

YEAR 17, ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER 4, 2019

ODYSSEY ORACLE

WELCOME, CLASS OF 2020!



In this Oracle . . .

Graduates.....	1
From the Class of 2019	5
Alumni Corner	17
Special Odyssey Moments	21

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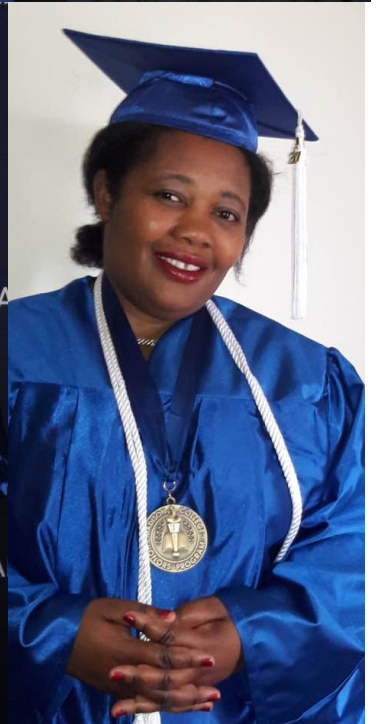
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Our graduates have earned associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees from Madison College, UW-Madison, Edgewood, and other schools. Pictured on pp. 1-4 are Josephine Lorya-Ozulamoi '08; Yasmin Horton '07 with son James Horton '09; Keena Atkinson '10; Brian Benford '07; Mustafa Saed, Shaimaa Ahmed, Umaina Saed '16; Mary Wells '07; Tineisha Scott '04; Adrian Molitor '18; Michelle Brown '05; Shirley Norman '04; Lavern Brown '09; Dominique Christian '09; Shaquida Johnson '12; Molinda Henry '07; Shanita Lawrence '09; Zeynab Ahmed '14; Sharisse Hancock '13; Kegan Carter '04; Sahira Rocillo '15 and Mai Neng Thao '16; Milli Lau '14; Cameron Daniels '07; Luci Chikowero '14; Sherri Bester '08 and Tom Gardner '08; Edwina Robinson '11; China Moon Crowell '13 and Yolanda Cunningham '12

TO THE CLASS OF 2020

LETTERS FROM THE CLASS OF 2019



"If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."
(Author unknown)

First of all, welcome to a bomb experience. The UW-Odyssey Project is the fastest and farthest you likely have ever

traveled or will travel in your life each week, whether you come from the Motherland (Africa), Asia, Central or South America, Mexico, the Arab world, California, Florida, New York, or right here in Madison, Wisconsin.

So whether this is your 13th or first time in a college-level environment, excuse the cliché, but "today is the first day of the rest of your life." Regardless of your being the former or the latter, you have won a lottery of sorts, and the prize is what you do with it and how far you take this, e.g. A.A., B.A., M.A., or Ph.D. It's in your hands and the hands of Emily Auerbach and her incredible staff.

This is my *nasse'hah* (Arabic for 'sincere advising') to you, the UW Odyssey Class of 2019-2020:

On the day you receive your letter of acceptance in UW Odyssey 2019-2020, after you thank Emily Auerbach and God, learn as much about the Odyssey as you can, ask as many questions that come to mind, and remember, "The only dumb question is the one you don't ask." Visit the space where you will reside once a week, 2312 South Park Street. Meet and become acquainted with Emily and her staff if you haven't already done so.

Make school your number one (1) priority: now, that will be a luxury for most of us, because of our own mental and physical health, our children, work, religious practice, significant others, elderly parents, etc. First thing, connect and get to know all of the resources available to you as a resident of Madison and a UW student.

Don't be afraid or too proud to ask for help. For most people, including myself, that's hard to do, especially if you were brought up not to ask for help. Ask for help if you need it!

Use all of the academic help and resources available to you, again, despite there being a reluctance to ask for and receive the help you need. Ask anyway!

Become a part of the Odyssey Family and the UW community as much as you can. This can be difficult with all of what I have mentioned above. We are all adults, different, and have our own individual challenges, but you can do this.

Finally, from the founding of this country and most of the world's communities, education is the key to a better life for yourself and your family, if you are blessed to have one. If you come up in the right place, you are going to be offered many alternatives to the education path. "Don't, don't believe the hype." In the parting words of my "Woman of Courage," Mary Ellen, here's what I feel about Odyssey: "I wish I could do it all over again."

(Muhammad Abdullah)



Welcome to the Odyssey Project. You guys are about to take a journey where school is some sort of Pandora. You will have free schooling, free childcare, free food, free transportation, free books, notebooks, and many other resources to help. You will meet really nice teachers and staff. At the end of first semester you will end up having good classmates that could be considered family.

Maybe you are feeling nervous right now. I know I was, but at the end of first class, I felt good and was excited for next class. Emily is going to give you a good, long, extended summary about the program. It could be overwhelming, maybe to the point where you might think you are not prepared to take this journey. Well, let me tell you it's not that bad. Once you complete your first week of homework you will feel better. I am sure Emily is going to tell you this too. You should try your best not to miss any class days, even if you don't have your homework done. Missing a class is like missing the final of any sport, or like someone spoiling the end of a movie or book. You won't get that same experience if you miss class.



Well, Class of 2020, I wish you guys the best. Enjoy every moment and all the new experiences the Odyssey Project will give you.
(Juan Carlos Abrajan)



Every time it is time for you to eat, WASH YOUR HANDS! The first time you go back there, only take one scoop of everything! Take one cutie (I used to take two ☺). The second time, it'll be okay to get more (if you forget, Char will remind you).

But, more seriously, you will have an awesome journey and have a new life experience and awareness of why YOU have been chosen out of 100 to go on this Odyssey. Go to tutoring whenever you find the chance on Monday and Tuesday evenings. Do EVERY assignment and ALL homework, and if you get done with your homework then it's okay to work ahead; just write down what assignment it is and date it. You'll have some AWESOME instructors who will be and are there to help and assist you.

And it's good to get to class early, too. You can finish up homework, get started on some of the other papers that are being passed you, and write whatever notes are being written.

Some of the guests and old alumni may visit or stop by from time to time, and you will always learn a lot!! I loved Mrs. Emily's husband, dad, and son; they're AWESOME, and you will love them, too. When you meet Prof. Baron Kelly, get ready: he is PHENOMENAL, and what he'll have you doing will crack you up! So get ready, strap in, 'cause you're taking off on an adventure of your lifetime! And one more thing, everyone in and part of this is WONDERFUL, and you'll have a set of new friends and family for LIFE!

(Quishanta Cary)



Hello, and welcome to a truly amazing program. You will learn so much about yourself. Let me introduce myself. I am Carmon Latrice Caire. I have been a child development teacher for 22 years. I am from Madison, Wisconsin, born and raised here on the South Side of Madison.

We got to know each other over the course of class. It was an amazing experience meeting so many wonderful people from different backgrounds, cultures, and walks of life. I learned a lot about myself at the age of now 45. I became a better writer, and being in this class gave me a great opportunity to start writing again.

I started my writing at the age of 11. I have kept that passion of writing up until 2008. It ended due to depression and the loss of my grandmother, Mary B. Caire. I was a published writer in the Southern Exposure in 2005-2008. I wrote about her being a pioneer of Madison and her passing, and I ended that passion of writing when she passed away. I was given an opportunity to start my passion again by being a part of Odyssey, this amazing program that I love. So being a part of this wonderful, amazing, warm, diverse family is a true blessing. I am encouraging each of you to stay dedicated and go all the way. You will learn so much about yourself and from one another. I loved all of the reading assignments, getting to know classmates who become your family too, and the team. I could go on and on about this program.

As I write this letter, I cry because that is how wonderful the program is. I had a tough start due to a stressful teaching job, so that first semester was tough, but I made it. Some days I felt as if I wouldn't be able to go on, but God made a way. I also was nursing a broken right ankle, but determination and being very strong



kept me going on. I'm very proud of my graduation from Odyssey. So do what it takes to complete the program. It's so worth it, and once you're a part of Odyssey, you're always a part of Odyssey. Have fun, enjoy and stay encouraged. Also come to tutoring. I found it very helpful.

Blessings and love. **(Carmon Caire)**



Welcome to your fresh start! This class is a beginning to a new life, so please think of it as such. You might look around, unsure of your surroundings. Everyone has an unfamiliar face. These people will become your family. As every

Wednesday passes, it will be easier for you to share pieces of yourselves, and you'll find that your classmates' lives will fit your puzzle. The amazing factor is our diversity. Despite our many differences, you'll be surprised how much you and your classmates will have in common. Don't be afraid to bare it all because you'll be caressed with love and support in return.

I am a living testimony that bad things happen, life happens. But in this class, those issues are non-existent. Every Wednesday, we show up and we show out. Have a ball! **(Kayasia Blake)**



I started my Odyssey with fears in the fall of 2018. I remember my first day, feeling wonderment and frustration. I left school and all earning processes for almost twenty years, so believe me, my brain was on pause. The challenges got bigger with my four children. I work also as a lunch lady, Monday to Friday.

Odyssey Project came at the right time to save me. I discovered the project accidentally and walked in blind. The first classes were very hard. I was most of the time lost, but Emily and her team were nice, supporting people. Monday night was my tutoring time, and Kevin and his tutoring group were always sweet and patient. I started to be surprised with the good notes and impressions with my assignments from Emily, and that gave me the strength to go forward and to just enjoy every homework that came.

English wasn't my first language, but being able to improve my English skills by reading and writing was a nice adventure. The classroom is nice, lit up, and warm. I never felt judgment or controversy from anybody—teachers, tutors, and classmates. I always felt welcome, considered, and dealt with in all the right ways, and so were my girls.

I started to be more and more amazed. I was proud of myself and realized that I could do more than what I was thinking and scared of. "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way is always to try just one more time," said Thomas A. Edison. Learning is a process, and the courage and the strength you carry will make everything possible.

The authors we worked on through the program were extraordinarily powerful. Frederick Douglass with his narrative showed his life as a slave and especially his challenges to be a free man. Other authors like Plato, Jeff Stetson, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Walt Whitman, and Maya Angelou

were also good literary experiences.

And the Oracles which came every week were also interesting, and learning about other people's stories gave you courage and hope. Odyssey Project filled the lack of knowledge in me and opened my eyes to a new wonderland of fun and hope.

I am very proud of Odyssey Project students, the ones I shared my journey with, the ones who stepped in before me, and the future students. This is an extraordinary Odyssey, and it is magical because you realize it after you've done it.

(Tchallassi Edoh)



The first day of Odyssey I was skeptical about so many things; would I finish, the students, and especially the staff. I had so many bad experiences. I thought to myself, is it worth it? I was struggling with day to day life, and

I didn't have the energy to commit to anything else. As time went on, I began to look forward to Wednesday evenings.

I was sad the day after graduation. My first thought was, "what now?" Odyssey had become a part of my life, my routine, my peace!

I know that when I look back, heck even now, I know Odyssey is one the best things I have ever been a part of. It was unlike any other class or program I had attended.

My advice to the Class of 2020 is to keep pushing forward. You never know what doors this program can offer you and what great people you will meet. Emily, Kevin, and the other caring staff are a blessing. These are some of the most genuine people you will ever meet, and that's saying a lot coming from me (if you know me, I don't trust anyone lol). You have become a part of something that will stay with you forever.

(Queeneice Creamer)



Now it's time for me to make my impression felt, so sit back, relax, and strap on your seatbelt, 'cause you've never been on a ride like this before. You'll have a teacher who can write and control the maestro, at the same time with dope poems that Emily kicks, you know, and I know Fabu will flow some ol' funky stuff. To add to the collection, the selections symbolize hope; take a joke, but don't choke. If you do- you'll have no clue on what Emily and her crew from Odyssey came to do.

-Revised, nothing but a G. Thang – Dr. Dre

Connect with your classmates who are taking this journey with you. You will gain strength from each other. Respect each other's feelings and differences. One love!

(Erica "Cocoa" Gentry)



First and foremost, congratulations! Being accepted into the Odyssey Project is a privilege and such a great blessing! So, take a deep breath and relax. You're in great hands! Emily, Kevin, and the entire Odyssey team are phenomenal. My only advice to you is to come to class and always do your work. Odyssey is a huge support system, a community. Emily and Kevin have literally made it impossible for you to not get your work done. From tutoring, emailing, phone calls, and texts,



they are always available and willing to help. So take full advantage of the resources given to you. They will be the tools you need to complete the class successfully.

Aside from all that, you will have so much fun. There will be certain trips or guest speakers that will make a life-changing impact on you. So pay attention and embrace these moments. It goes by incredibly fast, but without a doubt, your classmates will become your family. So participate in class discussions regularly and openly. Nobody is here to judge you. Everyone here is here to learn, to listen, and, most of all, to be inspired. All the best to you. **(Zataiya Gober)**



Walk into class, take a deep breath, sit, relax . . . you're here. Being a part of this class will open many doors for you, so when you have time, connect with Emily and Kevin. They want nothing but the best for you, during and after your

graduation day. Let them know your dreams, goals, and aspirations. Make it a goal to never miss a class; you'll be surprised how much you can miss in just a couple of hours. Always be yourself because it's guaranteed that everyone will love and accept you for who you are.

I'm pretty sure we got homework the first week of class, so be prepared, but never overwhelm yourself or feel like you have no other choice but to give up. Always reach out, go to tutoring if you have time, and I promise if at any point you feel overwhelmed, it will be short-lived. I could think of a bucket list of things, but most importantly, please get to know your second family (classmates) because that's honestly what these people next to and across from you will become.

"Not every door is always locked, push!" You'll learn a lot of things/skills about yourself. All in all, I'm excited for your class of 2020, so get ready, strap in, and let's go! **(Breonna Hawkins)**



Welcome! Are you ready to begin your new Odyssey? Let me let you know now... there will NEVER be a dull moment in this class. Odyssey makes learning so exciting, and nothing is too hard. If you find yourself struggling, Emily, Kevin, and the Odyssey tutors don't mind helping you understand things better. Ask as many questions as you need; never feel embarrassed to get extra help. Odyssey staff helps with everything from homework to mental health issues and personal issues. Never get discouraged. Participation goes a long way in this class, and it's more exciting when you do participate. Odyssey gave me that encouragement I needed to further my education. It is truly a blessing to be in this class, and I hope you all enjoy just as much as I did. **(Candace Howard)**



The thirty of you are very blessed and lucky to have been chosen to enter the Odyssey Project. I know this for a fact because I, Mother Joyce Johnson, was accepted September 5th, 2018, and graduated May 8th, 2019 in the class of 2019. In the beginning, I felt intimidated, and I believed I was too old to go back to college. I was so very wrong. Even though I'm 69 years old, I was encouraged by my pastor, 1st Lady, and my church family at Mt. Zion Baptist church.

I'll not let you think it won't be challenging or hard work, because it will be. But, after you graduate, you'll have a new family with your classmates, Odyssey alumni, tutors, and the entire Odyssey staff. They all will be there for you in any family crisis, health issues, transportation, daycare, meals, etc. Now I'm on my way to get

my Bachelor's Degree. I'm so grateful because of Odyssey I'll reach my dream, vision, and goal.

Every week, no matter how the weather was, I made a personal sacrifice to be in class. The serious truth is that missing one week of Wednesday night classes means you'll miss a great deal.

We learned a lot about art, like sculptures, paintings, and abstract design from Gene Phillips. We learned a lot about music, like what our veterans listened to during the Vietnam War, being home-sick, missing spouses, children, parents, other loved ones and friends. Also, we learned about Reggae, Jazz, Blues, Gospel (spiritual songs), R&B, also rap, from Craig Werner and our director's father, Robert Auerbach, who learned to play the piano at four years old and played different types of songs on his piano. I was very impressed. Robert Auerbach is 90 years old. Our director (Emily Auerbach) also had her son, David Auerbach, come to our class, and he played his viola.

I also took advantage of the tutors who came in on Mondays and Tuesdays. Amond and Lise helped with punctuation, run-on sentences, and correct wording before I turned in my homework. I found out you're never too old to increase your level of education, and I was the oldest out of my other twenty-nine classmates. We also read "Raisin in the Sun" and "Macbeth." We all were given parts and put on those plays in class. I learned a lot from also reading Plato and Socrates, Frederick Douglass and

Slavery, Thomas Jefferson, various poets, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and many other books.

Because of Odyssey, I'm on my way to get my Bachelor's Degree. My dream, vision, and goal will become a reality. The Odyssey is quite a journey. **(Mother Joyce Johnson)**





There will be moments when the uncertainty in your ability to complete assignments will consume and leave you feeling hopeless, but know that you can always reach out to staff to get you right back on the path to success. As a single mother of two, working two jobs, attending Madison College, and making time for Odyssey, I never felt more stressed, tired, and mentally drained, but I was



Odyssey showed me how to find my voice. What does finding a voice mean to you? It doesn't mean finding a right word to say. For me, it meant finding a wrong to make it right, or creating something out of nothing, or

acting on an impulse that is deep within you saying go ahead, speak up and just do it.

So, my dear friend, all in all, come to class with an open mind and open heart. You will love it!
(Yangchen Lhamo)



Welcome and congratulations on your acceptance into this journey known as Odyssey. I have no doubt you are feeling as I did on my first day: nervous, excited, scared, and unsure of how you will manage with

everything else in your life. Leave your fears at the door and accompany others in a place of acceptance. Embrace the friendships you will make. Take time to engage in events outside of class, especially the Moth Story Slams and trips to the museum to recharge.

determined to prove to myself that I had purpose and show my children that with hard work and determination accomplishments will flourish. That reason you applied, accepted, and walked through that door is the one that will push, test, and get you past any obstacle. Remember to keep your mind and heart open to the stories of great authors, poets, classmates, and artists as they empower you to look within yourself and see the world in a different light. **(Sandra Zintzun)**



Hello Odyssey students. If I can recall, I was feeling the same way you feel at this very moment. Just like you, I was nervous and I doubted myself. I wondered if this English course would be difficult. However, I

knew joining Odyssey was a step towards a better future for my family and me. Although I was scared, I was overjoyed and felt extremely blessed that I was one of the chosen 30 students. As a former Odyssey student, I can honestly say worry less, study more, and get comfortable with your classmates because eventually they will become family. Don't feel embarrassed to ask for help, as the Odyssey Staff will support you. **(Galeca McCain)**



Congratulations! I would like to welcome you to the Odyssey Project class of 2020!

What a better way to spend your Wednesday evenings now. I would also strongly suggest coming to tutoring nights. Going to this session every week with Kevin and a great group of people will feel just like a Wednesday class. From my personal take away, the full experience of attending the tutoring sessions and class feels like the real package of the power the Odyssey program has to offer. Taking your time analyzing and connecting with the assignments can help you reach your full potential. If you ever fall behind on your assignments, don't shy away by not attending class or tutoring nights.

You are now accountable for keeping up with the opportunity of having a seat with the Odyssey. Your commitment starts now. Please don't let your Odyssey family and yourself down by trying to quit the class. We are counting on you to help every one of your classmates be the best they can be. Try to stay



connected with your classmates, supporting staff, and professors, and you can be a great support for them too.

Congratulations once again, and I hope to meet every one of you soon. **(Ricardo Marroquin)**



Congratulations for making it here. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. Use this time wisely, and you won't regret it!

My anxiety around possibly missing a class is crazy because I love coming here; I've experienced and learned so much in this short time.

This time will go by so fast! **(Monica Mims)**



Focus! Odyssey is one of the greatest accomplishments you can achieve in life. Regardless if you pass without thinking, the course itself is life-altering. You become close with people from all walks of life, and you have

people who are going to gently push you to succeed. They won't stop until you achieve just that! During my year, I went through HELL and back; literally, I think I died, and with the strength of Odyssey I pulled through. They have plenty of resources to help with whatever hardships. Just BE THERE; those 2-4 hours were the most stress-relieving time I had all week with my hard life. OMG wait until you have to take a month and a half break, then two more of our classes were cancelled due to Wisconsin weather, and I was devastated so I kept asking can I come back next year, but that's not going as planned. Have fun, go to tutoring, and attend the events. When you leave, you're going to wish there was room in the back you could hide in until Wednesday at 5:30 when Char starts serving food! **(Savannah Rose Perry)**



First I want to congratulate you for making it in. I guarantee at the end of this journey you will not be disappointed. You will grow and learn, read and pronounce words you never thought you would—but relax, enjoy this Odyssey, and know you are now amongst family. Be ready for Plato’s cave, Shakespeare, and one of my favorites, “A Raisin in the Sun.” Acting was the bomb, and the guest speakers will be most memorable. I will encourage you to try and not miss class, ‘cause making up homework is a bit**. Thankfully tutoring is always there and a great way to catch up! ☺ **(Martina Mitchell)**



Welcome to the Odyssey Project! I am literally very excited for you all for being part of this odyssey. You might be having different thoughts, maybe anxiety; maybe you are being doubtful about this whole thing. Do not worry! The ones before me felt the same way, and I felt the same way on my first day of class. It is normal to have mixed feelings about this new adventure. Thirty different people, thirty different histories, and thirty unique souls will become family. You might even have classmates from different cultures and different countries. You will learn from each other and find out there are many similarities. You are here for a reason. We all have struggles in life, we have had our ups and downs, and they will continue to happen throughout this program.

The great thing about being part of this program? The staff want you to succeed, and they will be with you throughout those ups and downs. Work, work as hard as you can throughout your caves. Emily and Kevin will walk you through to successfully reach your goal. The Odyssey Project staff and Kevin’s team

of tutors will be there for you pretty much any time to work with you. Take advantage of the tutoring, as it will not only help you in this journey, but it will help you in future academic and personal goals.

The readings you have ahead of you throughout the two semesters are unique. “The Circuit” of Francisco Jimenez, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, and Malcolm X, to mention a few, are an inspiration from people who overcame hardships to be successful in their education. You might relate to one or all of them, and I hope you find that courage you need to overcome your obstacles as you read from these great writers. The “Allegory of the Cave” can be a challenging reading, but with the help of the tutors, you will relate to it as I did. We have, in different ways, been in caves that have held us down from reaching our goals. I will not wish you luck because I believe you are being blessed by being here as I was. Hard work and determination will make your “luck.” I am sure you will make this odyssey an unforgettable experience, as you are already part of the family. **YOU CAN DO IT! (J. Luis Pérez-Olguín)**





The first thing that I will say is to stay committed to this class every week! It may feel like a lot at times, but there are great resources to reach out to, so never be afraid to use them!

Coming into this class was a mixture of feelings. You'll know what I mean in time (lol). Having the drive to want more and further your education is always a good step in the right direction! There are great staff and classmates who just gave me life, and I'm so grateful to have met them! On my first day of class I was anxious and so shy! Now I can speak up in front of 30+ people no problem; this class gave me a voice! You're going to come across the most genuine and supportive people you've ever met ☺ Just remember to stay focused, use your resources, and speak up. The ending is near and it feels so surreal, but hard work pays off. May you enjoy your Odyssey as much as I have mine ♥ **(Cheyenne Pete)**



Coming into the Odyssey class, I was scared but excited. I didn't know what to expect. Honestly, after the first day my nerves got so bad I didn't think I had it in me to come back, but I did. It was one of the best decisions

I ever made.

The 29 other classmates you'll meet will become like family, and you'll learn and grow from each other in so many ways; I think you'll amaze yourself. Keeping up with the homework is something you definitely want to do. It may seem overwhelming at times, but overcoming that challenge is so much more rewarding. I thought to myself at times like, "What does this book have anything to do with what we're learning about?" Let me tell you everything we read has a purpose, a lesson waiting for us to learn.

Having Emily and Kevin there to help you every step of the way is pretty awesome, and everyone around you wants to see you succeed.

Honestly, being in this class made me look at life differently. I even I talk to my children differently. This class has forever changed me and my odyssey. **(Alice Ramirez)**



Welcome to Odyssey, where you can be yourself, learn a lot about your classmates, and absorb the great things that Odyssey has to offer. If you ever feel discouraged, you will love some of the great people to get you through this. Never give up, and keep fighting for a rewarding ending. **(Rana Potter)**



Welcome and congratulations! Being a part of Odyssey is both a memorable and exciting experience. There are so many great people you will meet and learn about. Although you may all feel like strangers at first, open your mind and get ready to meet friends. Begin taking the steps to a new chapter in life. Welcome! **(La'Cee Webster)**





Let me begin by congratulating and welcoming you to a life-changing journey—‘Odyssey Class of 2020’— that you are about to embark on.

First, be assured that you will come to love the class as time goes by. Trust me: you won’t want to miss the family-like get-togethers.

I know you may feel nervous on your first day, and you have all rights to feel such way, but be assured you are in the right place and in good hands. Just chill out and free your mind.

Don’t worry if you speak broken English or English with a heavy accent or are not a writer or public speaker because at the end of the course you will become both. Emily and her team will take you through every step and process along the way to become what you want to be in life.

As long as you attend class regularly, participate in class activities, and complete your assignments on time, rest assured you are on the bright side because ‘punctuality and regularity’ matter a lot in this program. Take it from me: this class is informal and like a family get-together where every student learns and shares experiences; thus your contributions and participations are recognized and valued.

I will tell you this: what makes this program unique is that you are treated as a family. Once a family member, always a family member, so no matter where you are or your status in life, you are hooked to Odyssey forever.

For those of you who might think of giving up, Emily and her team won’t let you give up. Even if you are sick, they are with you. You will be treated equally, and with love and compassion,



regardless of color, status, level of education, or age.

My brotherly advice to you is please do not panic. This class is not an avenue to test your knowledge or compete but rather a family union where you learn and share ideas and experiences in a most informal way.

In conclusion, please always remember that you are not alone in this crusade, and certainly you will never be alone. Emily and her dynamic team are always ready to help you out whenever you need help. For those of you who are not fans of speaking or hearing big, strange vocabulary words, be prepared to see and all kinds of strange words from Coach’s Mindbenders, and certainly you will get used to them as time goes by.

Finally, I would like to once again to congratulate you and welcome to Odyssey Class 2020. I wish you all the best in your endeavors as you journey through this process to the end.
(Abdourahman Sallah)



Welcome to the Odyssey Program. I am going to start this letter by congratulating each of you. You made a wise decision by choosing this route. By the end of this “journey,” as I call it, you won’t be the same person. Go on, look at your classmate beside you. He or she is not your competition; rather, he or she will be your new family member in the months to come. This program is not going to be easy; it is not going to be hard either. Emily and her staff will make sure that no one is left behind. However, 99% of the work has to come from you.

My advice is to come to every single class session, participate, and turn your homework in on time. Also, Kevin has tutoring sessions. I would recommend you take advantage of them.

Last but not least, at the beginning of classes, be focused and ask questions of your instructors if you don’t understand the material. They are there to help you.

Once again, welcome to a new beginning.
(Hezouwe Walada)



This program really and truly is amazing! Do your best to attend every single class, and allow yourself to be open.

I’ve had challenges and regrets. However, the energy that comes over me every time I attend Odyssey is something that only the experience can give! A friend tells me I have a glow after each class. It’s true! I’m always discussing things we covered and learning more each time. No matter what you do, Class of 2020, never ever give up! If you wake up, it’s a beautiful chance at another step. You just have to be willing to take it.

Life is an ongoing, learning lesson. This is a life-changing one.

At age 44, I’m becoming more confident in my abilities, and I believe the same will happen to you. Trust the process and allow it to guide you.

In the words of the Isley Brothers, “Come along and ride on this fantastic voyage,” Odyssey.
(NatuRa Warford)



ALUMNI CORNER

I LOVE ODYSSEY

BY JUANITA WILSON '07



I love Odyssey because before Odyssey I always felt like an outsider when I was among a group of people. I now feel that I can contribute to the conversation and feel that I am no longer a slow learner. I feel that I can accomplish whatever I set out to do. I am happy most of the time now.

I am going to be a lifelong learner.

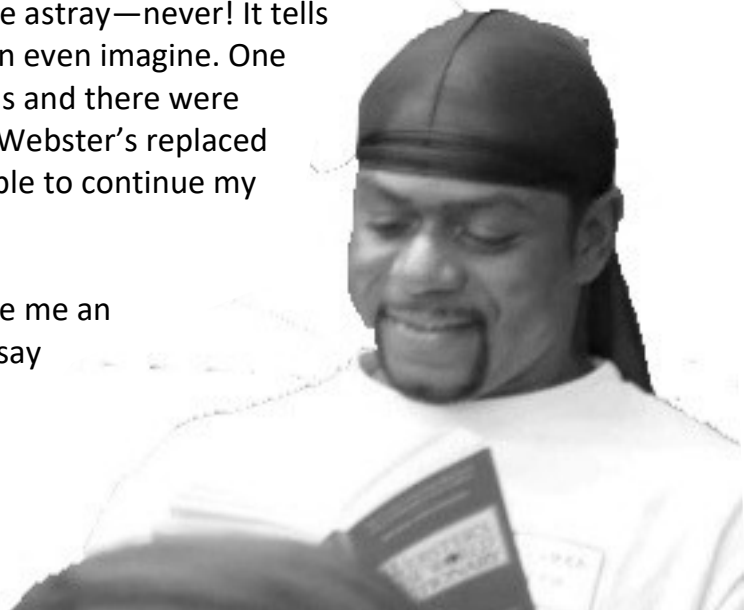
I feel that I am not alone anymore if I need help with a problem. I feel that I am loved by my teachers and classmates. I feel that life is beautiful this year and the rest of my life because of Odyssey. I feel that there will always be help available to me. I feel blessed.

I LOVE MY WEBSTER'S

BY TOSUMBA WELCH '13

I love my Webster's with a great passion and sense of dependency. Webster's has never stood me up, let me down, or led me astray—never! It tells me secrets that sometimes no one else can even imagine. One time I was walking through a path of words and there were blank spots on the path. Out of nowhere, Webster's replaced those blank spots with words, and I was able to continue my walk.

Webster's sat me down one night and gave me an idea that landed me second place in an essay contest answering the question "Why Vote?" I have never known Webster's to be anything but perfect. Webster's has given me 230,000 reasons to be in love with it. I love my Webster's.



DON'T QUIT

BY JOE ROBINSON '04

My advice to the new Odyssey class is don't quit. No matter how hard it gets, don't quit.

When you get off work at 5:30, and you only have 30 minutes to get the kids situated and get to class, don't quit.

When you get stuck in the middle of writing a paper or doing a project, don't quit.

When you find out that your father has cancer and has to have surgery and treatment, don't quit.

When you have circumstances that occur that make you miss a class and you get behind on your work, don't quit.

When you feel as if you're not getting anything out of a particular subject, don't quit. When people tell you you are wasting your time, don't quit. When your car breaks down, and it's twenty below outside, and the only way to get here is on the city bus, don't quit. When your spouse is complaining that your five children are driving her crazy every Wednesday night, don't quit. When one of your

classmates makes you feel stupid for voicing your opinion, don't quit. When your boyfriend or girlfriend accuses you of cheating on them because you had to turn your cell phone off during class, don't quit.

And if you get to the point where you just can't find any more motivation to force yourself to keep coming to this class, my advice is to call Emily, and I guarantee you that she won't let you quit! There were many times that I wanted to just give up, but Emily would not let me. She believed in us more than some of us believed in ourselves.

Finally, I would like to say that, the first couple of weeks, I was in class trying to figure out, what is the catch? Why are these people offering us this course for free? There must be a catch. I found out what the catch was. Each one of the teachers was trying to trick us into believing that our lives would somehow be better if we completed this Odyssey class and then go on to graduate from college. I guess I must be a little naïve, because I fell for it, hook, line, and sinker.



Joe Robinson with classmate Tineisha Scott, who earned her Master's Degree at Edgewood College



Joe Robinson with his family

WE ATE DOG FOOD

BY ALICE MCDANIEL '09

WRITTEN FOR KEVIN MULLEN'S ODYSSEY ALUMNI COMPOSITION CLASS



... You can only write about what you feel and know really. I know that my mom was not a high school graduate, but no one else would have known that unless she told you herself. She was a very well-

versed, super-intelligent, beautiful, spiritual, and loving woman.

My dad, on the other hand, could hardly read or write. He has lived most of his life with those limitations. He is a very funny, kind-hearted, spiritual, and good-looking man.

While in the care of my dad, my four other siblings and I ate dog food. That is what we were told some years later, and our mom confirmed that story. You are probably wondering how that happened. Well, I will tell you what we have been told.

My dad went to the grocery store. He was in the canned goods section, or so he thought. He looked at the picture on the can of some corn beef hash. "Ha, ha!" he said and grabbed it.

When my mom arrived home from work, she asked him if we

had eaten yet. His reply was "Yes." My mom asked him, "What did you feed the children?" He said, "some hash." For those of you who have never eaten it and never want to, hash, according to Webster's Dictionary, comes from the French *hacher*, to chop, and means "to chop up meat and vegetables for cooking; usually a baked mixture, a muddled mess." She asked him again, "What did you say you fed them?" My dad replied again, "Hash. The cans are in the trash can."

My mom went to the trash can. As she lifted each of the cans out, she screamed at my dad, "You fool! You gave my children dog food, with your, 'no reading' ass!" It goes without saying, that he was not asked to go shopping for groceries again.

My parents didn't have the opportunity to complete their education due to obstacles. My dad was from the small town of Stamps, Arkansas. By the age of four, his mom was now a single parent. His father had left them. As the oldest of her two sons, he was now the man of the house. He went to school on a regular basis only up to the third grade. He had to work in the fields, either having to stay home or be pulled from his class at school whenever it was time for crops to be harvest.

***We ate dog food,
but we were rich.***

Mother was from a large family of eleven and also from Arkansas. She got to go to school every day until she met my dad. With her parents' permission, they got married a year later.

They moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin several years later along with their two daughters. During their marriage they had some economic struggles. It was not for lack of ambition and determination and drive. Both of them would work—Dad as a laborer and Mom as a waitress or maid. I remember she would wear a black and white uniform when she rode the bus to

the eastside of the city where the rich people lived. . . .

Both of my parents instilled in their children that we should do our best at whatever we chose to do in life. "'Can't' is not a word," my mother would say. We could not use it at all as an excuse or reason not to go for things in life, like getting an education. . . .

Education is the key to freedom, to advancing your world. Wealth is not only of material and financial means; it is also knowledge.

We ate dog food, but we were rich.

ODYSSEY POEM

BY ANTHONY JEFFERSON '17

Odyssey is the pencil of life with which we can erase past regrets and rewrite our future.

Every "word" formed solidifies our resolve, those periods at the end a proud stamp of success.

Sentence by sentence, we forge a new tale.



SPECIAL ODYSSEY MOMENTS



Odyssey Project receives award at Chancellor Becky Blank's house; Teresa Tellez-Giron '04 receiving 2014 YWCA Woman of Distinction Award; Urban farmer and genius grant winner Will Allen with Nicki Cooper '16; former UW Chancellor Biddy Martin flanked by Madison Police officers Anthony Ward '04 and Corey Saffold '06; Class of 2014 students featured on Capital City Hues cover.



TV personality Tavis Smiley and scholar Cornel West taking Odyssey students out to dinner during their Poverty Tour; Tosumba Welch '13 winning Best Actor award from the Bartell Theatre; scholar Henry Louis Gates III with Kegan Carter '04 and Josephine Lorya Ozulamoi '08; Yolanda King (daughter of the late Martin Luther King, Jr.) with Emily Auerbach, Juanita Wilson '07, Pamela Holmes '04, and Denise Maddox '04; author Jelissa Edwards '16 on cover of BRAVA Magazine.