



ODYSSEY ORACLE

CELEBRATING THE JOURNEY



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CELEBRATING THE JOURNEY

Here are 30 excerpts from the student bios in the graduation program for May 8th!

Emily pushed/pulled me over the finish line. (**Muhammad Abdullah**)

It was a bit stressful with the homework, but every sentence I wrote was worth it.
(**Juan Carlos Abrajan**)

Even through Shakespeare, I made it! (**Ebony Anderson**)

You all made it possible for me to believe again. (**Kayasias Blake**)

I have been blessed to be selected for this wonderful program.
(**Carmon Caire**)

My journey, experience, and adventure will not end; it has just begun. (**Quishanta Cary**)

Before I applied to Odyssey, I was lost. (**Diamond Clay**)

I never thought I would see the day that I would walk across the stage, but here I am with my classmates. (**Queeneice Creamer**)

My design is to show my girls that they can do anything they dream of. (**Tchallassi Edoh**)



This class has been life changing for me.
(**Erica Cocoa Gentry**)

There is an amazing support system at Odyssey. (**Zataiya Gober**)

Learning new words has definitely become my thing. (**Breonna Hawkins**)

Through Odyssey, the light that learning provides shines forward, illuminating my path.
(**James Horton Jr.**)

My kids will be so blessed because of the path Odyssey put me on. (**Candace Howard**)

I was intimidated from the start, but after I met such a diverse group of people, I began to feel relaxed and eager to learn. (**Joyce Johnson**)

I am very happy and feel blessed to have been accepted into this program. (**Yangchen Lhamo**)

I can describe myself as a whole different person now. (**Ricardo Marroquin Santos**)

I truly believe it is my time now. (**Galeca McCain**)

I've never been in an environment where everyone cared so much. (**Monica Mims**)

The positive comments on the top of my homework inspired me to keep writing, and Kevin is delightful and always available for tutoring. (**Martina Mitchell**)

I am feeling positive and grateful to have found that path that I exited many years ago.
(**Luis Pérez-Olgún**)

Coach Marshall, you are a very powerful man, inspiring and changing lives still from afar [because of your car accident]. (**Savannah Rose Perry**)

Anything is possible with the right support, the right attitude, and the courage not to give up!
(**Cheyenne Pete**)

The Odyssey Project has given me the strength to move forward and pursue my education.
(**Rana Potter**)

That phone call [of acceptance into Odyssey] was almost like it was too good to be true or one of those scam things. (**Alice Ramirez**)

I must not forget to thank Char for the wonderful meals . . . and chicken fries.
(**Abdourahman Sallah**)

Through Odyssey, I have learned not to stop dreaming. (**Hezouwe Walada**)

Every time I leave class I am glowing.
(**NatuRa Warford**)

I will never forget Odyssey!
(**La'cee Webster**)

We are forever grateful for the opportunity, friendships, and support from staff for empowering us to find our voices on paper (**Sandra Zintzun**)



EVERYDAY CREATIVITY

Perhaps in Africa over two hundred years ago, there was a mother who painted vivid and daring decorations in oranges and yellows and greens on the walls of her hut; perhaps she sang in a voice like Roberta Flack's sweetly over the compounds of her village; perhaps she wove the most stunning mats or told the most ingenious stories of the village. Perhaps she was herself a poet, though only her daughter's name is on the poems we know. —Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens"

One form of art is how each of my grandmothers and mom make the Mole Poblano. Even though all three of them use the same ingredients, the taste of their Mole is unique. If I were blindfolded and tried all of them, I would be able to identify which one belongs to each one. For example, my mom's Mole seasoning is thicker, sweeter, and spicier. My grandmother's (from my dad's side) mole is more watery and spicy. Finally, my grandmother from my mom's side's mole was more in the middle. It was not too thick and not too watery, and it was sweet and spicy. I could say that their mole is a form of creative art. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**

A couple of people come to mind when thinking about using everyday materials to make art. For one, my mom likes to make jewelry, quilts, and a lot of arts and crafts things. My mom also uses a lot of natural products for everyday use, such as deodorant, soaps, and lotions, and she adds coconut oil and essential oils like tea tree, peppermint, jasmine, and lavender. These products have grown on me, and now I use a lot of these products. I have also had better results with my skin, so I really only like natural products because they are better for you and don't contain a lot of chemicals. Having a creative outlet allows you to express yourself and your ideas with others. And now I use mainly natural products. **(La'cee Webster)**

I don't like to discuss my mother because she was never there. However, my father was very creative. Any time he had to, he'd improvise. If

we didn't have any butter for the bread, he'd make a way. If I didn't have any clean clothes for school, he'd wash something for me in the tub. People call him a handyman, but I just call him creative! **(Savannah Rose Perry)**

I would like to think of myself as somewhat of an artist. I love to paint. Seeing a pile of wood on the street corner gives me inspiration to want to build something, and my kids give me inspiration to want to paint. It is a huge stress reliever for me and takes me to a happy place. I most recently built my own bed frame, and before that I built my boys a farm house bench/coat rack. Painting is definitely a passion of mine. I love painting. It's relaxing and allows me to be in my own world and have a peaceful mind. **(Alice Ramirez)**





My daughter Zamorah loves art. It doesn't matter what it is. Coloring, drawing, painting, building masterpieces out of scraps: she does it all. She loves using cardboard boxes, egg cartons, plastic bottles, or any other miscellaneous items to build or create art.

Although it can be a hassle to contain, I wouldn't trade Zamorah's love for art for anything. I'm happy that she can use her imagination well and create beautiful and meaningful works of art. I can constantly encourage her to do what she loves, and I'm just so happy that she chose art. **(Zataiya Gober)**

I love tattoos. Most people say that tattooing is a form of self-expression. I agree. When I was a teenager, I started with a small tattoo on my knee, with a sewing needle. It fascinated me to be able to draw a word on my body, and it didn't hurt while doing it. That started my love for tattoos. Now, when I'm battling life issues, I go get a tattoo, and it seems to relieve stress that is built up inside of me. Whatever is bottled up is slowly being released through the whirring of the tattoo gun and the needle piercing my skin at a quickened pace. Certain tattoos on my arms have caught the eye of people, and they have expressed their love for my tattoos. **(Erica Cocoa Gentry)**

Late nights with my grandmother were the best! I'd snuggle under her, watch old black and white movies, and in between commercials I'd ask questions. She shared many stories of my ancestors, her childhood and things I could only see as she told them to me. Pictures were so vivid in my head. I envision them now. My grandmother represented strength, beauty, love, and courage! To me she was a goddess! When she passed away, I was blessed with a poem that

flashed over me and left into her obituary. My pride smiled as I filled in the many blanks to her story for it. It was those late night love, learning sessions that gave me an in depth look. **(NatuRa Warford)**

I remember my grandma preparing herself as the Day of the Dead would approach. I believe this was one of her favorite times of the year. She felt closer to those family members who passed away.

She made all of us collect fruits in season such as mangoes, bananas, mandarins, oranges, guavas, etc., and also flowers of different colors and smells. She made mole, rice, and the best chocolate. She also got an opened beer bottle and would say: "My mom will always have a beer here and there, so this is for her." Her mole sauce was always so delicious, full of many spices, chilies, and chocolate which gave it the perfect sweet and not too spicy flavor. She added chicken to the mole sauce and served a plate in memory of her dad. For a couple of days, the house smelled like copal, which is an incense we burned during the day of the dead. Marigold is the flower petals we used to make the way to the table where all the food was. My grandma said, "that is how our family will find their way here."

This art tradition allowed me to be proud of my roots and how we remember those were here before us who lead the way for us to follow. To know we are here is a learning process.

(J. Luis Pérez-Olgún)





My grandmother's garden means a lot to her. When the weather is extremely nice, outside is where she spends her time mostly. She plants watermelon, cucumbers, cabbage, fruits, and many more. Growing up I have noticed that most of the newcomers like my mom and aunt also did the same, and they have always told me that part of being a woman is having a nice, organized, and large garden. Since I have been mostly living in apartments, I haven't been able to start my own garden to follow the tradition, but the moment I move into my house, I am picking out my own space in the backyard that's for ME only. I will do this not only because of the tradition but because that was my grandmother's happy spot, where she got the most peace. Her calming area will help me lots. **(Diamond Clay)**

My friend makes beats and also created music. When I listen to him say his raps without the beat, his songs always have a deep meaning to people who might come from hurt and struggle. A lot of people might think rap is not art, but there are so many different kinds of rappers with different vibes. **(Breonna Hawkins)**

I would say when my mother always cooks either breakfast, lunch, or dinner, it looks like art. She loves to capture pictures of all her home-cooked meals. There are all different colors that pop out on the plates and never an empty space. Her

creativity allowed me to want to learn how to cook and replicate exactly how she makes her meals and serves them. She hardly ever let me help in the kitchen because she was determined to do it her way (lol). Her love for food and passion for cooking and the way it made her feel was beautiful to witness.

When I got a little bit older, I used some of her techniques in the kitchen (and made my own) to create different dishes. I've learned to use different colored foods (greens, carrots, corn, etc.) and create my own art on a plate. Now cooking has become one passion, thanks to my grandmother! **(Cheyenne Pete)**

I use everyday items to do most of my crafts. One day, my daughter walked through the arboretum in Madison; we found long sticks, pinecones, and anything that looked unusual. We created several works of art and gave them as Christmas gifts. I also enjoy sewing and drawing.

When I'm in the moment of creativity, my mind is free and I mentally disconnect from this entire world. One night I got really into my project at my sewing machine. When I finally got thirsty enough to come out of my basement, it was daylight outside. **(Monica Mims)**





I am a poet. I write to music. This poetry I write allows me to express myself in all sorts of ways. I write specifically all my poetry when I'm in elated moods. I write whether I'm feeling sexual or sleepy, happy or feeling the weather. I never write when I'm feeling low or if I had a bad day. The impact it has on others is emotional and allows for them to understand me at that moment in time. I love writing! **(Carmon Caire)**

My grandmother always used materials and circumstances to create art. She also used art and circumstances to mold her granddaughters. She has an education, but being born a black girl to a mother with little education, she had to do more to help her mother. Those traits grew roots under my feet. She taught me how to spot healthy fruits and veggies at the tree farm, how to plant my own garden. She taught me how to maintain a home. In slavery, most high ranking women were house mothers and cooks. I don't know this, but I think the women of my past relations come from these women. We all have that powerful, motherly bone in our bodies, and I am thankful. **(Ebony Anderson)**

When my mother does my daughter's hair, the many different styles she comes up with are so unique. She braided a smiley face in my daughter's hair one time. That got her a lot of great compliments.

My art is my music and my poems. I make music while driving, washing dishes, doing laundry. I make my best songs when it's least expected. Sometimes I have to stop and record myself to remember what I thought of because there's never a pen and paper around me when I think of my best lines. **(Candace Howard)**

My brother's dancing is like something I've never seen before. The way he interprets his feelings into moves are amazing. Watching him dance always brings me to tears because he gives it his all. His limbs moving remind me of a painter creating a masterpiece or a singer writing a song. All of his moves melt into something beautiful. Aaron creates and makes his statement to the world without saying a word. Unapologetically. Dance is who Aaron is. In each performance he gives me a little more courage to go out into the world and do what I love. **(Kayasia Blake)**

My grandmother was a great baker. She would keep busy every morning baking fresh bread to feed her house. Also, she baked cakes, cookies, or sweetmeats and biscuits of any kind. She baked every bit of her sweetness from scratch or left over from food she wouldn't want to throw away. She made so nicely her delicacies from her traditional furnace. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**



A young mind is so full of imagination. Torn between mother and father, he struggles to find his way in a world not yet his own. He navigates his thoughts through creativity, making every object a piece to complete his creation and to express destruction, mindfulness, and love. He shows the vulnerability of his soul in hopes to be consoled and not be pushed away. **(Sandra Zintzun)**

My mother was an activist, a woman activist, who never attracted television coverage, but yet her work goes beyond the boundaries of the provincial region of Central River Region. My mother's name spread like wild fire in a Virginia forest. She was praised by those people who valued her work as an activist, an advocate for the rights of women and children. Despite not being on national television and in major newspapers in the country, she had made herself a name, a name tag in the mind of the people of Central River Region. She is now remembered and mentioned during the International Women's Day Celebration that occurs annually. **(Abdourahman Sallah)**

Whenever my friends and I get together, we usually put on instrumentals. If the vibe is right, we cypher together, all done in the moment, bouncing words and rhymes off each other. I'm not much of a freestyler so I usually get nervous, but the energy my friends radiate when we're in the circle is ecstatic. You might hear a "yeah!" "C'mon!" or a "whoo!" if what you're spitting is fire. You can't help but want to keep going, to keep flowing. This allows us to express everything lying on our brains at the moment. I might have had a bad day at work; I can use that as ammo in my freestyle. My friend may have seen something crazy on the news earlier in the morning, so he slips it in the cypher. Sometimes we might have an extra audience to our cyphers—a friend of ours who doesn't rap but loves the music and culture.

They just give us more energy; it is a fun time. **(James Horton Jr.)**

My grandmother's morning wouldn't begin without making chesses and butter. She hung dry cheese around the kitchen window. You would find yellow, white and brown colors due to the smell from the wood shaving stove. Some cheeses are years old, months, weeks, to days old, hanging on the window like a curtain.

Outside our veranda ceiling we have dry corn of different colors hanging down that were grown in our farm; this showed the hard work.

Hand carpet weaving is my mother's learned craft. She would use carpet on the bed, floor, wall art and place mats. I have my mom's carpet on my chairs. Weaving is her pride. **(Yangchen Lhamo)**





were like a terrible rain and thunderstorm, with the sun burning and shooting out fire rays as my mother lies in her grave. I had to read and describe what it was I wrote and drew. He liked it so much that he had it published in the museum.

I still do that today. However or whatever I feel, I write and draw about it. **(Quishanta Cary)**

I come from generations of soul food cooking. In 1960 I was a ten year old girl in Chicago. My grandmother and her daughter, who was my mother, sold "soul food" dinners every summer in our neighborhood. They told me stories of my great-great grandmother and my great grandmother. They did the same each summer, only they were slaves in Little Rock, Arkansas. I was told it became a family tradition, cooking "soul food."

I can still see the feast prepared on our long dining room table. There was always greens (mustard and spinach collard) and corn bread, candied yams, neck bones, barbeque ribs, strong beans with white potatoes, cat fish, spaghetti with ground beef in tomato and garlic sauce, fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, ham, turkey, dressing and cranberry sauce. The spread looked like a masterpiece. Just because I was involved in Ballet Modeling and modern dance, I never learned. The tradition still goes on as legacy because both of my daughters cook exactly like four generations ago. **(Joyce Johnson)**

When I was going to college right after my mother's death, I was taking an art class. So, my art teacher asked us to write something pertaining to art and describe it in however and anyway we could. I wrote this poem called "The Ripping and Tearing at My Soul and Spirit in The Loss of My Best Friend." After I wrote it, I drew how the ripping and tearing of my soul and spirit

When my dad was alive he always decorated the giant yard at home. He would have his flowers that he planted. He would have his rocks he would keep up with. You would feel like walking through a garden of many flowers and plants. It would make you feel like you were at peace.

I love music. Most of the music that I have expresses my feelings toward all the challenges that I have to overcome in life, and I am still here. It also sometimes expresses my anger toward politicians. In addition, the beats that I make can be joyful. I think my music can impact others too. Also my music can make people cry. . . .

(Hezouwe Walada)

The dairy workers in the state of Wisconsin are mostly undocumented immigrants. Some of them are required to live on the farm. Can Wisconsinites take real pride of once being the number one dairy state, knowing that much of the labor was being done by undocumented immigrants? Our dairy workers make art from what the farm provides, yet they don't get much recognition for their work. The inspiration of my mother to emigrate to the United States is an art to me because of this effort. Maybe people should follow and be inspired. My mother is seen as a criminal. I see her as my savior.

(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)

EIGHT YEARS FROM NOW



In eight years I'll have my master's degree in social work and will have written and published two children's books and a memoir. I'll also be studying writers abroad at that time. My finances will be so stable, and I'll have a little extra. Twice a year I'll send for

my children and grandchildren, and we'll spend time together on one visit and vacation the other. Several times a year I'll be returning to the States. Each time I go back, I'll do different things but always see my children and grandchildren. I'll be doing inspirational and writers seminars. My future looks mighty bright! **(NatuRa Warford)**

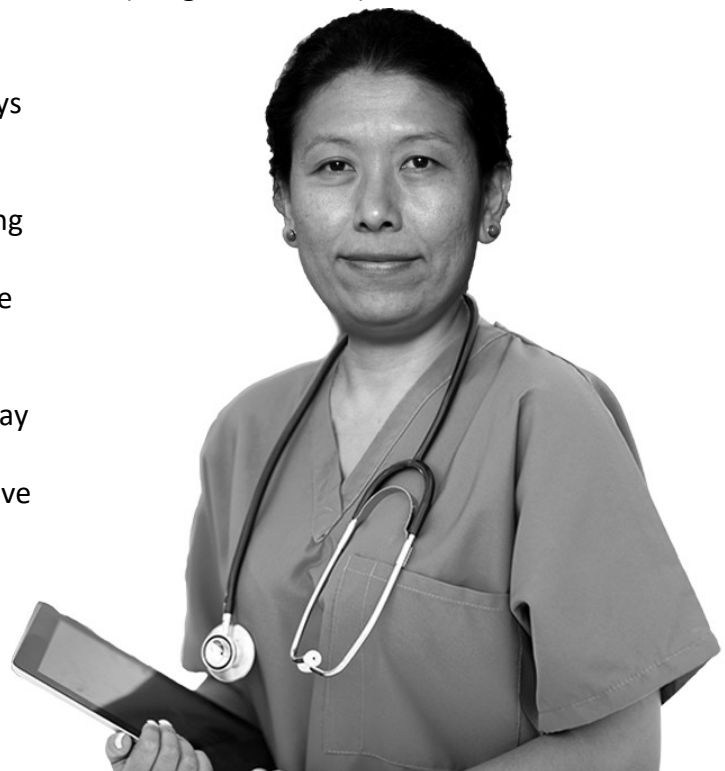
It's 5:30, and my first alarm has gone off. I always hit the snooze with hesitation because every sleeping moment is lost alone time. I start my coffee pot and flick my Bic. Then I enjoy watching the news for 10-15 minutes before I hit the shower. After my shower, I blast rap music while getting dressed for my executive position and planning my day. I get into my all black on black QX60 Infinity truck and finish my blunt on my way to work. When I enter my private office every morning, I take a moment to admire my executive MBA hanging on the wall. Then it's business as usual **(Monica Mims)**

I am a beautiful lady all of the time, and I will still be cute in eight years. I am a mother of four sweet girls, brightening my day as usual. I

will be for sure the lady I always dreamed of—the lady with a degree and, believe it or not, a career. I will be up every morning as always, rushing to help my girls be ready for their day. I will be the perfect professional. They will see me and take me as their model, their spirit, their love.

(Tchallassi Edoh)

In eight years, I will be a humble Registered Nurse working at the UW Hospital in the cardiac unit, while working toward my master's degree. My youngest son will be in middle school, and my oldest son will be working toward a PhD in Education Policy and Analysis. My second son will be in undergraduate college. I am hoping to be a grandmother by that time. I didn't get to spend as much time as I wanted to with my own sons due to my life circumstances—two jobs, school, and trying to pull out of my hardships. Therefore, I am really looking forward to raising my grandchildren without worrying about money, bills, homework, etc. **(Yangchen Lhamo)**



I wake up to birds chirping and the sun peeking through my white, almost see-through drapes. I lift up and slide my freshly manicured feet into my furry slippers and let out a huge stretch, time to start my daily routine. After working under a real estate broker, I decided two years ago to branch off on my own. After furthering my education with real estate, now I own my own house and am married. Throughout my career, I have helped hundreds of people of color purchase homes. I love my job, and the racial gap is finally almost coming to an end. I feel good about myself and happy I can provide for my family. **(Breonna Hawkins)**



I wake up and rise from my bed in my one-bedroom apartment. My loyal companion, Jaw Breaker, my dog, greets me as I get ready for work at the library. I drive my old but well-kept car to work. My associates make fun of me for driving such an old car in 2027, but I pay them no mind. I work as a librarian at the South Madison Library. I have been in that position for two years after I got my library science degree. After work I head home, get a quick workout in, take a shower, and unwind with some gaming. A lot of new systems have come out, but I stick with the old reliable. My PS2 has too many classics for me to throw it away. I take a break to make dinner. Now, I'm no five-star chef, but I can feed myself without getting sick. I game for a bit longer, then get ready for bed so I can begin my day again. **(James Horton Jr.)**

If I could describe myself eight years from now, I can see myself not starting a family. I hope to finish my career of choice, something practical that allows me to be involved in the community. I would be wiser and inspiring others. **(Ricardo Marroquin)**

I wake up in the comfort of my king-sized bed, nestled in between Egyptian cotton sheets. The light of the sun peeks through the blinds that are drawn shut. It is quiet, but I am not alone. The house is still asleep. I slowly settle down to the kitchen and start a pot of coffee. Its dark and rich aroma consumes the atmosphere. I love the smell of fresh coffee. It's a Monday but I am not in a hurry. I don't have to call in to work because I'm the boss. I finally got the opportunity to leave a table that was no longer serving what I needed and bought my own. **(Zataiya Gober)**

Eight years from now I see myself losing all my hair from pulling it because of my teenage kids J haha. I can see myself working as a home remodeling man and probably visiting Mexico. I can see myself in Mexico eating all that good food that I have been craving for years. In eight years I can see myself not having many debts. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**



accomplished every goal that I stressed over eight years prior. I will be healthy, visiting current students, and giving them hope that one day they can be successful like me!

(Galeca McCain)

My life is like a list, so it's best I write it that way. I see myself being very busy and organized.

4am: shower, get clothes out for work, do my make up

6am: cook breakfast, wake the kids up for school

7am: wake the kids up for school again

7:30am: feed the kids and get them out the door and off to work

*my companion is doing music around the world

8am: working

4pm: pick the kids up from school

5pm: take the kids to clubs, help them with homework and cook

6pm: have dinner and clean

7pm: homework

8pm: put kids to bed

9pm: send out orders for hair business

10pm: read and study.

My goals are to graduate with an RN, get married, have more kids, go on vacations, and have more personal economic growth

(Ebony Anderson)

I have been able to keep a healthier life. My perseverance in eating healthy and exercising has given me the body I want. I feel happy because I also have found a beautiful wife who understands me and wants the same lifestyle. We have a beautiful baby who means the world to us. Also, my hard work and dedication made me finish getting my bachelor's, and I landed a job with a great company. There my bilingual skills have help me become a great asset for the company. I feel fortunate and blessed that finally I have become a U.S. citizen, and my wife and I own a house. I also own a couple of rental properties, which give me extra income. My job is very flexible, so it has given me the opportunity to work on the side. I also have the chance to travel for pleasure. **(J. Luis Pérez-Olgún)**

Thirty-five years young, I'll finally be free, free from financial hardships, free from inbound call centers, free from changing my daughter's Pampers because she is now nine years of age. At 35 years young, I will be waking up in a house paid for by me; no longer will I be the tenant but instead the homeowner. I will be preparing myself for another day in the office while yelling at Zoelle, "Wake up! It's time for school." At 35 years young, I will be happy. I will have

A typical day for me is coming home from doing lifesaving surgery all day and pulling up in a nice car to a house I own. My son is doing homework and greets me with a beautiful smile. I take a shower, relax, and get ready to make dinner for my family. I spend the rest of the night helping my son get ready for school the next day and catching up with my husband before going to sleep. I wake up every morning feeling blessed and thankful that I pursued my dreams. My bad days are minimal compared to the past. I no longer suffer from anxiety and can enjoy my family and life. **(Queeneice Creamer)**

As a young energetic man, I was determined to face challenges and conquer all odds to achieve my desire goal. In eight years, I want be called Dr. Sallah, a doctor who has meritoriously undergone all that it takes to be conferred the title Dr. I want to be a doctor who will make a difference by having a positive impact on the lives of the poor and disadvantaged. **(Abdourahman Sallah)**

One of the places I go deeper in my thoughts is in the bathroom. When I sit on the toilet I begin to have a different sort of thought. One of them is what will I be like in eight years, and what that day will be like.

In eight years, I see myself wearing a white coat practicing medicine. I will have two more kids and I will be happy. That day I will have my own clinic and I will be traveling the world, going places that I have never seen before. I will have enough money to take care of my family, and I will be able to create a foundation to help orphans and widows. I cannot wait to see the future me. May all my wishes come true.

(Hezouwe Walada)



Waking up at 5am, I think to myself, "Is this even worth it?" I hit the snooze button until it's 5:30, knowing that I have to be into work by 6:30. Now, here I am rushing because I hit the snooze again and it's 5:45. I wake my man up to go warm the car for me (and to also get him up because I got up J). I repeat telling myself "it's going to be a good day" as I am driving to work listening to second date update, getting a few laughs in before I walk through the doors to reality. After a long 10 hours, I am doing 80 on a 60 to my happy place, of course after grabbing my little monster. **(Diamond Clay)**

Busy hustle and bustle, awake at 4:45am Monday-Friday. Work 6am- 5pm Monday- Friday. Home at 5:30, cook and eat, and then sleeping by 9 pm. I'll take care of mom, clean, do some reading, and take a bath. We will do laundry on Sundays if not Saturdays. I will attend the Bahai Center or activity. I grocery shop Saturday night or Sunday evening. Maybe I'll go on a movie night if able or to a family event. I'll go for an evening walk, take a shower, and go to bed. **(Carmon Caire)**

Eight years from now I'll be 36 years old with children who are 20, 19, 16, two that are 12, and a 10-year-old. I'm hoping to be five years into law enforcement by then, living in a five-bedroom house with my four youngest. I'm getting calls from my oldest two about help with college homework and daily living things! I'm hoping to be married by then, but if not I'm fine with that too. A typical day for me in eight years would be getting my kids up for school every morning, making them breakfast before they head off to school, and going to the police department. My oldest two will help get my younger ones from school because I won't be off work by then. My oldest will watch my youngest until I come home. Once I'm home we discuss our day while I'm cooking dinner, and then they're getting ready for the next school day. **(Candace Howard)**

I'd be waking up and getting my twins and myself ready for school. We'd start our day with self praises and a breakfast of grits and oranges. After my husband drops my kids off, I'd head to the high school. My office is filled with pictures of my kids, past and present, and all the schools they've gotten into. My brown eyes will shine with pride as I listen to the progress that one of my students has made in her academic career. After stocking her up with many scholarship information packets, I finish up paperwork and head out to start an early weekend. My husband has plans to take the family to the beach for a short vacation. He greets me at the door with a kiss and a smile. As I blush, he reminds me of the things he loves about me. I'm smart, beautiful, and blessed. I pass my degree in the hallway and smile. Every time I look at it, it reminds me of all the things I went through to get it. The best is yet to come. **(Kayasia Blake)**



On March 27, 2027, I will be 55 years-old. I will be bodacious, young, and living somewhere with no winters whatsoever. My daughter, Blessing J.G. Norris, will be 17 years old, talented and gifted, young, away at a University, either at Harvard or Spellman. We have a five-bedroom and five- bathroom house and live near all amenities. I've already gotten my BA, MA, and PhD in psychology and early childhood special education. I got my license and certificate in cosmetology (minus the hair), my own spa and old school, in-home candy store (spa business is manicure, pedicure, facials and massages). Our city and state we live in is warm and hot. Blessing attended school on different scholarships. She has already written her story and is working on finishing it up; she will turn it into a movie. She has a children's art book: How to Draw with Your Imagination. She has steady straight As and Bs plus is on the dean's list. She has all this and with no kids, holding down two jobs, and working on her second major and career. **(Quishanta Cary)**

I am a very busy woman and a mother of two busy girls. At times, I am a very depressed woman that has to keep it together for my girls. I get sad a lot with thinking of my parents, who both are deceased. I try to look on the bright side and let the good memories take over, but sometimes it's hard. A typical day for me is very hectic. I am up and at it from 5:00 AM to 5:00 PM or 6:00 PM at least five days a week, having to make sure everything is together. I have to start early and work late. I also have two girls that keep me busy all week. A break would be a great day for me. I envision myself still working hard taking care of my two girls. Something I will always do is be there for my girls no matter how old they are. I have received my diploma in medical assistance and am currently working on my degree to

become a registered nurse, taking care of people who are in need of help and wanting to live and fight to live. **(Erannia Potter)**

As I envision myself eight years from now, I am smiling from ear to ear. I see myself sitting on my recliner in my living room of my beautiful condominium. I fulfilled my dreams, visions, and goals that I had on my mind. Ever since November of 2000 when I arrived in Dallas, Texas after my husband and I left Chicago, Illinois, on my wall is a plaque with my name on it as a graduate with my Bachelor's degree in Humanities. I'm reading the book that I wrote, which was just published six months ago. As I relax, I'm thinking it is good that I am taking my two-week vacation from work. I can finally cross this off my bucket list: a cruise. My oldest daughter, Joy Marie, and my son-in-law will arrive in an hour from Garland, Texas to take me with them to Jamaica. After getting my divorce from an abusive marriage, I am very happy, blessed, and grateful that God my Lord and Savior sent me a wonderful godly man. Never beyond my wildest dreams would I guess at age 77 that I would be getting married on June 10th, 2027. **(Joyce Johnson)**



A typical day for me eight years from now would be a bright sunny day that I'm waking up to. I don't have an alarm set because I am my own boss. I make my own schedule. I am not only self-employed but a well-established woman with my MBA working on my entrepreneurship adventure. However, I will also still be working as a student loan counselor/advisor helping people and offering options people may not have thought they had, as well as juggling my work life with my personal life at home, I'm married with three beautiful, smart children living about 20 minutes outside the city. I have land where my skincare shop is in the heart of downtown. My mother doesn't stay far away, living in the guest cottage helping me with my business and enjoying her retired days traveling the world when possible. **(La'cee Webster)**

Well, at the ripe age of 77, I still rise in the morning, eat my customary cup of Collectivo's Black and Tan Organic coffee, lemon blueberry muffin, and banana or organic flax waffles with blueberries, strawberries, and banana. Though retired, I will still be engaged in some measure of volunteer work or part-time employment, likely at a public library or recreational facility in some capacity. I also hope to spend winters away from the cold visiting one of my nine children and 16 grandchildren in Arlington, Virginia, Tempe, Arizona, Milwaukee (away from summers in Arizona), or Denver, Colorado. I could also see myself as part of a community of like-minded people teaching adults or young people religion, or as a peer support specialist or smoking cessation Facilitator. In any case, as long as I'm healthy and able, I will do as the young folks say, "Git' In Where You Fit In." **(Muhammad Abdullah)**

Eight years from now I'll be riding down the freeway, bumping "Look at me now" in my 2027 Jeep Wrangler. I will be anxiously going over the speed limit to get to work on time to start my

day. I will be pulling long hour shifts, four days a week, making over 80K a year, and spoiling my one and only baby, my golden lab, Roscoe. I will be dating a sweet, compassionate gentleman I had met over time. My family will get my help taking care of them if need be. This is the time of my life I will be most successful. I will travel to the tropical islands and stay for weeks at a time, soaking up the heat while cringing from the sun. My jaw will start to be impaired from all the smiling and joy my life brings. **(Cheyenne Pete)**

Cock-a-doodle-doo! Cock-a-doodle-doo!! That's the sound of the rooster early in the morning outside my window. I am finally back down South where the early morning rooster wakes me up! I smell the fresh brew of coffee that was made by someone in the house. I get out of bed and walk to the sun porch as the already-hot sun is out beaming its bright hot rays through the porch screen. This is life! I won enough money in the lottery that I could open up my Big Mama's House Center, and I bought acres of land where I have my house built from the ground up. I have my family and friends surrounding me. Life is good! **(Erica Cocoa Gentry)**

In eight years I'll be 29 years old, going on 30, and if life goes as planned, I see me loving and working hard for the career I chose, having a family that is just starting, working on my upcoming business, and searching to buy my first house. A vivid day most likely consists of me getting up at 5 AM and getting my kids ready for daycare, feeding them, then sending them on their way. I would get ready for my day with a cup of coffee and a shot of whiskey to keep me on point, kissing my loved one before heading out to another stressful day of hard work, feeling I work too hard to not have what I want. I am living life the best I can without exploding! **(Savannah Rose Perry)**

Enjoying a healthy breakfast after an hour workout at the gym, I gather my thoughts for the day and take them with me to the Empowerment Youth Center, a center I established along with a group of individuals looking to connect with kids to help build on their diverse talents and skills. Now that my youngest has graduated from High School and is preparing for college, I have more time to dedicate to kids in our community.

I gather my belongings and head to work. As I walk into the building, I am greeted by staff with high fives and hellos. We all gather for our daily huddle to promote mindfulness and share creative ideas that will engage kids. As we conclude, we make our way to our places throughout the facility to attend to the kids.

I head to my office to plan events, manage financials, business duties, and to evaluate improvements needed based off a survey we provided to the kids. Already offering meditation, yoga, social and emotional guidance, art, physical recreation, music, theatre, technology, and tutoring for school course work, we asked what other things they would like to see. Our goal is to provide kids an outlet to minimize the risk of substance abuse, as over the years there has been an increase throughout local and surrounding communities. I attend events, performances, and challenges throughout the day to observe and provide support to staff.

I witness my son Juan brighten the kids' lives with music, providing lessons and therapy during difficult times. My son Zinedine applies his technology know-how,

setting up activities and experiments while earning money to save up for college expenses. I bring my family into our mission!

We make our way home to a small, quaint, bright cabin we built as a family, our refuge from the stresses of the day. We discuss the situations that opened our eyes. After Zinedine's usual request to fire up the grill, I head out to provide massages to area locals who are less fortunate and not able to afford therapy. Returning home to relax with a book and the smells and sounds of the outdoors, I think of my next trip around the world with my boys.

Looking back at the struggles I faced as a teen, adult, and a single mother, I can't believe they have brought me to today. Despite the doubts, laughs, and put-downs from others who didn't believe in my goals, I made it! All my sacrifices brought me to realizing my dreams. I am blessed with opportunities, accomplished children, and a second home that will provide for our community for years to come. **(Sandra Zintzun)**



FINDING OUR VOICES



Imagine you drive to a park to walk your dog, you have your two-year-old daughter with you, and it's about 30 degrees out. You get pulled over by a cop supposedly because you ran a red light, which you know was

yellow. Despite this fact, you don't want to argue with the cop because you are supposed to keep silent. You are undocumented and therefore have no driver's license. This happened to a friend of mine about three weeks ago. He called me to tell me about the incident and how he felt. First of all, I asked him to tell me the truth, if he had indeed run a red light. He said he did not and felt it was racial profiling. He had to exit his car while his daughter was in the back seat and people were staring at them, and he had to walk home in the cold with his almost two-year-old daughter while feeling judged and degraded.

We cannot deny the fact that we have undocumented people living among us. There are families that have been here for many years. The community can benefit from allowing IDs and driver's licenses for immigrants. Allowing undocumented people to have access to state IDs will enhance public safety, make communities safer, and benefit the economy. Having individuals take driver's tests will give them the proper understanding of traffic regulations and road rules. Also, being properly registered will allow law enforcement to identify drivers and have access to accurate traffic records. I believe that having everyone register with a state ID can give us accurate information, whether by name or facial recognition. Lastly, it will generate revenue from the driver's license application fee. There are an estimated 85,500 undocumented

people who can help boost the economy by setting up a state ID. Also, it can increase the automobile insurance and automobile sales business. **(J. Luis Pérez Olguín)**



If you don't believe that education is the key to unlocking your fullest potential, then you are sadly mistaken. Most of us desire success but do not possess the willingness to do what it takes to reach that point. I

will be the first to admit that school has not always been enjoyable for me. It is not because I am incapable of doing the work or lack comprehension, but mainly because school never seemed interesting to me. That was until I started taking college courses, like Odyssey. It wasn't until then that my hunger for learning grew. It wasn't until then that I realized that school was not only interesting but also fun! It wasn't until then that I realized that educating yourself is a lifelong journey. You never stop learning because there is always something new to learn.

Before college, I was uncertain about my future and doubtful of obtaining success, especially after many years of struggling to make ends meet, working full time and sometimes overtime at dead-end jobs. I knew it was time to make

changes if I ever wanted a chance at the life I know I deserve. I was put on this earth to go to school to finish my degree. I understand fully now that having higher education puts you in a higher position to reach success.

(Zataiya Gober)





Often when a mother gives birth, she struggles with preparing herself for maternity leave because she only has 6-12 weeks of bonding time with her child and sometimes unpaid leave, which can cause her to stress even

more. Not only does she have to prepare for this new life, but while away from the job financially she must be ready to budget each source of income.

Here in Madison, WI and most states in America, paid maternity leave is only offered to mothers if they are eligible for FMLA. If the mother is not qualified for this leave, she is forced to use the remaining of her PTO, which in most cases does not amount to a full check. Due to the lack of income, the mother is forced to end bonding time with her child and return to work.

I find this unlawful, inconsiderate, and selfish, considering some countries offer eighteen weeks of paid maternity leave, which gives the mother a chance to have more bonding time with their child and be financially stable. Although there are some government agencies that help, they also make it hard to qualify.

As a victim of stolen bonding time with my daughter, I feel no mother should have to feel pressures going back to work. I feel no mother should be denied paid maternity leave because she is not eligible for family medical leave, causing her to use the last of her paid time off just to make ends meet.

Bringing life into the world can be stressful enough, as the female body changes due to pregnancy. As her life and schedule changes, the last thing a mother should be concerned about is unpaid maternity leave or ending bonding time with a child to go back to work. We as a country should make things much more convenient and comfortable for a mother. After all, she will be raising our future. **(Galeca McCain)**



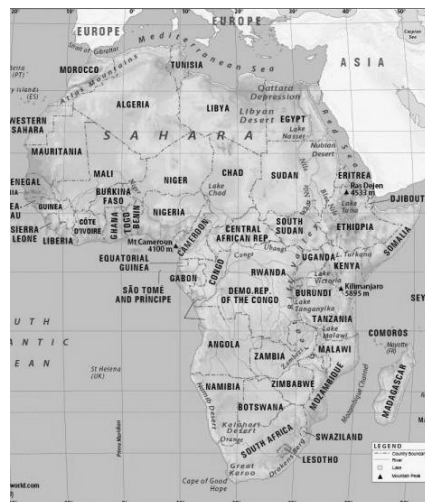
I may be from Africa, I may speak English with an accent, but that does not mean that I am not an American.

Many Americans think that not being able to speak English correctly means that a person is dumb. Personally, I find that to be a false statement. Language has nothing to do with intelligence. For example, when I arrived in the US back in 2009, I could speak six languages, but none of them were English. Often, when I tried to use gestures to communicate, people ignored me, laughed at me, and did not try to understand me. It made me feel like I was nothing, and I started to question my intelligence. Deep down I knew that I was not dumb because when I went to the library, I was able to tutor other students in my strongest subject, math. The thing that hurts me the most is even though my English has improved through classes I took at college, I still speak with an accent. When people hear me they automatically dismiss what I have to say and do not even try to understand me. That makes me feel like an outsider, not an American.

Part of the problem is also the way the media portrays Africa as a continent of uneducated people. Even the President of the United States refers to African countries as "s**tholes." When people hear those kinds of lies about Africa, they treat us like nothing. I think people should be more open-minded about who is an American. Pay

attention to those who have an accent and embrace their culture with respect and dignity. This is the true meaning of being an American.

(Hezouwe Walada)





School Safety and Beyond:

"Mama, this teacher grabbed me by my neck."

"Mama, that boy hit me in the head with his computer and I told the teacher but she didn't do anything."

"Mama, my teacher's racist; she talks to all the black kids with an attitude but talks sweet to the white ones."

"We get these complaints about this teacher a lot, but I don't think she means any harm."

"That boy is known for bullying, and we're going to talk to him."

What do you do when your child is being bullied in school and is not respected by the teachers or school staff? What do you do when not only your child but you report it to the higher authority at the school, but you have yet to see change?

School staff are quick to call the parent when their child is having a bad day, but they're very hesitant when acting against bullies. Kids around America commit suicide because bullying is being ignored. This is my daughter's first year in middle school, and she's been getting bullied by a boy since the first week of school, on top of feeling like some of her instructors are racist.

How does one succeed in school having to deal with things of that matter? What should a parent do when she feels she constantly has to address the same issues with the same people?

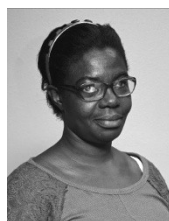
Parents, we have to pay more attention to how our children are behaving outside of the home. It starts at home; respect should be prioritized. I tell my kids every morning, "School is a place



for learning; everything else can wait until after school."

School instructors, your job is to teach our children and protect them while in your care. If I'm feeling my child isn't safe in school and I decide to take her out, CPS will be at my door. I want to feel comfortable sending my children to school and not having to worry they will call me saying someone has harmed them.

It should be state law that there are two teachers to a classroom that has over ten children, kindergarten through eighth grade. Maybe then teachers wouldn't get so frustrated and feel the need to put their hands on a student. **(Candace Howard)**



Health Care in the United States

We, the people of the biggest Nation in the world,
The United States of America,
Listen, you government, mayors,
senators, and President,
We need health care for all.

The emergencies come, and we need to get back our healthcare.

This should be completely free, no sales business and no political issue.
(Tchallassi Edoh)



The polar ice caps are melting, and we're all in trouble! The polar ice caps have melted faster in the last 20 years than in the last 10,000. A comprehensive satellite study confirms that the melting ice caps are raising sea levels at an accelerating rate. Scientists that assess the planet's health see indisputable evidence that Earth has been getting warmer, in some cases rapidly.

The number of polar bears in the world is declining. They are facing extinction because their homes are melting, and they are starving to death; walruses, seals, whales and sea birds are negatively affected in many ways.

Human activity is the number one cause of global warming. In particular, the burning of fossil fuels and the resulting buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has influenced this warming trend. These actions are weakening our ozone layer, allowing rays from the sun to warm the surface of our planet at a rapid pace.

Some people express skepticism about the subject as a whole, but the arguments are from the stakeholders of burning fossil fuels. They have something to lose if society cuts back on our use of fossil fuels, oil, gas, coal mining/burning, and

the making of some man-made materials. CEOs and owners of these companies are financially threatened by the prospect of people using renewable and sustainable energies to preserve our world.

The human race as a whole needs to change the way that we think about and consume fossil fuels. We need to build more sustainable energy structures and use the solar energy that's melting our ice caps. **(Monica Mims)**



I am Carmon Latrice Caire. I suffer from regular depression and seasonal depression. It may seem as though I am always happy and fine, but that is not the case. My outgoing bubbly personality and bright smile hides an inner pain deep within me at such a young age.

My grandfather was from Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. He taught me how to ride the bus at the age of five. We went around town, and I felt as if I was on top of the world. We had an amazing time. His dedication captured my heart. He had a heart of gold. He was tall, had beautiful skin, silky hair, amazing brown eyes, a rich happy smile, and a heart full of love. Losing him caused a lot of emotional damage, and I couldn't complete school for the rest of the year. I had to repeat the fourth grade, but it was worth it because I needed to heal over time. I am not 100%. I am 40% as of now. I lost my grandmother, his wife, in 2008.

I would like to help people who also suffer from depression. I would like to talk about ways to cope with living with depression on a daily basis and let them know they are not alone. I am not afraid to share my story about my number one struggle. I would like to start a group for others to come and share when they feel comfortable. It will be confidential as always. This group would be for Odyssey staff and students. **(Carmon Caire)**



There has been a change happening in early childhood education that we need to consider.

I have three children. The oldest two had naps in kindergarten, but six years later when my youngest entered school, I found naps had been removed. Right away I noticed a difference in my child's behavior and temperament. She was so overtired she was beside herself! I even had to move her bedtime up an hour just so she could recuperate!

When I inquired of the school as to why this was done, their reply was "to maximize learning hours." It seems they think four-year olds should be able to sit through eight hours without down time. I would like to petition and advocate to bring naps back to kindergarten because it would be much healthier for children and they would be able to retain more information if better rested, especially after lunch. It is proven that too much stimuli in young children can affect growth development and their ability to focus and concentrate. It is also noted that well-rested children have lower episodes of acting out.

Instead of focusing strictly on learning, we should facilitate a fun and relaxing environment where the development of social and cognitive skills is the priority. There will be plenty of time for our four-year olds to "maximize learning hours" in the future.
(Martina Mitchell)



In late 2016, my mother found herself fined with hundreds of dollars for just driving to work. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin, but finding a job in this area can

be difficult for her because of her immigration status. So she would find jobs out in the country. For example, she worked in New Glarus in a production center for a while, until one day she was

pulled over because of a traffic stop. She didn't do anything wrong, but she was breaking the law. My mother does not have a driver's license or car insurance. She got fined, and within the same week she got pulled over again by the same officer because her car was recognized.

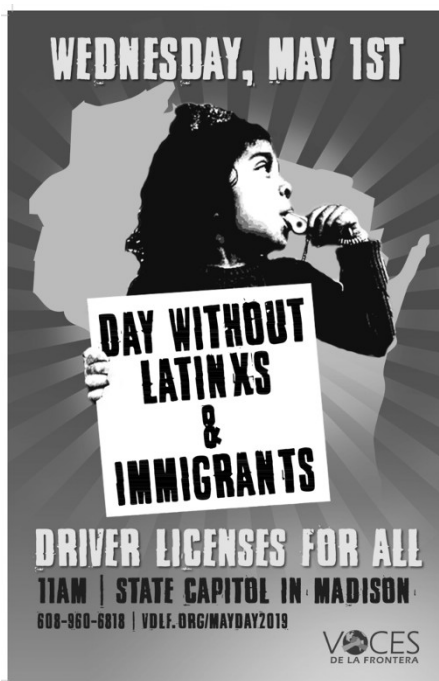
I can see this being a state issue that affects the lack of dairy workers. Most of the dairy workers in our state are undocumented immigrants, and they are fearful of driving out in the country to occupy those jobs. The lack of employees in the dairy industry affects production.

There are already some states issuing driver's licenses or some identification card to undocumented immigrants, and our state used to be one of them. This change of policy has directly affected our immigrant community with unnecessary tickets, fines, loss of employment, and overall fear. It also affects all of us indirectly.

Segregation in our state has made us take a wrong turn for the worst. Can this affect the lack of dairy workers in Wisconsin because they migrate to other states that do issue a driver's license? Martin Luther King Jr. said, "How can you advocate

breaking some laws and obeying others?"

Now undocumented immigrants pay into the common pot to receive what the system provides. Why should we sell our dreams to a system that doesn't provide equal opportunities? Therefore, people have organized a rally that will take place in downtown Madison on May 1st to show a day without immigrants.
(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)





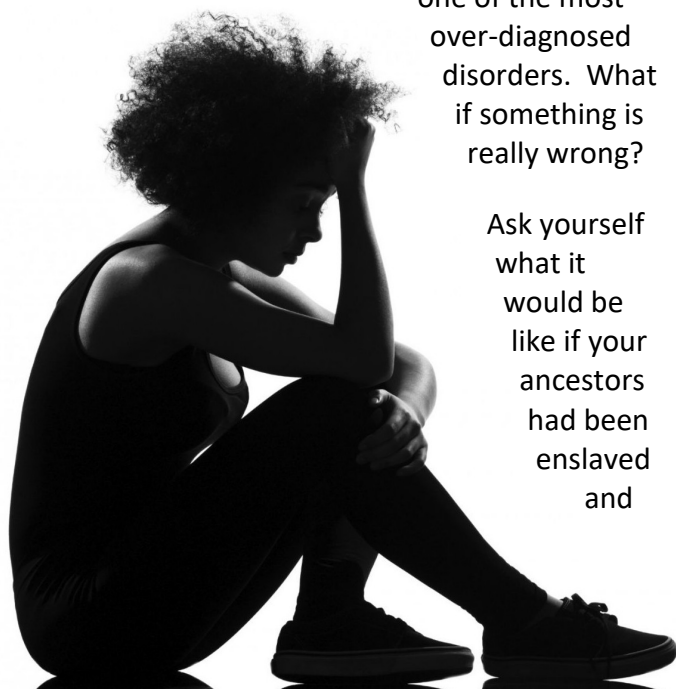
Depression is real, and it can be very overwhelming. Depression can make you feel like you are the only person on earth. Depression is like standing on top of a building, and there is no one but you. The loneliness that you feel is so strong. You feel like you are alone, and no one is around to keep you safe. Depression is real. **(Erannia Potter)**



It's Okay Not to Be Okay. How many of us have found ways to cope with stress and depression without turning to drugs? How many of us have found others to blame, or feel that sad or angry feeling you have more often than not is normal? As African Americans, we've had and continue to have more than our fair share of trials and tribulations. Our daily life is a struggle just due to the skin we were born in. So, what do we do? Ignore it when your daughter suddenly starts to act out or blame the teacher for your son's bad behavior and poor grades. I see so many of my people ignore the fact that their mental health should be a priority and just say, "Oh, he crazy, he doesn't have any sense" or they are always trying to diagnose a black child with ADHD,

one of the most over-diagnosed disorders. What if something is really wrong?

Ask yourself what it would be like if your ancestors had been enslaved and



murdered by the thousands, to this day you are still dealing with racism, and you see videos on a daily basis of people who look just like you being killed by police, black women disappearing at an alarming rate, no real opportunities given, having to work harder than your white peers just to get half of what they have, and facing abuse, molestation, and rape. Yes, these things happen in the black community, although it hardly gets talked about. The black community needs to be an advocate for their mental health. If we don't, this vicious cycle will continue, and we will pass it to our children and so forth. It's okay to say you're not okay and seek help. It doesn't mean you're trying to be "white." It means you realize it's a problem and you need help, and you've finally realized your mental health is just as important as your physical health. So next time you hear one of your black brothers or sisters say, "Oh he all right, ain't nothing wrong with him," just remember how we can as black people be "not okay." **(Queeniece Creamer)**



Battling Yourself: There are many topics that are brought to people's attention, such as racism, homelessness, and poverty, but one thing that many people face that is not being recognized is depression!

This is an everyday feeling for many people, including myself. This is something that needs attention (crying for nothing, not being able to get out of bed, isolating from the outside, sometimes even the inside, our loved ones). Depression is a feeling that can bring you down and separate you from what is going on in the real world, causing you to ignore the important things in your own life.

Depression is a very, very black storm—so black, it blocks your thoughts. It blocks you from finding the sun that you may have never known existed, blocking you from being you. Depression is the inner barrier that "protects" you from the outer fresh air. It is real. Stay woke. **(Diamond Clay)**



One leg at a time and one arm at a time, I start every day the same way. Before I

shimmy into my overpriced fabrics and material things, I do a look in the mirror. I often wonder if people fight to accept me as much as I fight to be accepted. I'm not that different. Ask one out of every two people you meet.

These folds of flesh have been through it all with me and, honestly, why rush to get rid of the only thing that held me down when nobody else did? It took me too long to embrace myself. Life did go on after the first time my doctor said I was overweight. At 12 when I got my first pair of jeans from Lane Bryant, I learned through tears that I can't change anything about myself that I don't love first.

Just before you type the next joke on Instagram, or share a meme, take a look in the mirror, remind yourself that we all have some imperfections. Mine don't make me any less human. Fat doesn't make me undesirable or unlovable. I won the fight with my mirror, and I want to win in society's eyes, too. I'm not too big for bright colors; my brown skin told me so. I'm not too wide for stripes; my favorite dress told me so. I'm the perfect fit for me, though. I am the perfect size for acceptance. **(Kayasia Blake)**



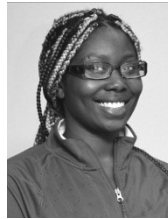
"I'm nobody, who are you? Are you nobody too?" -Emily Dickinson

As people leave prison, they often feel like they have been thrown away from society, like nobodies. This feeling of alienation often has deep roots and leads to mental health issues and drug abuse, a kind of self-medication to deal with trauma and stress that



often leads to jail time. The judges and prosecutors are not concerned about why people commit the crimes; they are only concerned about the crimes they committed. While incarcerated, they are tackling the issues that got them in jail, plus the same mentality of things that got them there. So, the cycle repeats.

My solution would be to have rehabilitation centers in every community or neighborhood, to help with therapy, job training, financial education, and a job to put them back into society. People with mental health issues often don't know that they have mental issues, so therapy should be a conditional requirement upon their release. **(Erica Cocoa Gentry)**



"America is the land of the second chance- and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to be better life." - George W. Bush

We need housing and jobs for individuals with a criminal background. Too often when I am in my community, I see "fair housing opportunity" or "nondiscriminatory jobs" and background checks, and I can't help but to think, for whom? I have been around many individuals with a background and some who are even still on probation/parole who have difficulties getting higher paying jobs or even getting approved for any sort of housing, whether that's from public housing or market rate housing. So where are these people who are returning to the community from prison or jail going to go? What kind of jobs will accept them with the background, and how can we change the reentry process into the community for these individuals?

Of course, nobody wants to have problem tenants, but if we are not creating training and good tenant examples for everyone newly out of the system,

this will raise crime rates. Individuals who do not have family or friends to fall back on for help may feel like they must do certain things in order to just survive while on the streets for money to eat and a place to sleep. If a landlord is willing to accept someone with a background, more than likely this will be in a neighborhood with poor conditions and more than often what you would consider a “slum lord.” This then causes a revolving door effect. We cannot continue to imprison human beings, throw them back where they left off in society, and expect change. I believe unless an individual is an immediate danger to the community, there should not be prejudicial screening for those individuals. I know this can be big leap in faith, but everyone makes mistakes. Too many individuals are suffering from their past mistakes, which prevents them from showing improvement and the ability to elevate themselves. This subject is not often spoken on and gets brushed under the rug without a care for these individuals who honestly want to change. I will end with a quote for everyone to ponder.

“They should be treated as a special needs population and all efforts should be made to connect them to housing that provides in-house support services such as emotional and financial counseling, job training and placement, and legal services. Many may choose to avoid this, seeing it as an extension of the prison, but those who embrace the opportunity would have much to gain.” —Martin Luther King, Jr.
(Breonna Hawkins)



In the United States of America, the term “immigration reform” is used to describe a process of revising or maintaining immigration policies. The immigration and nationality act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, abolished the system of national-origin quotas. By equaling immigration from non-European nations, it changed the ethnic makeup of the United States.

For the past two years, the Trump administration has sought to shift the nation's immigration system away from its original emphasis on family reunification and employment based migration towards a point-based system that targeted certain countries and religions. Today about 40 million lawful immigrants live and work in the US. In addition, about one million unauthorized immigrants have temporary permission to live and work in the country, through the deferred action for childhood arrivals and Temporary Protected Status Programs. (Abdourahman Sallah)



Establishing affordable dental clinics in our community requires funding, and we must express the need and advocate to close the gap in the crisis of quality care. Working for a local non-profit that offers mobile dentistry at schools, in-clinic general dentistry, and oral surgery, I see the need as hundreds of patients are put on wait lists for services they so desperately look for.

Local county agencies, public health, school nurses, and shelters aid to find resources to care but fall short of options. Colleges with hygiene programs provide affordable preventative and diagnostic care such as exams, x-rays, and cleanings. Area universities with dental programs and private practices may offer free or discounted services such as root canals, periodontal services, cosmetic, and oral surgery but with limited availability to help all those in need.

The lack of funding and high cost of services hinders facilities to set up in abundance. Support through donations, state, private grants, charities, foundations, and individual gifts are needed to supply convenient dental care to the underserved and surrounding areas in Wisconsin. . . . Lobbying, educating voters on candidates and current interests during elections can promote change. Now is the time to use our voice for the public good. (Sandra Zintzun)



A wall won't stop drugs from coming into the United States and most definitely won't stop people from giving up on their dreams. Donald Trump said, "I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great, great wall on our southern border and I'll have Mexico pay for that wall." The question is: why build a new wall to stop bad stuff coming in from the south, when the wall is only going to be a small obstacle? There is already a wall between the United States and México, and that current wall hasn't stopped drugs from coming into the U.S. Don't be so naive and think that this famous wall that Trump wants to build will suddenly stop drug trafficking. Drug cartels have the money and enough intelligence to find ways to bring drugs to the U.S.-- either by land, sky, or sea and through bribes to U.S. government officials. If people in the United States didn't demand them, there wouldn't be any illegal drugs coming in. Not only would the United States benefit from this but also other countries.

If you think immigrants are a bad thing for the United States, just remember this country was made from immigrants. You might say my ancestors came here legally. Who says? The people that came here and killed millions of indigenous Americans to take over their land? Then I would say that your ancestors are the bad people here, but that is not the point I want to make. My point is that undocumented immigrants come into the United States because of the same reasons your ancestors did--the United States is the Land of the Free, where you can work hard and live the American Dream. This is what my fellow undocumented immigrants

come here for, to have freedom, to live the American Dream, and to not fear for their lives every single day. You think illegal immigrants are all bad people, but we are not. We are good, hard-working people that want to advance in life. We can't do it in our own country because there is no space or opportunities for lower class people. Because we don't have the same opportunities and equality in our countries, we can't come here legally.

Even Donald Trump understands this desire to pursue our happiness and dreams. On May 24, 2004, speaking at Wagner College in New York, he said "Never ever give up. Don't give up. Don't allow it to happen. If there is a concrete wall in front of you, go through it, go over it, go around it, but get to the other side of that wall." This is what immigrants are doing--they are not giving up, and if they have to, they will go through, over or around that wall.

As you know, Mexico is not going to pay for a wall that it doesn't need. At the end, the citizens of this country will end up paying, and taxes are going to increase. Why should the "American" people pay for a new wall? I mean, after the two examples I gave you, do you really think a wall will solve this issue with illegal drugs and illegal entry to the United States? I'll leave you with these couple of questions, and I would like you to deeply think if a new wall between the United States and Mexico is the best solution.

(Juan Carlos Abrajan)





Do you know you are exposed to carcinogens every day? Carcinogens are substances and exposures that lead to cancer. Many people worry about being exposed to substances in their environment that may cause cancer

today. However, there are many factors to consider, such as how you are exposed.

Carcinogens are in a lot of products we use every day, whether it's tobacco products or cosmetics, from the types of soaps and lotions we use to the UV rays lights and foods we consume. After doing research, coming across various readings and videos, as well as my family making me more aware of these harmful chemicals, I've come to the decision that I only want to use natural products and slowly change my eating habits as well. I am working on a healthier lifestyle for myself and those around me.

My plan is to open a skin care business, but it will be so much more than that. I will offer a variety of natural products and services. As far as the products go, I will offer lotions for the body and face, facial masks and scrubs, body scrubs, foot scrubs and creams, and many other options for great looking skin and hydration. For services, I will offer facials and waxes and educate my customers on why my products are the best for them, including offering insight on some ingredients that the products are made with as well as why.

For instance, lemon, which is cheap and easy to access, has so many great uses. For one, lemon is rich in vitamin C and citric acid. One great use for lemon is to help brighten your skin overtime. Also, the antibacterial and antifungal properties help with acne treatment. My mother frequently uses many natural remedies, one being lemon juice and baking soda mixed together, making a paste to get stains out of clothing. This can also be used

if you are looking to brighten your teeth as well.

Furthermore, some of the products that I use are essential oils, coconut oils, lemon, vinegar, baking soda, and apple cider vinegar, which is good for weight loss and detox. Coconut oil is a good moisturizer and has uses for baking and sautéing. Vinegar and baking soda are great for cleaning and brightening whites. I use essential oils in the humidifier for the house and for headaches or to relieve stress. I also use essential oils such as lavender, eucalyptus, peppermint, tea tree oil, rosemary, and lemon grass. Each has its own specialties as to what it is best used for. There are so many foods and products that are used for medical purposes that are chemical free.

A lot of this information I didn't even know until I began doing research of my own and looking at the ingredients in the products I used every day. As I began researching and talking to family, I wish that I had done this research so much earlier and changed my lifestyle sooner. Just because something smells and looks good doesn't mean it is good for you. I currently have this app called "think dirty," and you can look up products and see how "dirty" they are as far as all the bad chemicals they contain in them. Let me tell you, you'd be surprised at all of the products you thought were "good" based on advertisement. Each item is color coded, with red being strong evidence of long-term impact and green being no known evidence of any harmful ingredients. I use this all the time. It's very helpful and makes you more aware of what you are buying and things to look out for. I want to share my knowledge and help create a healthy lifestyle for all. I am continuing to do my research and find more

and better ways I can keep myself healthy every day. Therefore, when everything for business falls into place, that will be a better way for me to promote great natural products for a healthy, long-lasting lifestyle for everyone. **(La'cee Webster)**





The world we live in is materially developed and economically prosperous. However, the basic human needs and purposes for happiness and inner values are in denial. Instead of fulfilling the needs, we chase after

wants. Wants, in turn, lead to emotional distress when not met. As a parent, I reflect on my own childhood where I lived with shared values of oneness at home and in the community at large. Oneness brought a whole village together. The values taught us to manage feelings and emotions and showed us the importance of interdependency between each other and a sense of concern for others. When I compare my childhood to witnessing my children's world, it appears that their world is shaped around a sense of competition one way or the other. Technologies shift children's values away from our values and the values of family. . . . We raise them without teaching them how to manage their feelings and emotions.

The lifestyle we live in includes routines at home and work, and not truly paying attention to what we are doing. Our minds wander elsewhere, and we end up eating without tasting, looking without seeing, and talking without knowing what we are saying. . . . Children live in a world of being told what to do at home and at school without conscious awareness of what they are doing. As we see the rising stresses in our world reflected in children's behavior, one in ten children are being diagnosed with ADHD in the United States. The nation is swept with mental health disorders as young as children from two years old.

Teaching mindfulness is critical to a child's healthy development because it not only teaches positive behavior through training but also reduces the stigma of labeling children with different diagnoses. It is inspiring to see the research proving the efficacy of mindfulness training. The outcomes of some of the studies of mindfulness-based training are very promising. They include improved executive functioning and learning, improved regulatory skills,

and reduced stress and anxiety. The proverb says, "Work with the clay while it's soft." We must cultivate a healthy and holistic childhood through training children's minds so that future generations can learn to manage the world around them internally and collectively. **(Yangchen Lhamo)**



Where I grew up on the streets of Milwaukee (1955-1970), it wasn't good to show you were afraid, even if your chest pulsated "Tell Tale," like a character out of an Edgar Allan Poe story. We've never lived through a time like this, when the most "powerful" person #45, POTUS, is like a poop and pee-filled Pamper-laden toddler, having a constant temper tantrum. Was his predecessor so qualified, so cool, so smooth, so aware, so empathetic, so comedic, so moral, so monogamous, so scandal free, that it thrust him and us along for the inescapable ride into Bizarro World? No, my loved ones, "one of these things is not like the other": the now infamous and to date elusive Mueller File is being waved in front of us * "Suckers" like a prop in the center ring of a P. T. Barnum Circus. The **Cirque du Soleil gods are crying rain on our democratic parade.



You can't even watch the evening news on network or cable TV with your teenage daughter without cringing like you're watching a rare Denzel Washington sex scene from Walter Moseley's "Devil In A Blue Dress." For example, "You can (freely) grab a woman's private parts" (with impunity), "Throw the S. O. B. (e. g. professional athletes) off the field, fire him," and "The Democrats need to decide whether they will continue to defraud the public with ridiculous bullsh*t." . . .

Finally, more than 100 million Americans of voting age *didn't cast* ballots in 2016. At the end of the day, we all have access to the same AR-15 against this attack on our democracy. Be informed, register, vote, and take someone to the polls with you. ***“When You Don't Vote, That's Equal To Two Votes Against You: The Vote You Didn't Cast, And The Vote Of Those Who Oppose You.”

* “A Sucker Is Born Everyday” ~ P. T. Barnum

****Cirque du Soleil**: French for Circus of the Sun, pronounced – serk-duh-solay (soleil=sun)

*** NAACP mantra from my time as Milwaukee NAACP Branch Coordinator (1980 - 1983) (**Muhammad Abdullah**)



“There are no bridges nor alleys on God’s green earth safe for a human being to live in or under.” I don’t care what anyone else thinks or says, but bridges and alleys are unsafe for any homeless person to sleep under or in. It tears at my soul and rips my spirit to see a homeless person/ family wrapped in whatever they can find and sleeping on cardboard or the cold ground, even if the heat lights are on as they are trying to stay warm. But that's still not enough, not in the wintry months or cold, frigid nights!

They could be someone's family member, friend, brother, sister, relative, son, daughter, etc. I remember one time living back home in Chicago and going with a group of people early in the morning every Saturday making different dinners and sandwiches and going in the church van to feed the homeless under Lower Wacker Drive Bridge. What I saw and witnessed tugged and tore at the inside of my heart. They were all just ordinary people like you and me, maybe down on their luck, or life dealt them a bad hand, or maybe they didn’t want to deal with society anymore.

I remember I met a teenager around 16 or 17 years old, alone and homeless after running away from home, JESUS! But he also shared with me his dreams and goals. Each family or individual that the group and I spoke to all had plans, goals and dreams that one day they will get all back.

Homeless people are not animals but human beings. They should not be subject to sleeping in infested, disgusting alleys. I went there too with the same group feeding whatever homeless person or families we saw in the alley, as well as those standing outside the shelter. These homeless people, human beings, only need a chance to be welcomed back into society, help finding a job, learning how to keep it, a decent place to stay, and not to be looked upon like a disease, dirt, or animal because they are not! They are people with real feelings.

Just one time, I wish I were President so that I would make a law that would change the rate of homeless people. It would allow them to get any kind of help they needed to get and stay on their feet. And if they have never gone to school or finished it, or even been at all, it would make that happen. And with Madison having some businesses that are no longer in business, I would have these empty buildings made for resources that would help all homeless people learn how to get jobs and keep them, starting with the basics. Also, I would make it a law that in any vacant lots/space something would be built for the homeless so when other shelters and churches are full, there would be other shelters or homes homeless people could go to and not have to sleep out in the open. These buildings would have everything they ever needed; they would have the accommodations of a real home. So, the basic reality is not to let the homeless go forgotten, but let’s help them by showing them that they are human beings too. (**Quishanta Cary**)

POETRY CORNER

1, 2, 3 look at me, what do you really see?
 What if I walked into class with a kufi on my head?
 with those from Arabia, Morocco, or Dubai?
 with sandals, brown with brushed suede?
 Would I be invisible, stereotyped, or other, a terrorist?
 1, 2, 3 look at me, what do you see?
 What if I walked into class wearing a blonde wig,
 a pair of earrings, a dress, high heels, and lipstick?
 Would you be shocked, amazed, stereotypical,
 or would I become invisible?
 1, 2, 3 look at me, what do you really see?
 Am I invisible? **(Muhammad Abdullah)**



I come from two jobs and no sleep.
 WIC and food stamps.
 I come from Grand Avenue, three generations strong.
 I come from maybe laters and broken promises.
 I am not what it was predicted that I would be.
 I come from no expectations
 to exceeding goals.
 I come to bear it all.
 I am prepared to change the statistics. **(Kayasia Blake)**

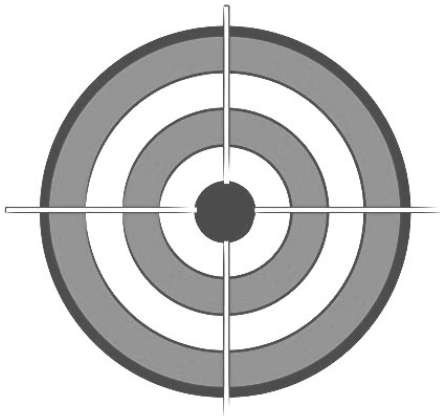
I am a diverse woman,
 solid, short
 full of joy, with a lot of wisdom,
 who has a big voice,
 a voice of peace,
 a voice of reality,
 a voice of life,
 a voice of hope,
 a voice of unity,
 a voice of me. **(Carmon Caire)**

Poems Are Not My Thang
 I'm not good at writing poems.
 I have nothing beautiful and deep to say.
 Writing is hard for me, kind of like trying
 to express your feelings to someone that may not feel the same way.
 Where do I begin?
 There are so many things I would rather do
 than to sit and think about something that I didn't want to do.
 I love poetry, but it has no love for me.
 But like a crazy ex-girlfriend, I will keep coming back for one more try **(Queeneice Creamer)**

My peaceful journey will be walking in the very early morning,
 Light blue sky, a sweet bright sun to warm me up.
 I sing melodious songs with the birds and admire tropical butterflies,
 I run to follow squirrels, does, and fawns.
 I know my peaceful journey is coming soon.
 Be happy for me. I am here. Just wish me good luck. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**

The Enforcer

Black, unarmed but still harmed,
 student, son, daughter,
 friend of many, instead of speaking,
 shooting seems easy
 but to end a life would make me queasy.
 "Keep us safe" or end our race.
 This is something I'm willing to debate. **(Breonna Hawkins)**

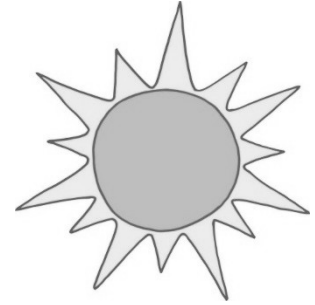


Can't we all just get along?
 Our kings and queens have been constantly beat for too long.
 Decades later we still singing the same melancholy song.
 My melanin can't do no wrong
 Look, I just want to live.
 I'm honestly terrified to have black kids.
 Like, the world don't love black.
 They see my skin, they on edge, ready to attack
 Stand their ground, 'cause they feel threatened
 All I get is my color, who knew it was such a deadly weapon?
 Used to wish it would wash off in the shower
 Just maybe if I scrubbed hard enough
 I'd stop feeling like a target
 Bullseye! Another dies
 Looking for the truth, but they done pulled the wool over my eyes
 These helping hands are wrongdoers in disguise.
 No surprise.
 I don't want the color of my skin to be the reason for my demise. **(James Horton Jr.)**

Me, myself and me is who I'm tryna be.
 I close my eyes and see,
 A special thing in me,
 For every time I push through,
 I look at me and say I'm a special kind of you.
 This half full glass has caused me to last,
 to last and push through to the lady
 Who's a special kind of you (me)
(NatuRa Warford)

My life lately has been a maze
 Me not knowing which way to turn
 Eyes full of water
 Chest pains and heartburn
 I seek for a way out
 I seek for peace
 I seek for a helping hand from those
 who claim to love me
 Fire in my eyes, with or without help,
 I'm determined to break free.
(Candace Howard)

Dear Sun,
 Thank you for coming back into my life.
 The last few months without you have been a drag
 I was missing your warm touch and the way you make my skin glow
 I even sometimes enjoyed the way you blinded me with your glow on fresh white snow
 I'd missed how you changed my mood, and encouraged me to do things I wouldn't normally try.
 You've added so much to my life, just like Vitamin D.
 Thanks for coming back around!
 Love, Monica **(Monica Mims)**



The Bus Ride

If you ever want to get to know the people, ride the bus.
 The co-worker, mother, brother, wino, the other. They ride the bus.
 He just got off in his Sunday suit, looking for the old Granada Way prostitute.
 The guy across me wanted to bum a square. I told the truth, it was only fair; I only brought one.
 The white man at my stop says, "There's a lot of Chicago people here!"
 How does he know? He said they told him so, and now he's on the bus.
 The Black, White, Arab up front, homeless, helpless, students, parents,
 We're all riding the bus. **(NatuRa Warford)**

Nomadic

I have been a wanderer who has felt, smelled, and tasted the ocean, the river, the lakes, and the creeks.
 A wanderer who has tasted the breeze in the woods, whose skin has been burned by the radiant light of the sun and the wind of winter.
 A wanderer who has slept under the night sky, a sky full of stars appreciated only when your eyes are not sabotaged by any light.
 A wanderer who has eaten the sweetest orange from a tree in Mexico and has had the best raspberries in Northern Wisconsin.
 A wanderer who on his way has met people, some of whom have become lifelong friends, friends who gave me a place to stay, to eat, and who made time to listen to me.
 A wanderer who believes there are still great people out in the world always willing to give us a hand.
 A wanderer who has learned that no matter how much I have, I am always willing to help as I was helped.
 A wanderer who's grateful for the people I have met throughout my journey, a journey that has made me to be a better version of me day by day.
 A wanderer who understands the value of life,
 A life that has no meaning without being nomadic. **(J. Luis Pérez-Olguín)**

Monarch

I became the milkweed you needed to live
Recognizing your poison but instead ignored
Endangering my heart to be broken
Left without strength to refuse your attempts

Two saviors in my hands
A guardian angel full of compassion
An intellectual, energetic, kind soul
Keep me absorbed and sailing forward



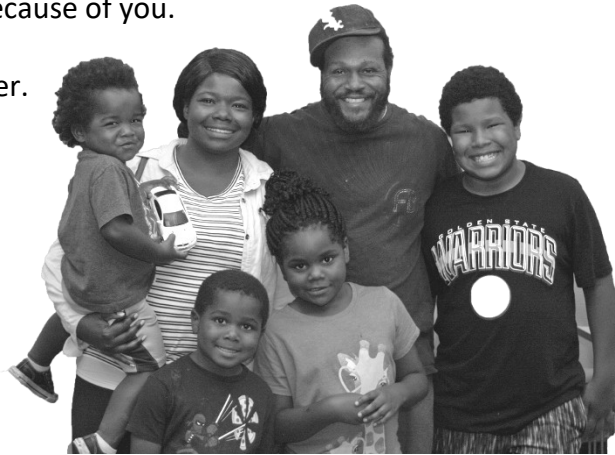
Let go, Monarch, let go
The anchor belongs to me
So my ducts can dry, my heart can heal,
To accept the life that is waiting for me. **(Sandra Zintzun)**

Hello Gun!

Because of you, many children are orphans
Because of you, I cannot go to a store without fearing for my life
You are my worst nightmare
I wish you were banned forever from this earth. **(Hezouwe Walada)**

Momma's Babies

You are from me but I am who I am because of you.
Love is what holds us together
and my baby is what you will be forever.
(Zataiya Gober)



A piece of dirt
stepped on, staked, and tossed
fulfilling a need
turning to a muddy mess
Be gentle as I'm
capable of growth, play, and
shelter.

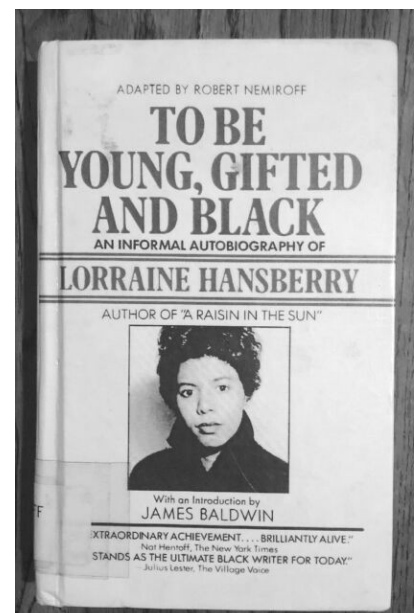
Explore me with your hands
Open your heart
to embrace the feeling
that nature bestowed
upon us
The land's plants,
Rich, enlarging sensory play,
Adobe, mud huts, and cob. **(Sandra Zintzun)**



I feel like a blank sheet of paper.
 I know that some way somehow I'll be useful.
 for something.
 I am a blank sheet of paper lying in the printer's tray,
 waiting to be used
 I know that sheet of paper is there, but I don't actually see it
 That's how I feel, that I am doing my daily routines,
 but I am not being useful or proactive.
 People can see me but can't see my exhaustion
(Juan Carlos Abrajan)

There's something about the way God drops your blessings
 in front of you right when you never would have thought.
 Your cautious hello changed my life. We make sweet memories, you and I.
 Your words put me on pedestals higher than a trend.
 Stolen by a Kardashian
 My Babe, your touch is a giant Band-Aid
 Healing my exterior
 You keep me super
 As the superwoman you see in me
 I love you
 I'm still getting to know you
 But I know I need you
 Need the spirit you give
 When mine is lost
 The graciousness you give
 When I have nothing left to spare
 You're always there
 It's like you were waiting for me
 To become the woman God made me to be
 The birth of a good woman made for a good you. **(Ebony Anderson)**

I am unique, hardworking, 47 years old, beautiful,
 I am a black, caramel-complexioned queen.
 I am an educated mother of a talented nine-year-old bilingual daughter
 I may be 47 years old and bodacious,
 but I still look like I am 17 (some say, including family),
 and I always shall be "young, gifted, and black"!*
 *Title of Lorraine Hansberry's autobiography **(Quishanta Cary)**



The last few weeks, I have felt like depression
 Like a tunnel with no light at the end
 Like the last person that is left to be picked up
 Like the little cousin that no one likes
 Like a book with no words or lines
 I am pushing myself to become
 A better me
 A better supporter, a helping hand to all
 A better woman
 A better mom
 I will be a wonderful me
 Advocate for everyone, role model for my daughter
 Amazing wife
 Successful
 Social worker
 A woman of courage **(Diamond Clay)**



I am an aspiring student, scared to fail
 For failing is something I know all too well
 I am a person with dreams who doesn't quite know where to start
 I am a woman with feelings although sometimes it may not be easy to tell
 I'm a human who, just like you,
 Wants to be treated well. **(Queeneice Creamer)**

My Radio!

My Radio is my friend, my pull through, my
 beat maker, my soul taker.
 My Radio belts sounds and bass beats
 that makes my entire body tweak.
 My Radio can boom loud sounds of music
 throughout the house or rock your soul quietly
 like a mouse.
 My Radio is my friend, my pull through, my
 beat maker, soul taker. **(Erica Cocoa Gentry)**

We started off exclusive,
 somehow you convinced me to be open to change,
 I lost myself in you quickly,
 all the things I wanted to see in myself, I started to see in you
 You took my hands in yours and blindly led me
 to the rollercoaster called love
 Introducing me to self-consciousness and a false sense of reality
 Why am I not good enough?
 Can I be your one and only?
 Slowly you went astray and I was alone again
 I had to teach myself acceptance
 I can't buy that from you
 I still see you from time to time
 and laugh
 You don't live here anymore
(Kayasia Blake)

Who am I?
 Carmon Latrice Caire
 A child development teacher
 A daughter to Gretchen Caire and Dave Caldwell
 An aunt, a niece, a good cook
 A published writer
 A student
 A positive inspiring and uplifting motivational woman
 Graduate of the Odyssey Project Class of 2018-2019
(Carmon Caire)

What a feeling to be alive!
 Reaching beyond the stars,
 Climbing life's mountains.
 Endure this journey
 For as long as you can.
 Life wanders on by, thus
 Your journey may end.
(Cheyenne Pete)

My authorization to work permit does not allow me to work,
 but I can find work without a work permit.
 My work permit provides me with a driver's license
 but when I didn't have a driver's license, I registered my car and drove.
 My work permit is there but can be taken away.
 I have freedom to work, but I don't have the freedom to leave the country
 or my rights will be taken away.
 My work permit gives me a sense not to fear or be desperate,
 but it feels like they want to keep me to work.
(Ricardo Marroquin)



A Mother's Love

My mother's love is priceless.
 She is warm and tender,
 adores me with all her heart,
 loves me more than life,
 unconditionally. She tells me
 that I am her heart,
 supports me in anything I do,
 excited that I am in the Odyssey Project.
 Mom is sweet, loving, bright,
 cute, has a beautiful smile,
 pretty handwriting, and also
 cooks well. She is a great parent,
 raised two children,
 a great single mother who
 worked hard.

Our mother's love is priceless.
 Love her with all our hearts.
(Carmon Caire)

I Want to Be

I want to be the reliable car,
not flashy, but gets you to the job
you need to be at on time daily.

I want to be the unofficial NBA basketball
that the young man shoots day in and day out,
with dreams of places much bigger than where he's at.

I want to be the ink that fills many notebooks, notebooks
scribbled in with many dope hooks, metaphors, punchlines.
The writer recites my shapes to get his flow right.

I want to be the cop that lets you off with a warning
'cuz I'm tired and you're tired, so I understand why
you're going a bit faster at three in the morning.

I want to be the mattress that always catches
your fatigued body and mind. You can leave me unmade, I don't mind.
Hard to leave me behind, constantly in a rush to get up and out on time.

I want to be the parent that tells his kids how beautiful
and smart they are, so much they'll get sick of it,
anything so they don't grow up feeling inadequate. **(James Horton Jr.)**

**Let—Let's**

Let me be me.
Let me be free.
Let me wander all by myself.
Let me understand my self-worth.
Let the war going on inside my head subside.
Let me sit back alone to myself and cry.
Let's get my head together so I can smile.
Let's get my loved ones to surround me with hugs 'cause it's been a while.
Let's look up to the sun for strength, sitting there thinking time well spent.
Let's . . . **(Erica Cocoa Gentry)**

Diamond, precisely held in my hand,
Shining, sparkling, lighting, glowing.
I have my eyes open to the sky,
Wondering at the color of the day,
Blue day, yellow day, grey day, or white day,
I observe nature, another day to observe life.
(Tchallassi Edoh)



Jump-Start and Me

To me, the Odyssey Project is a journey, experiencing the unexpected.
 While challenging and lots of hard work, the ending brings happiness and reward.
 I could not have made it alone. Everybody needs a little help from somebody,
 and my first thanks and praise goes to The Lord.
 Can you imagine a late bloomer like me going back to college at 69 years-old?
 Health issues, a walker, a senior citizen, and unsure.
 Oh, how disillusioned was I! I couldn't have asked
 for a better group of people to put me on cloud-nine.
 As I exhaled toward my dream vision, I felt like I discovered a pot of gold.
 My director, associate director, teachers, all my 29 classmates, and Coach—
 there are no other people like them. Such beautiful human beings.
 When GOD created them, he broke the mold. **(Joyce Johnson)**

I am Student Loan,
 investing in those around me so they can prosper.
 Sometimes I feel used.
 Usually when people get to a certain level in their life
 I'm no longer relevant until I'm needed again.
 So instead of being bitter or passive,
 I will cut you off,
 leaving you in default,
 wishing you could come up with a payment plan
 for my help again. **(Galeca McCain)**

My laptop, my best friend.
 My laptop, my life companion.
 My laptop, my source of information.
 My laptop, my movie center.
 My laptop, my television set.
 My laptop, my musical set.
 My laptop, a laptop that travels across
 regions and continents.
 My laptop, I love my laptop.
(Abdurahman Sallah)

I am a DREAMER or recipient of the Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals
 Authorized to work legally for two years
 Authorized to obtain a driver's license
 Authorized to have a social security number through my work permit
 I am also the undocumented immigrant or undocumented alien
 Unauthorized to work
 Unauthorized to obtain a driver's license
 Unauthorized to have a social security number because of my immigration status
 I am a DREAMER
 Authorized to live in the United States without fear of deportation
 I am a DREAMER
 Unauthorized to reenter the United States without fear of deportation
 I am also the undocumented immigrant
 That works low paying jobs
 That works twice as hard
 That willingly works with his hands
 That willingly wants to work for the United States
 That willingly puts his life on the line to work for the United States
 I am a DREAMER
 The one who experiences success and failure
 The one who experiences freedom and being locked away
 The one who experiences an immigration status just like my parents
 The one who experiences the hardships of being an immigrant
 The one who experiences the warm welcome of the American people
 I am also the undocumented alien
 Who is the protector and real keeper of the AMERICAN DREAM
(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)



I am evolving
 A daughter of a hardworking man and woman
 Descendants of the Powhatan tribe & 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 **(La'cee Webster)**

I have a dream

I have a dream that one day we can all work as a team!
 Not just Blacks or Mexicans but us all;
 Blacks, Whites, Asians, Mexicans, hell, even Canadians.
 I have a dream that we can all respect each other as persons.
 We can look to one another without deceit, can love one another
 and all live in peace. I have a dream that we will stop killing each other
 and come together, no more war no more hate;
 just happy faces and a safe place! I have a dream. **(Savannah Rose Perry)**

A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT

There is probably no more clichéd beginning to a story than Edward Bulwer-Lytton's "It was a dark and stormy night." In class, students used this first line to go in their own creative directions. Here are six examples.



It was a dark and stormy night but I needed to stay silent and transparent. I had to keep moving fast along the Mexican desert, trying to

maintain a low profile. I couldn't be caught or seen, for that matter. Every move I made seemed loud, so it must be true that everything is 100 times louder at night. I was fearful because I was like a ghost. This happened when I was crossing the Mexican border into American territory. **(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)**



It was a dark and stormy night. My children were scared, and my wife was in a panic. I could see and hear my children crying when the lightning lit up the house. I could hear my wife yelling about how she feels about

storms. Me? I was just sitting in the rocking chair and seeing out the window how beautiful the sky and fluffy gray clouds looked when the flashes of lightning lit up the sky. Even though my family was in a panic, I was in a calm, peaceful mood. The darkness and storms calmed down the savage beast within me. **(Juan Carlos Abrajan)**



It was a dark and stormy night, and my eyes brimmed with tears as I looked out the window. As I thought about the day's events, I broke down a little more. I played with my soiled handkerchief as I looked at my phone.

Marcus had probably called me ten times by now. I couldn't answer. Shame hit me so hard, like a punch to the chest. I couldn't believe what I'd found out today. My grandmother passed away without me being able to say goodbye. Why didn't I call more?

(Kayasia Blake)



It was a dark and stormy night when we found ourselves in the middle of an ocean. Our boat meandered through and on top of the waves. The wind blew hard from north to south. The sky was dark and could only be seen when lightning struck, accompanied by the heavy and scary sound of thunder. The captain lost control of the boat due to engine failure, and we were left at the mercy of the waves and wind. **(Abdourahman Sallah)**



It was a dark and stormy night, and I was all alone in a strange city and state, I had no logical reason to even be out in the streets at 11:30 PM, I know now as I think about it. I was high as a kite from crack cocaine. Yes, what a foolish title I had acquired: Crack Head. Just walking blindly in parts of the stormy night? I found myself chasing that white ghost, trying to find out where I could get another hit

on my crack pipe. I was 19 years old in Dallas, Texas. I thank GOD today, April 2019, that it's all behind me and I've been clean since then. Life has had its ups and downs.

(Joyce Johnson)



It was a dark and stormy night when I received my acceptance email from Emily stating I'd been selected for the Odyssey Project Class of 2019. It was the most exciting yet slightly scary step forward to continuing my

education. When I began Odyssey, my personal life was in shambles. Things were so bad that I thought about quitting Odyssey, but I stuck with it. I'm happy and proud of myself for not giving up. I've done some amazing things with Odyssey and met a lot of wonderful people I can call family now. I do not regret this decision one bit. I'm anxiously waiting to figure out my next move. I know I will continue going to school until I get my degree. **(Zataiya Gober)**



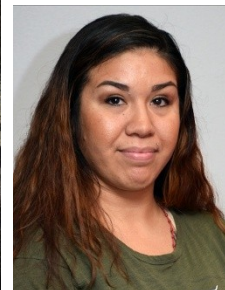
THE FABRIC OF OUR LIVES



This piece is wool fabric called pangden. The texture of this material is like felt. It has two strings that go around the waist. It is rectangle shaped, 23 x 27 inches in width and height. It is our traditional dress that

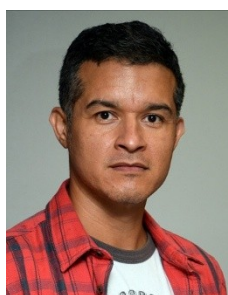
married women wear around their waist hanging down at the front. It is multicolored, with narrow and wide stripes running horizontally.

I chose this because it is a piece made in Lhasa, Tibet. Tibet is my homeland, but I have never been to my country. I know Tibet only through the culture that my parents shared and from growing up in an exile community. The community was headed by HH the Dalai Lama, where Tibetans lived close to each other and preserved the culture of Buddhism. (Yangchen Lhamo)



To some it may look like "just a poncho" with some weird designs and a sun on it, but to me it's a reflection of art.

It's my history and my culture. It's a design of the Aztec sun god Huitzilopochtli. (Alice Ramirez)



I brought in this gaban, or poncho (depending on the region in Mexico), made by the natives in the tiny state of Tlaxcala. Tlaxcala comes from the Nahuatl language, which was spoken by the Aztecs. Tlaxcala means “the place of corn bread or tortillas.” It is made from

the wool of sheep raised by the natives/farmers to sell or to feed the family.

This gaban was brought to me by a friend on a volunteering trip to Tlaxcala. I have had it for 12 years now. To me, it’s a unique piece of clothing because it was made by the hands of natives. When I think about this gaban, I see people spending their time to put a piece of cloth over their family so they are protected from the environment they live in. Also, it is a way for them to make a little bit of money or use it to trade for other goods among other people. This gaban represents part of my culture and the art people can create with sheep wool and their hands. The colors, patterns, and ideas they use can be from our ancestors, mostly the Aztecs or Mexicans, and can come from animals, birds, plants, and flowers.

(J. Luis Pérez-Olguín)



Leppy is a beautiful traditional fabric made and used by West African Fulani for various ceremonial events. There are more than 40 Fula dialects within the West African sub region; Maboobe is among them. They do weaving and pottery. Other

groups do iron work, boat building, and construction. This manner of dividing tasks in traditional African society is common. The woven Leppy is worn by both Fula men and women in special ceremonies such as marriage and circumcision.

The making of such fabric is time consuming and laborious, and it takes between three to four weeks to make a complete unit called Wuudere. A complete Wudeere is six meters long, with four strips put together. It has a fine texture (colorful) and can last for ten years, depending on its handling.

Leppy means a lot to me. It reminds me of who I am and my traditional heritage. I am always proud of to be a Fulani.

The process of making Leppy is complicated. Threads of varying colors are attached to a stone on one end with the weaving part (kawirgal) at the opposing end. The weaver (Kawowo) uses a boat shuttle to crisscross between these horizontal



threads. This repeated movement is tiresome and is one of the reasons why young Fulani boys are not willing to learn the trade.

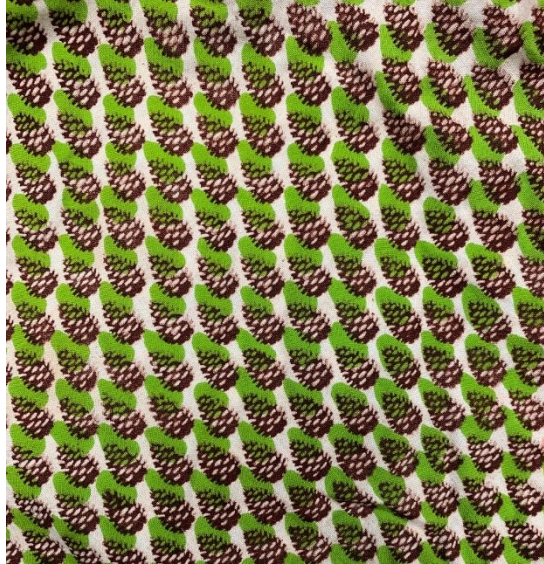
However, there is a belief that an increased appreciation for these textiles in the West will inspire and motivate the younger generation to learn and perfect the trade.

(Abdourahman Sallah)



The fabric I shared with the class was a little girl's dress. I really like that dress and its authenticity. I got the dress from

my mother when my first daughter, Hannah-Kay, turned two years old. It was amazing because she mailed it to me from home in Togo just in time for my daughter's birthday. She wanted to see my daughter enjoy it at the same time I did. It was my own dress, and before me, my mother herself owned that same dress. I was proud to share the family legacy with my daughter. **(Tchallassi Edoh)**



look like a colorful flag. Secondly, Assassa is so thin that you can see through it. I think this is the reason why some people of my village say that it doesn't lose its color when you wash it. In addition, if you look closely you will see it is breathable cloth because it has a lot of very small holes that allow the air in. This is important because Togo is a very hot country.

Also, it is a ribbed cloth due to the fact it has raised parallel lines on it even though its color makes it hard to see the lines. Finally, this cloth is very stretchy, and therefore it will go back to its original shape when you stretch it.



In some African countries, weaving cotton fabric is a tradition that is passed down by women from generation to generation. For example, in my village, Assassa is the name of the cloth that is woven. These cloths differ from one another by their color and

their meanings. In the next few paragraphs I will describe the beautiful cloth assassa and the reason I chose it.

First, Assassa is made of cotton. It is a result of hard work by great women of my village who usually used looms to weave it. Just by touching it, you will feel the softness on the surface. Not only that, but its green color mixed with little red spots all over make it



Other people may have chosen a cloth for this assignment based on its beauty. However, I chose my piece of fabric because of the meaning it holds in my village. The term "assassa" means "love" in our language. In other words, it is a cloth of love. It has been in our village for many generations. Also, we celebrate the cotton harvest for the cloth every year by a dance called "The Dance of Assassa." This

is how important the cloth is to my community. In addition, whenever there is a disagreement between two neighbors, the chief makes them wear Assassa clothing to reconcile the two parties, which symbolizes peace and love.

Furthermore, people of my village wear Assassa on their wedding day, their birthday, and even at their newborn's birth. Given these points, I can sum up that Assassa has a lot of meaning to me because it connects me to my home, culture, and traditions.

(Hezouwe Walada)



I got this piece of fabric during my first week in The Gambia. The colors and the elephants caught my eye first. I've had tons of ideas about what I want to make with it, but I love it so much that I have not brought myself to cut it yet. **(Monica Mims)**



The piece of fabric I decided to bring to class today is my graduation cap. I completed my GED/HSED at MATC South in the spring of 2017. My graduation ceremony took place at the MATC Truax campus on June 6, 2017. I was part of many

continuing and returning students receiving their diploma that night. Wearing my graduation robe and cap holds a special place in my memories and moments of courage because I worked and sacrificed so much throughout the whole period of trying to complete it. There's no doubt in my mind that returning to school was the best choice I did to improve myself and inspire others. I won't ever forget the moment of finally walking across the stage and seeing my professors and family members after the ceremony to thank them.

(Ricardo Marroquin Santos)



My piece of cloth is a kufi, a head covering or religious adornment, worn by Muslim men. I hadn't planned on using it for this purpose, but when I lost my driver's license, bus pass, and debit card and had to go to the DMV to get a replacement

license, I wore it so it would remain consistent with two previous pictures. However, I was first told I would have to remove my kufi, to which I said, "No, I don't." It then became, "You have to move it so that your hairline shows." To which I replied, "Since when? If you look at my two previous pictures, you will see that my hairline is not showing." "I'll have to call a supervisor." "Okay!" The supervisor said that she can show it to me in writing, and that the new policy has to do with their new "Face Recognition" software program. So I exposed my hairline and was on my way. I was not happy, and it shows on my driver's license.

(Muhammad Abdullah)



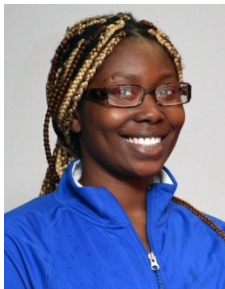


The garment I brought to class is my favorite cap. It's my cap that represents

my African American ancestors. I've had this cap since I was 19 years old in 1989. I attended Malcolm X Junior College on the west side of Chicago. I took two classes: African American Studies and Anthropology. I usually wear it every year in February when I attend gatherings honoring "Black History Month."

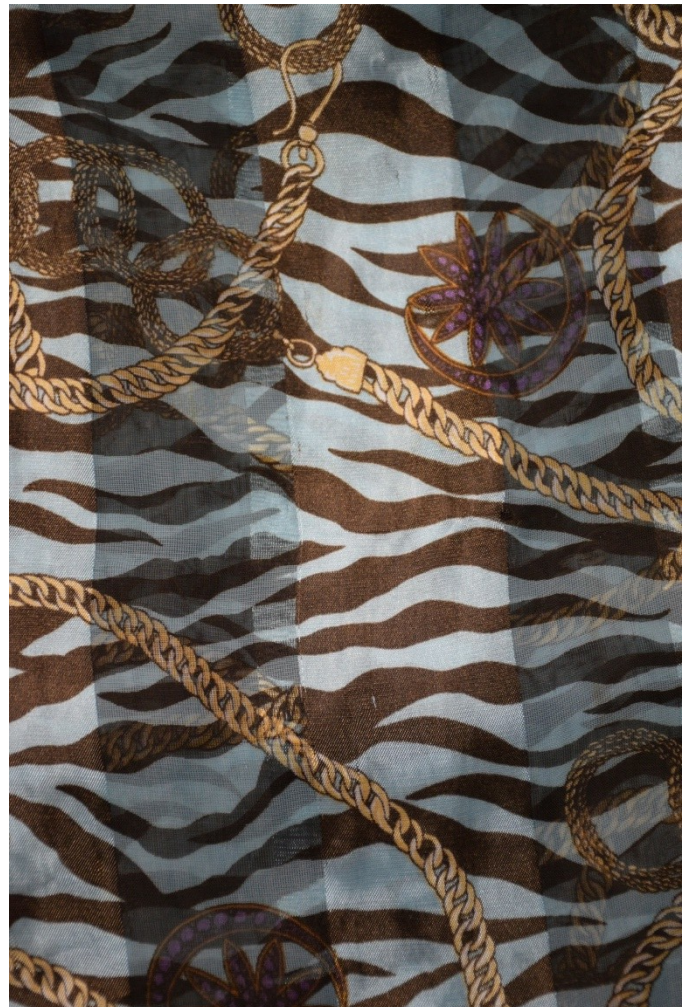


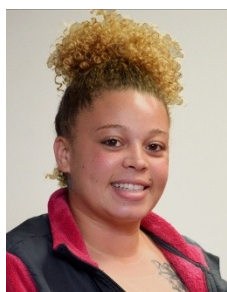
For years, since I was in high school during the Civil Rights Movement, 1963-1967, I learned the colors black, yellow, red, and green represent the black race of people, acknowledged in this day and time, which is now 2019, as African American. I am a proud Black Woman, and my goal to become a writer and use my voice to bring about change and a legacy for my children and grandchildren—and their children to come in the future. This cap means a lot to me. (**Joyce Johnson**)



I don't really have a special cloth, but I do have different scarves I like to sleep with. It's blue (sky blue) with golden-like chains printed on it. Also it has shades of brown. The scarf might be made out of fabric like satin

maybe. I chose this because it helps protect my hair at night and is also good for laying down my edges whenever I get a new hairstyle. (**Breonna Hawkins**)





My piece of fabric is mostly black, with pink and red flower stitching. There's also green and white stitching that makes the stems of the flowers. My fabric is almost like a fishnet fabric or netting fabric because it is see through. The touch of the fabric

is a little rough but is thickly layered.

I've chosen this piece of fabric because it was once one of my favorite shirts a few years ago. Also, I made plenty of memories while wearing this, plus it was a great-looking shirt on me. Unfortunately, it no longer fits. Instead of keeping it hidden in my closet, I decided to put it to good use! J (**Cheyenne Pete**)

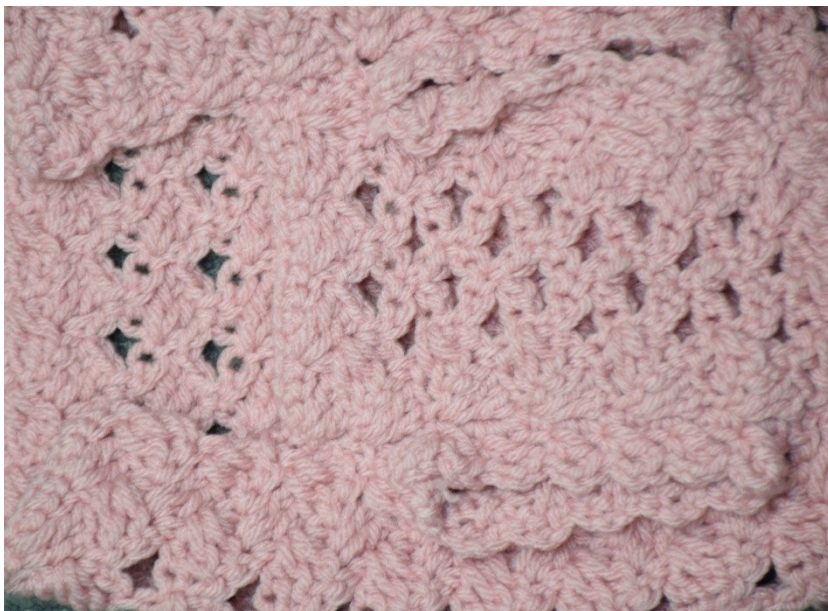


I've noticed this piece of fabric when I was a little girl handling my grandmother's stick pins for her rollers. As she parted her hair and grabbed the rolling paper, she would always hold her hand for the roller pin. It was

amazing to look at her roll all this

hair with those sticky rollers and to secure it with the pen. I've tried this technique many times but to no avail. I was trying to mimic my grandmother's technique. Instead of getting upset, she would help me and tell me how to secure the pins. My grandmother is one of my heartbeats. I affectionately call her ladybug. Now, growing up I didn't, but when she got sick that's what I started calling her. She has onset dementia, so this is a part of my "ladybug." She is still in Chicago, so this is my connection to her. (**Erica Cocoa Gentry**)





Through the years, I learned how to patch up holes and eventually learned how to make clothes. I took clothing classes at school and learned to make dresses, comforters, and anything else someone needed. As the end of the school year came around, I knew it was time to make plenty of shorts for my brothers with button-up sports team tops, as we could not afford the real thing from the store. I can still picture their faces when they received the items I made them. I'm sure they are sporting them in a few old family photos. (**Sandra Zintzun**)



I am so excited for my first feeling as I run my fingers through this fuzzy, soft, and a bit uneven material. The colors of purple and pink stick in my mind as if it were yesterday. It first started as a ball but with a little looping in and out, turned into a loose construction, functional for my dolls.

Growing up in a big household, I learned many hands-on things. One of my favorites was to sew and knit. I had so many dolls to dress, as I could barely afford the dolls, let alone more clothing for them. Oh, how I recall all the pokes by the needle as I tried to learn to pedal and spin at the same time on my aunt's vintage sewing machine. That machine is something I wish I would have kept, as it meant so much to me. For my bigger dolls, I learned to knit. At least the knitting needles were not as painful! Spending that time with my aunt was my favorite memory of my childhood. She showed me how to make my first shawl for my Cabbage Patch doll, Annabel.



I am a New Orleans Saints fan. I love Alvin Kamara #41. I love the Saints because my late grandfather was from there. I ordered the infinity scarf, which is one item I own as a Saints fan. Also, I have a good amount of black French in me. It runs

deep in my bloodline. I fell in love with the Saints due to my family being from there, and we have property there as well. (**Carmon Caire**)

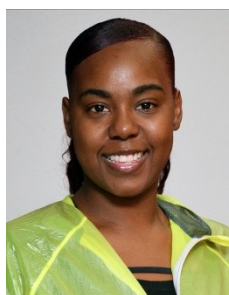




covered, and this is one I use for prayer. It's also unique and beautiful to me. **(Candace Howard)**



The piece of cloth I have is my daughter Blessing's 2T-3T t-shirt. This is very special to me because you can see both her tiny little hands, left and right. Every time I look at them on the T-shirt and see her hands now, I cry like a big ole baby because that tells me she's growing more and more. I just get sooooo emotional. Honestly, it actually took everything out of me to part with this. **(Quishanta Cary)**



I chose a t-shirt my grandma wore and gave to me, which I also wore. My grandma lived through a lot of history that I was interested in as a child. She would go through newspapers she had, showing me a past I fell in love with—young Michael

Jackson jackets, MLK records, Otis Redding tickets. When I wear it, I think of her. I think of everything she has done to put her foot down on life and leave a piece of her in this history.

(Ebony Anderson)



It's 26 inches wide and 17 and a half feet long, a head wrap with fringes on each end, light brown and dark brown with silver stitching and a little black stitching as well. It is designed with swirling flowers and leaves.

I chose this piece of fabric because it was the first head wrap I bought when I learned the Most High wants women to have their heads covered at all times. Also, we are supposed to pray to him with our heads





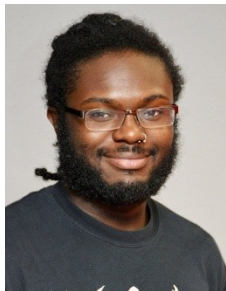
my heart. My football coaches seemed bitterer than rugby coaches, only gifting super stars and their own children, so it felt strange to get such a gift from my coach. He seemed more like family rather than just a coach. **(James Horton Jr.)**



My piece of fabric is something that belonged to my mother, who passed away in 2015. It's a very long, silky material that feels like a soft, velvety, glossy brown scarf. It has brown looking paws on it.

I also chose this scarf because my mother wore it when my dad passed away. She wore it at his funeral. It really means a lot to me

because now I wear it like she did. I will always cherish this scarf. **(Rana Potter)**



Dark navy blue, zip-up active wear: it has yellow highlights down the shoulder blades and on the collar. Across the chest in yellow in box-letters, it reads Wallabies. The word has been split in two, only combined when it's zipped up.

Underneath the side with "abies" sits the Wallabies rugby team logo.

This cloth is important to me because I received it from my high school rugby coach. It was my senior year, my last year to play rugby on the Middleton area squad. I played with them since the tenth grade. The coach's name was Guido. He was a renowned rugby player in the state of Wisconsin, highly regarded by all of Wisconsin's best players. Guido was about as tall as I am, but he was known to be one of the toughest players around, showing that the size of your heart can allow you to triumph against any giant. I looked up to Guido, so to receive a jacket from him was like he was acknowledging





The piece of fabric that I decided to choose was my daughter's newborn hat, the first hat that she has ever worn. I chose this hat because it symbolizes the largest life-changing event I've ever experienced. When I was

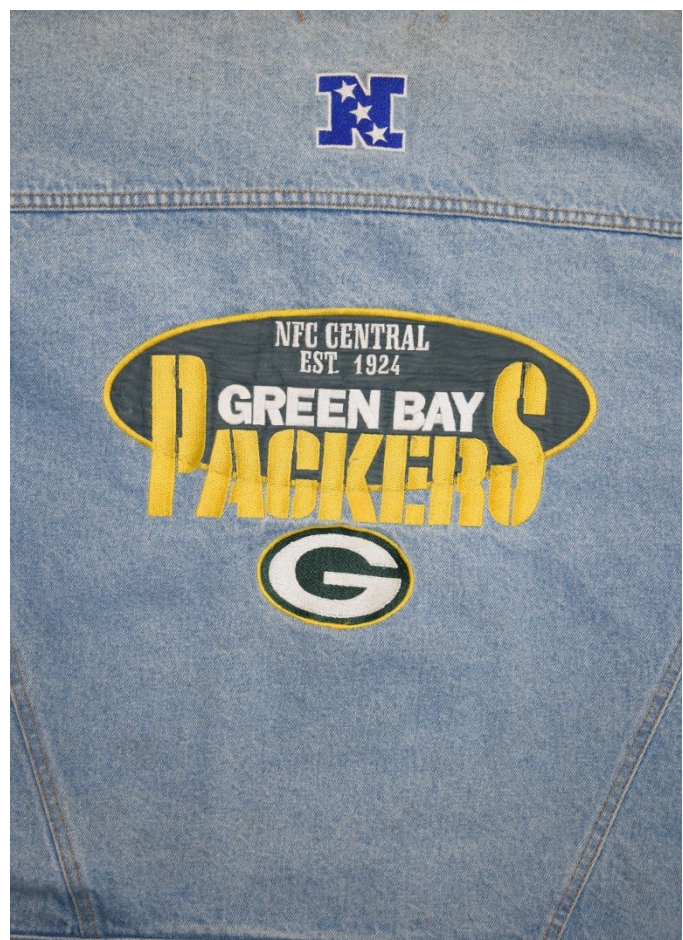
pregnant, I was living in hotel rooms with my boyfriend, living paycheck to paycheck. We refused to bring a baby into this world with a struggle and without a stable place to stay, and that's what really pushed us to keep apartment searching, despite being denied, told things were not available or not in our income range. We tried and tried, reached out to whoever we could, and lucked out with an apartment, being able to move in a day before our baby shower.

After my daughter came and was able to come home to a roof of her own, we kept pushing for more. My daughter has really motivated me to keep pushing in life. Before I had her, I was not applying myself like I should have been. God has blessed my little family in any way possible. I keep this hat because this is really when my life began: Feb. 23, 2018, my love. (**Diamond Clay**)



This isn't much of a traditional piece of cloth you were expecting, but it's important to me! This jacket belonged to my late father. It wasn't very special to him and really didn't have any meaning because he was a Bulls fan, but he'd wear

it every once in a while—whenever the Packers were playing or if he had any green or yellow on! He was very fashionable; unfortunately, I got my fashion from my mom's side. This jacket is very special to me. When I put it on, I feel like him! No, not like I'm closer to him because he's the closest thing to me, but I feel like him! I feel all his happiness and all his pain, the things he's proud of and the things he's ashamed of. I miss him so much, an ongoing pain, but when I put this jacket on, his soul collides with mine and I am just fine! (**Savannah Rose Perry**)





The item of cloth I chose to bring is a plaid jacket that was my father's. It's pretty big, as my dad was a big and tall man. The main color is blue, with white, red, and light blue plaid lines going across.

I chose this item because it's one of the only physical memories I have of my dad. Since I was a kid when he passed, I don't have too much control of anything surrounding his death. Years later, going through boxes of clothes, my mom asked if I wanted it, and I told her yes immediately. I never wear it, so it doesn't tatter or stain in any way. When I wake up in the morning, I usually look to the side for it, as if it's my dad. **(Kayasia Blake)**



The meaningful garment I've brought in with me is my father's hat. It is actually called an "apple hat." For as long as I can remember, my dad would always wear a hat. He had different ones to go

with his outfits and shoes. From casual caps to snap backs, fitted caps and fancy cowboy-like hats, my dad had them all. My father passed away June 28, 2015, so keeping his hats along with a lot of other items reminds me of him, especially on days that are harder for me.

The hat is black, made of cotton, with a very thick fabric texture like wool. The fabric is very scraggly looking up close. The texture being like wool makes it almost feel itchy. It must've been warm, though, because he never complained. **(La'cee Webster)**





As a child grows older, they outgrow all of their belongings. Considering these small items are now no longer needed, they begin to take up space. Most

parents donate to Salvation Army, Goodwill, or even a family member or friend. However, there are some parents who hold onto the little socks and Gerber-stained onesies as a reminder of how much their child has grown. Some parents keep things because one day they will pass them along to a new child, and lastly some hold onto these items for sentimental reasons and they can't seem to let go.

As I look at the receiving blanket covered with lions, monkeys, flowers, and butterflies, I remember what and who it was used for. Some people would think it's just a blanket; however, it's more than that.

This blanket was used to cover my lifeless daughter's body, keeping her warm as she slowly turned cold, large enough to cover her entire body, delicate enough to make her feel secure as she transitioned from earth to heaven. If you look closely, you will notice a piece of tape attached to the blanket which was used to keep her IVs intact against her body. You will notice a distinctive smell of hand sanitizers because the doctors and nurses used it so much. Although this blanket brings back memories of what I lost,



I cherish it. I hold onto it tightly some nights to feel closer to my daughter, knowing that there was a time she was here and she was wrapped so tightly in this blanket. For that, I will always hold it close.
(Galeca McCain)



This cloth is a pink and light green crocheted small blanket. It's very soft, just big enough for a small, very small baby to fit in. It has a few drops of blood from the baby it once held.

I chose this cloth because it was the blanket my deceased daughter was handed to me in. March 11, 2014 was one of the worst days of my life. I had gone into premature labor despite the surgery I had undergone in an effort to prolong my pregnancy. I was in labor for 13 hours and gave birth to a little girl I named Anaise. I keep a box with her things from the hospital with a small urn with her ashes. This cloth reminds me to be grateful for those in my life. (Queeneice Creamer)





Jabari. He is my rainbow baby. That's a term given to babies born after a miscarriage or stillbirth. He reminds me that there can be something beautiful to be made from the storm. He lives up to his name, which means fearless in Swahili. **(Zataiya Gober)**



My fabric is one of my brother's favorite jerseys. His wife gave it to me before we returned to Wisconsin, and it brings me comfort. I've never worn it, but it hangs in my closet with my clothes. At times I swear it's him moving it around, so I talk aloud to him. My only brother is in my heart, mind and spirit for the rest of my life. He's truly missed! **(NatuRa Warford)**



I'm choosing to write about my son Jabari's blue and pink striped cotton baby hat. Jabari is my fourth (and as far as I'm concerned my last) child. He was born at 37 weeks, just a few weeks early, via a scheduled C-section. I had a complication with this pregnancy which led to the C-section delivery. It went quickly, and we both recovered well, although Jabari needed a blood transfusion soon after delivery and stayed in the NICU for nine days as a result of other complications. Although he started off rocky, these days Jabari is a fun, charismatic, almost-three year old. He is full of life, and for that I'm grateful. I spent the majority of my pregnancy with him under extreme anxiety. I had experienced a miscarriage just a few months prior to becoming pregnant with





My mamma and her leopard print: everywhere she goes, it goes. Whether it's the grocery store, church, or the club, it's the leopard print.

This is mamma's signature statement. This print symbolizes a woman's strength and character, like she is this fearless spirit animal. Both have skilled survival instincts that enable them to overcome all life's obstacles and remain beautiful and strong.



My mother is my role model. Like the leopard whose spots never change, my mother's love for her family remains consistent. She teaches me the importance of God and wisdom. She is the foundation that keeps our family together. I see how the leopard print and Mamma's life coincide—my mamma and her leopard print.
(Martina Mitchell)



The item that I brought to class is my son's baby slipper. It's funny because I was looking for a piece of cloth that I made in middle school. Well, I couldn't find it, but I found my son's slipper. The fabric of this slipper has the texture of a towel.

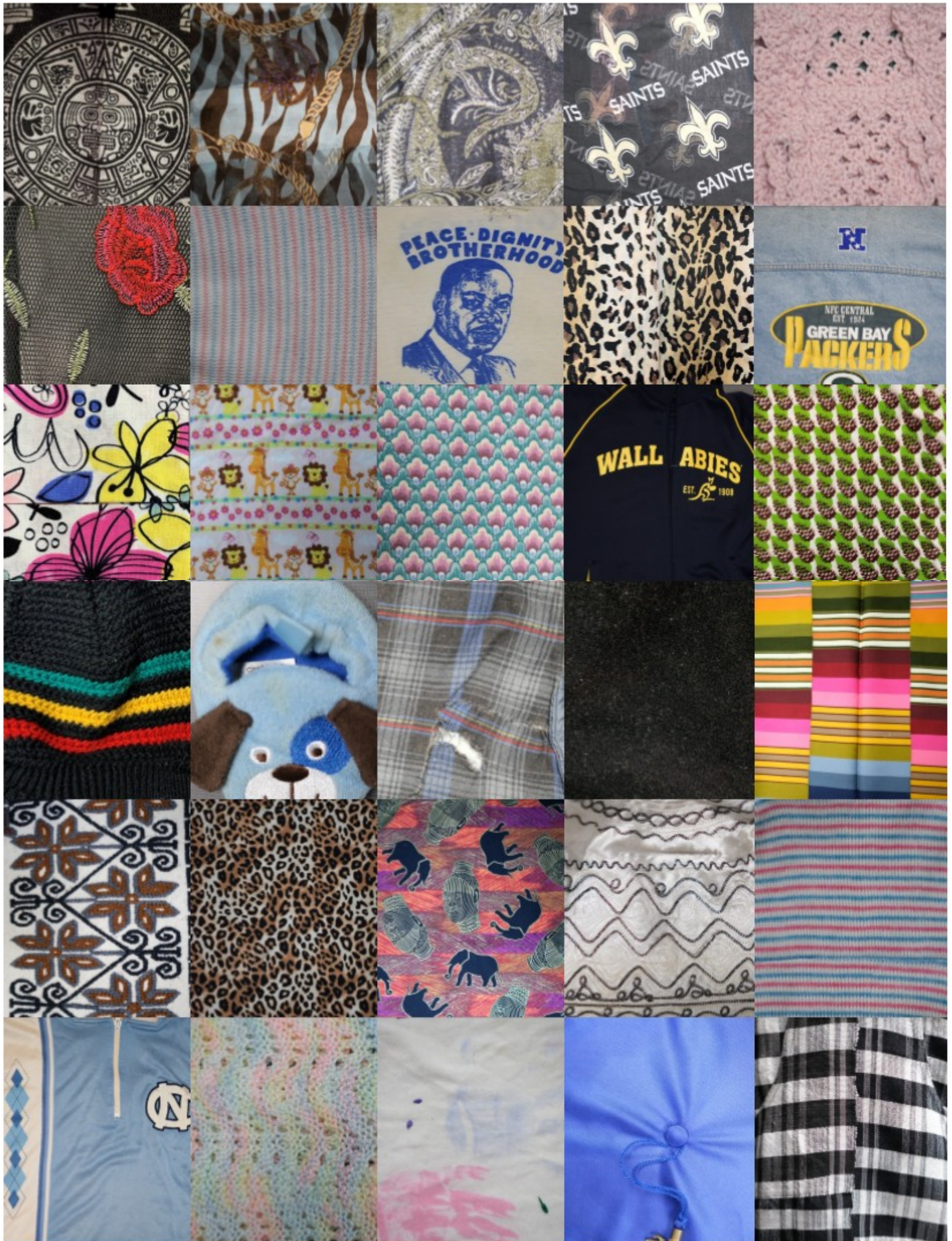
The slipper is blue, and it has the face of a puppy. It has ears that are brown, and one of the eyes has a bright blue spot. I decided to bring this item because it symbolizes a new path in my life.

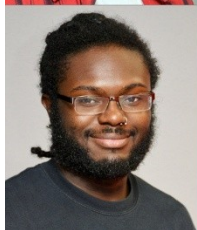
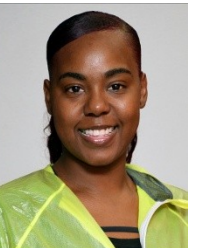
It's important because I felt a thrill when I held my son for the first time in my arms. I felt a warmth of love—a different warmth. Even though I am not the biological father, when I carried him for the first time, I fell in love with

him. He changed my entire life. In that moment, I cared for him right away. See, I was with my wife since she was three months pregnant. I didn't feel the impact of having a baby or that love for him until I held him in my arms. Since then, I knew that I would stay with him and my wife forever. I would make a life with them. That is why I still save those slippers because it was I who bought them for him.

(Juan Carlos Abrajan)







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Great Hall, Memorial Union
800 Langdon St, UW-Madison Campus
Wednesday, May 8, 2019, 6:30 – 8:00 pm
Reception Following

You are cordially invited to attend the inspiring and memorable graduation ceremony for students of the UW Odyssey Project class of 2019. Please join the faculty team—Project Director Emily Auerbach, Associate Director Kevin Mullen, Marshall Cook, Jean Feraca, Gene Phillips, and Craig Werner—in celebrating students' successful completion of six UW credits following two semesters studying great works of literature, American history, art history, and philosophy.

Program:

- 6:00** Check-in, refreshments, and music
6:30 to 8:00 Program featuring recognition of Odyssey supporters, remarks by Poet Fabu, and readings by graduates
8:00 Reception, refreshments, and music



I love Odyssey and its emphasis on finding your voice. Odyssey celebrates each student as unique while also creating a close and supportive community."

--Poet Fabu

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