents.
I am a sister and an aunt.
I am a traveler and lover of new experiences and adventures.
I am the palm trees down in Texas yet also the below-freezing temperatures here in Wisconsin.
I am a helping hand and a contagious smile.
I am me.
Song of La’cee
I am evolving
a daughter of a hardworking man and woman
descendants of the Powhatan tribe and Africa
I am from sacred land
My skin brown like peanut butter
I am strength
I am of the indigenous people
I am my people

Song of Candace
I am a mother of six
Facing many hard challenges
But too strong to quit.
I am a child of the Most High God
I am that light shining through the fog
I am that voice waiting to be heard
Sing out of the tribe of Judah
I will not be deterred.

Song of Yangchen
I am Tibetan
born in India.
A refugee camp Gulledhala
is my home,
a home where I gazed at cows,
walked in bare feet
did farming,
loved friends and families.
I speak Tibetan “Tashi Dele!”
I speak Hindi “Namaste”
I speak English “Hello”
I have ‘chinky’ eyes and curly hair.
Buddhism is my way of life.
Nursing is Buddhism to me.

Song of Ricardo
I am a fortunate worker
Hired to work in the United States
Happy to work and provide for my family
I am a fortunate worker in the midst of great workers.

Song of Cheyenne
I am Cheyenne.
One of many educated students in Odyssey.
The aunt of three free-spirited nieces
and two sweet-as-pie nephews.
A daughter of two head-strong parents.
The sister of nine unique and kind-hearted brothers
and two independent and courageous sisters.
I am from each side of Madison, Wisconsin.
A blessed role model and leader for many people.

Song of Erica
I am Erica, better known as Cocoa
Not loco, just finding my mojo
Seen so many faces, been to many places,
Like Birmingham, where it’s hot and humid,
And Chicago, where the hawk will get you,
Jackson, Tennessee, where I finally exhaled.
Walked here and there, a little bit of everywhere,
Dropped fries, sold dental plans,
Took your loved ones riding on a medical van.
Talked to my mom and grandma in Pig Latin
So no one around us could understand
Listened and danced to the music on American Bandstand.
Sang loud and proud in my aunt’s Baptist Church
Or walked in the morning with the Jehovah’s Witnesses
While hearing the birds chirp.
I am me. Take me as me. Loud, large, and lovely.

Song of Queeneice
I am Queeneice,
mother of a bright child,
hailing from the deep South.
I am a daughter, sister, granddaughter,
seeing my true potential blossom.
I am capable of anything I put my mind to.
I am me.
**Song of Martina**
I am Martina
Loud and spiritual
Daughter of a 16 year old
People said I was the milkman’s baby
Descendant of Chicago’s south side
Serving cocktails and a smile 😊
Skin described as “vanilla”
Living in the full understanding
and manifestation of the Blessing

**Song of Hezouwe**
I am a dreamer
A hard working son
A son who dreams about the impossible
Impossible, a word my ancestors never used
I am a busy man
A busy man who cares for other people
A busy man with two religions in the family
But I am a dreamer
Dreaming I will one day achieve the
impossible.

**Song of Tchallassi**
I am Tchallassi
A little girl from my family tree,
So kind and pretty in every way.
They told me with sweetness I was love.
My father’s young age put me in glory.
His wish rises, family and friends come over
To celebrate the newborn girl.
He was proud and shining with love.
The little girl brought them light and hope.

**Song of Muhammad**
I am Muhammad Abdullah,
Descendant of human currency, African slaves, share
croppers,
cotton pickers, city dwellers, and hustlers;
Son, brother, cousin, father of nine, former husband
times five, uncle,
grandfather, great-grandfather, father figure, counselor,
confidante,
Identity seeker, ikmam, Talib-ul-ilm e.g. student of
knowledge,
Hopeless romantic, lover of music, and chef.
When I grow up, I want to be a role model to inspire
others
to pursue education as long as they can see, feel, speak,
walk,
read, write, hear, and remain curious.

**Song of Mother Joyce**
I am a bird
Flying all over the USA and the world.
My ancestors are Native Indian from New Orleans,
Louisiana
Also descendants of Ghana and South Africa.
I am a beautiful African-American woman,
A vet from the old school, Chicago, Illinois,
South Side, Yeah yeah,
I am blessed by my LORD and savior, a survivor,
I nearly died eleven times due to health issues,
Yet I’m still standing, courageous and bold,
Like the song by R. Kelly, “I believe I can fly.”
I believe I can soar, shining light through that open door.
Oh, yeah. Spread my wings and fly away. Fly, fly, fly...
But, as a human being, my feet eventually will
touch the ground and walk on.
Song of Ebony
I am Ebony
A bright girl born with a twinkle in her eye that her mother was afraid of,
the daughter of a man who never wanted me,
the granddaughter of a fighter,
descendant of the Irish, Jamaicans, Native Americans, and slaves.
I am a go-getter, I just ain’t no punk.
Nobody can tell me nothing when It’s time for me to speak.
I am teachable.
I am kind.
I am brown-skinned.
I am Ebony.
And I’m OK with that.

Song of Rana
I am Rana,
a woman of great expectations,
a mother of two beautiful daughters.
I am Creole, a woman from New Orleans.
I am a very family-oriented woman,
a woman who believes in humanity.
I am a strong black woman.

Song of Galeca
I am Galeca,
Daughter of an ambitionist,
Mother of two angels, one in heaven and one on earth.
I am from a family of struggle,
Using our hardships as an opportunity for growth.
I am an escapist, sometimes living with a fairytale,
Not wanting to deal with reality.
I am goal-oriented, with aspirations to be happy.

Song of NatuRa
I am NatuRa,
granddaughter of Marcella, a woman I miss so much!
I am daughter of Rita, a broken small relationship,
sister to Ravi (RIP), sister to Abiola,
mother to Marcella ShaCarri, Christopher Mason, and Jhidna Nicole,
a woman in need of healing so that I may share with the world what I believe I have in me!

Song of Kayasia
I am Kayasia,
A daughter of a mother who beat the statistics,
A daughter of a father who didn’t get the chance to.
I am a descendant of the South,
The deep color of my skin carries the love of the Mississippi sun.
I am from many places,
As my people were taken from their true homes,
Slowly but surely,
Rebuilding our own sense of happiness and peace.

Song of Zataiya
I am Zataiya.
Born and raised in Wisconsin.
I am a daughter, mother, wife, sister, and friend.
I am strong from carrying what feels like the weight of the world on my shoulders.
I am wise because of my experiences, using them to build mountains from boulders.
I climb every obstacle flawlessly
Because a strong black woman raised me.
I am grateful and at peace within.
Unapologetically me, I have been born again.
Every person in my class comes from different walks of life, different struggles, religions, countries, colors, and families. Mix us all together and we are sand. Rocks collected throughout the world are mushed together and broken apart to create a beautiful sensation in between our toes and underneath our feet to guide us through a different, better walk of life.  
(Savannah Rose Perry)

My classmates and I are isolated trees of different species. Odyssey put these trees together to form a thick forest, a forest intertwined, together for life.  
(Abdourahman Sallah)

My Odyssey is a sea. Everyone who wants not to be thirsty, Come to the sea.  
(Hezouwe Walada)

My Odyssey is a diverse family with accents I love hearing each Wednesday receiving hugs and and check-ins and sweet greetings. We will be connected now and forever as we’re in Odyssey together on this journey in life.  
(Carmon Caire)

Odyssey is a potluck of people. All the different cultures, thoughts, and ways come together to give us a delicious new experience. For some, it’s the only time being different is celebrated. We come to the table bearing ourselves, the beautiful buffet of diversity.  
(Kayasia Blake)

Odyssey is a potluck. We are foods that come from all different backgrounds, but somehow we all end up on the same plate together.  
(Breonna Hawkins)

My Odyssey is a melting pot. We all come together making the perfect fondue. Just the right amount of different cheeses Makes the perfect blend.  
(Queneice Creamer)

Brown, yellow, beige, and red, To keep our beliefs fed. . . . Cut up voices Sautéed opinions Simmering together Making an understanding A soup of mixed races and faces Opinions and mental shifting Combined.  
(Ebony Anderson)

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My Odyssey is a song,
my classmates each singing and moving
to their own rhythms.
The different melodies form together
a beautiful song that harmonizes.
In sync like a choir, a body of singers
creates a joyful noise. (La’cee Webster)

My Odyssey is a raffle
Where everybody wins,
No matter their background.

My Odyssey is a platform,
a holy place for the reborn.

My Odyssey is the den of Daniel,
going in feeling deadly,
coming out bravely. (Candace Howard)

Theatrical displays
our stories are intertwined,
an unbreakable masterpiece
Beauty and pain
Heartbreak and triumph
the bond of our self-worth. (Sandra Zintzun)

Our adventures
Different, like night and day
Still we come together
In the nastiest of weather
Slush, snow, does not slow.
On our own ships setting sail looking for home
Destinations on a similar plane
so I don’t feel like I’m going at it alone.
Don’t have to be sewed, stitched, whatever,
our different textiles and patterns pop forever.
(James Horton Jr.)

My Odyssey is a globe.
My Odyssey is also a map.
My classmates in the Odyssey Project
are from other countries and states all over the
U.S.A.
It’s fun and amazing.
I see you all. I can close my eyes
and I see you, I feel you,
every time we get together for class.
Just because we’ll part and graduate,
From May 2019 I will always keep every one of
you
close to my heart and in my daily prayers.
It will never be good-bye.
Just see ya later, alligator,
After a while, crocodile. (Joyce Johnson)

My Odyssey is a puzzle
Representing the middle of my life,
A puzzle made of soft gentle clothes
Washed in fabric softener and soaked in water
all day.
Because of Odyssey, I can wear my clothes
And put the pieces of my puzzle together.
(Rana Carter)
I represent a woman close to a breakthrough.
In many ways, my fear hinders me, but I never fold.
I’m happy and want more from life.
I’m a door that is cracked open,
Waiting to be completely opened.
(NatuRa Warford)

My Odyssey is a journey.
I walked in with my weakness
I spent time looking around
I saw lights, tables, and chairs,
Chalkboards, pictures,
And a warm place of people.
I am now full of wonderland.
(Tchalassi Edoh)

Odyssey is a community
Different colors, values, and passions
Togetherness, happiness, and meaning
Open paths and open minds
Venturing to destinations.
(Yangchen Lhamo)

Odyssey is my quilt.
It links me to different types of journeys as it goes from one person to another.
It takes me on adventures as I travel from one class to the next.
Weaving and stitching languages, backgrounds, ethnicities, classes
to make a beautiful and exciting quilt called My Odyssey. (Quishanta Cary)

Odyssey is a quilt, each one of us a beautiful, unique piece of fabric.
Sewn together as one, we are even better than before.
Each one of us has a story, a past and a future.
We are the creators of our own destiny.
(Zataiya Gober)

Different pieces of fabric, many shapes, textiles and hues needing, wanting purpose and some misused.
Along came a seamstress, she had seen life from a different view,
she gathered the fabric with ideas of what to do.
She headed out on an odyssey to the store to get some tools with ideas in her mind to make something that she never had to sew.
She got a sewing machine and threader and patterns and batting, heavy duty needles and binding, and extra padding.
She worked tirelessly day and night with help from others.
They listened to her carefully as she told them what to do.
She had Kevin, Colleen, and Beth on her crew.
She had a few Emily’s, her mom and dad too.
They worked for months until they got it right.
The result is this Odyssey quilt, not perfect but sewn tight.
(Monica Mims)

Odyssey is a quilt where all become one.
Different beliefs, cultures, music combine to become one.
You will be able to see how skies from the other half of the world line up with the American skies to become one.
(Juan Carlos Abrajan)

My Odyssey is a quilt sewn together causing aching fingers,
Yet still creating a beautiful pattern.
Despite the uneven stitches due to our throbbing hands
Being stuck by needles, we continue to strive for perfection,
Eventually creating a masterpiece.
(Galeca McCain)
### The UW Odyssey Project in the Guise of Roy.G.Biv:
I Can See a Rainbow! Can You?

By Muhammad Abdullah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Red</strong></td>
<td>is the color of love, and love makes the world go round. Odyssey is love of learning in action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Orange</strong></td>
<td>is the color of energy, and all energy in our world comes from the sun. Odyssey draws out the energy within us, especially when we are challenged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yellow</strong></td>
<td>is the color of the sun’s light. The warm rays penetrate and remove the clouds of doubt, which appear when we doubt ourselves. Odyssey removes doubt when alumni appear and share their stories of what Odyssey did for them, then and now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Green</strong></td>
<td>is the color of spring and money. When we take this Odyssey, it puts a spring in our step and increases our earning power. Ain’t no Bovine Scatology: B.S. is Bachelor of Science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blue</strong></td>
<td>is the color of love when absent. Absent is the worst thing you can be in Odyssey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indigo</strong></td>
<td>is the color of curiosity, one of the lifelong seas of learning. Once you are part of Odyssey, it’s for life. Like life, keep coming back, and stay curious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violet</strong></td>
<td>is the color of royalty, not monarchical royalty, but scholarly royalty. Odyssey produces scholars. How do you know who is a scholar? Other scholars say fulan or fulanah is a scholar. Hear that, Kanye?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Addenda:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black</strong></td>
<td>is the absorption of all colors. The Odyssey Project is black because black also represents risk, the unknown, the doubt removed by the Odyssey experience. The blackest moment in time is just before the dawn of light. Odyssey is light.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td>is the color of light, which stands for knowledge and lighting the way ahead to success. A prism separates white light into a group of seven colors—Roy G. Biv—but it isn’t segregation. Odyssey is unity and connection. Odyssey is like a rainbow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Song of the Odyssey Class of 2019
Inspired by Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself”

We are the Odyssey Class of 2019.

We have worked as a janitor, dietary aide, babysitter, Taco Bell server, CNA, lunch lady, McDonald’s fries maker, telemarketer, photographer, library page, Walmart stocker, pizza crust packager, professional model, nanny, Potbelly sandwich maker, costume designer, farm worker, machine operator, shrub pruner, taxi driver, rear view mirror maker, court scribe, busboy, waitress, Klinke Cleaners cashier, peppermint field planter, makeup stylist, Jet Magazine seller, bus driver, and NAACP branch worker.

We hail from Madison, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Chicago, Cleveland, Montgomery, Birmingham, Nashville, Memphis, Washington D.C., St. Paul, Phoenix, Atlanta, Houston, San Antonio, Seattle, Gary, Omaha, the Gambia, Togo, India, and Mexico.

And our ancestors come from Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Virginia, Alabama, Texas, Iowa, Georgia, Minnesota, Illinois, Florida, New Mexico, Michigan, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, Arizona, North Carolina, Nebraska, Nevada, Mississippi, Wisconsin, Tibet, Jamaica, Spain, Ireland, Nigeria, Togo, the Gambia, Senegal, and Mexico.

Speaking Spanish, Swahili, French, Ifé, Ewé, Arabic, Tibetan, Hindi, Kannada, Polish, Sign language, Mandinka, Nahuatl, Fula, Wolof, Kabiyyé, Kotokoli, Moba, Algonquin, German, Pig Latin, Jive, and English,

Worshipping as Baptist, Jehovah’s Witness, Catholic, Muslim, Black American Islam, Qadian, Al-Islaam, Lutheran, Cherokee, Buddhist, Apostolic, Methodist, Bahai, voodoo, and non-denominational.

We call ourselves short, sassy, contented, willing, humorous, flexible, busy, anxious, loud, lovely, funny, logical, soft-spoken, dark-toned, quiet, relaxed, motivated, honest, humane, outspoken, curly-haired, hard-working, imaginative, adaptable, tall, smart, artistic, creative, tired, broke, stressed, determined, helpful, curious, ambitious, brave, calm, faithful, mysterious, panicky, thoughtful, tiny, young, methodical, impulsive, and enthusiastic.

We are the Odyssey Class of 2019.