

ODYSSEY ORACLE

CONQUERING CAMPUS



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CONQUERING CAMPUS

One of the best parts was getting my ID at Union South. Getting our IDs made us/me feel like we are really part of the UW school system. Going to the Chazen Museum was fun but it was very short, meaning we only got twenty minutes per teacher. OMG, seeing the glass art was really cool, but learning about how the museum works was interesting. Seeing the artwork and being told about it as very interesting. . . The best part of the night was getting to talk to Emily on the bus. **(Margarita Barajas)**

One of the most memorable things from the trip was the artwork. The artwork was absolutely amazing! I love art. I love colors and interesting things. I love learning and seeing things from the past. This was the perfect trip for me. I almost felt like a kid again, getting on the yellow bus, walking in groups, taking a class picture, and having a tour guide for the museum. At least it felt like there was a tour guide, because he did an amazing job! I like this class. I like the teachers and the students. I like the lady who provided and prepared the food for us, too. I was focused on the food. I also like the fact that we got our IDs. I felt welcomed, like a real UW student. I am excited about this whole experience. I thank you all! **(Laisha Cooke)**



The most memorable moment I shared during the trip was going to the campus on a school bus. I felt as though we were going to a camp with no kids. It sparked a few memories of when I had worked with

kids at the Boys and Girls Club. They were loud, complaining little people, except this time it was adults. There was no air conditioning, so you can just imagine.

My second memorable experience was visiting the museum. It was my first time. I really enjoyed taking photos and touring the building's artwork. I was shocked when I saw the sculpture of the two goats kissing with a large human penis between them. Next to that was an ugly, demonic-looking sculpture with blood, mouths, tongues, and hands all over it. A few of my classmates shared a few laughs and told me my facial expressions were priceless. It was a blast, and I would do it all over again. **(Ron Burford)**



We started class by grabbing food and then immediately getting on the bus. We travelled all the way down to Union South to get our pictures taken for our student IDs. I'm not going to say they were the most glamorous pictures. . . .

After we got our photos taken, we hopped back on the bus and were Chazen-bound. We got to the Chazen and took plenty of pictures. Jerome made the trip and taking pictures way more fun than it should have been. We split into two groups. One went with Gene, and the other group went with Emily. Gene showed us a lot of ancient art, and Emily showed us a lot more art from the "Black Era." We really got to compare and contrast both eras to observe how boring, stiff, old art may turn into hip and unique New Age art. We left a little early because of time constraints, but it was a great trip overall. We came back to Odyssey, and everyone went home. **(Corey Dean)**

The most memorable moment I had from the class trip was getting my student ID. At that moment I felt proud of myself. I felt accepted and knew at that moment in time that I hadn't given up on going after my dreams. I had put all of my fears behind me. Another thing I really enjoyed was all of the artwork that I got to see, especially the statue of the hand that had all different types of people inside of it. **(Tiffany Dixon)**



I have to say that with all the things going on in my life and in the world, it was super exciting to get our IDs and go to the art museum. It was cool with the different pieces and the way it made each one of us feel. It was the break at the top of the mountain we climb to get a good look at the journey ahead. **(Ashton McDonald)**

It was Wednesday, September 18th, 2019. We all went at 6 PM with the bus. We got to Union South around 6:15 PM. It was a very good trip because everybody was happy to be getting their ID cards. Everyone got very good pictures. After that, we took group pictures at Union South. The bus came and got us again when we finished there and took us to the Museum of Art. The only thing that impressed me at the museum was Jesus Christ, with pictures of Mary, his mother. We saw a lot of things, and we also took group pictures at the museum. **(Kossiawavi Elohe)**



I was very proud. It made me feel very important. It made me feel as though I could ascend with my education. It was like a breath of fresh air. I love taking pictures, so I was ecstatic to get pretty for photos. Everyone was happy and smiling. I got acquainted with the classmates I didn't know. Everyone has great personalities and great senses of humor.

The art museum was amazingly fun. I really enjoy museums and art, so it was right up my alley. I think that may have been my first time at the one in Madison. I learned a lot as well. It is amazing what you can interpret from a sculpture or a painting. Also, hearing others' thoughts was nice. I have to get back and experience the entire art museum! **(Jyneeva Hunt)**



The most memorable moment from the Union was seeing how the place looks on the inside! The most memorable moment from the Chazen was seeing the different kinds of art. The glass exhibit was very interesting to me; it was very unique and something I would put in my home. Something I also remember is the demonic things. The weird monkey kind of scared me. **(Natia Saffold)**

I think getting the ID card was definitely a memorable moment. Just being on campus was a great feeling. I didn't understand how to interpret most of the artworks, but with the help of our teachers (Emily and Gene), it helped and made me see the artwork in a whole different light. **(Tina Martinez)**

The class trip was fun; it felt really good getting on the school bus only because I have not ridden a school bus in so long. It felt good riding on the bus with the wind blowing in fresh air. Upon arriving at the museum, I was quite nervous because I had never been to a museum before. It was very nice seeing all the different art. I love the thought of freedom, and a lot of people express their thoughts in art. Every piece that I saw was so amazing. **(Ashley Lee)**

When visiting campus last week I was very excited to get my student ID. It really set it in my head that I was actually a student again. I really want this education for myself and for my son. Being able to see that I'm actually a UW student now tells me that this was meant to be. **(LaDíá Key)**



I liked how different sections or floors had different time periods of art. It was cool to see how art progressed over the years, and how the most recent art looked like anything goes. Art today has no limitations and isn't constricted to a little box like it has been in the past.

I recently watched "Eternity's Gate" about Vincent Van Gogh, and there was a scene where an art gallery owner shamed Van Gogh's art, which was hard to watch. It seemed like a lot of his life was a struggle for him because of what he wanted to paint and what society at the time wanted him to paint. **(Nina Salisbury)**

The Chazen Museum of Art was cool. I took one picture of the wolf and the rabbit. It just jumped out at me; it had a really cool meaning to me when I looked at it. **(Marcello Segovia)**

I love museums in general, but the Chazen Museum of Art was definitely something different. The art pieces were each unique in their own way. Different materials are used, materials that you wouldn't think could be made into art. One of the pieces was made from dirt, and the other from materials you would find in your home.

One of my favorite pieces was the wolf and the sheep. I might be biased given that my Celtic totem is a wolf. Then there's the student IDs. Mine looks like a mugshot and the lighting was horrid, plus my hair is standing up on one side. Overall it was amazing, and I cannot wait to see the pictures. **(Loché Mothoa)**

The coolest part for me was getting our student ID cards. I really enjoyed feeling like I'm a college student now. Learning about all of the benefits that come with being a student at UW is very exciting as well.

The museum was interesting too. I loved learning about the different art and the reasons why they belonged in the sections they were in. I liked the modern art more than the other exhibits. You could really tell how much more creative freedom they had than artists from other generations. I loved all the glasswork; that has to be a very frustrating style of art.

Lastly, I enjoyed the bus ride, and it was nice getting to know classmates who I haven't sat next to in class. I spent time talking with Eliazar about sports and family, and I enjoyed learning about his life and interests. **(Riley Sessions)**



The trip to the Chazen Museum of Art was an incredible experience for me. I have always had a difficult time understanding art, and I couldn't create any level of appreciation for it. Over the past year, I have tried to experiment with art by taking a stab at painting and drawing. While at the museum, I was excited to learn and see the different styles people have used over the years. I found that many of the things that Emily and Gene taught me, as well as other aspects of the art, helped me see art more deeply. It is cool to see the way people create art to express things they find valuable or important, and then to see how that changes over the course of time. It made me wonder about the Modern Art section. I wondered if we had reached a point where the items in our paintings aren't the point, but rather the freedom

we have to paint or draw them as we wish. The goats were so strange. I cannot wait to go back and just spend a day wandering around, soaking in my introspection. **(Krista Mellott)**

First of all, I want to say thank you for taking us on a field trip! They have always been my favorite thing since I was a child. I didn't get my student ID because I am still waiting for my passport, but I will get it pretty soon.

I enjoyed our trip to the art museum; it was my first time visiting one. It was too bad we didn't have much time to really look at all of the paintings and crafts. Hopefully, I will go back sometime soon, and get more out of the wonderful experience. **(Elíazar Martínez-Munguia)**



I LOVED our trip to Union South as well as the Chazen Museum. I felt very important walking into Union South and getting my badge as a UW college student, since I never imagined being a student at a legitimate university.

The Chazen Museum was sooooo interesting. The art from history was okay. The coolest part was all of the different kinds of coins from all over, as well as an Indian sculpture done by a white man, and how different the structure of the child was, not being done by one of his kind. My absolute favorite sculpture was one where a man was in despair



and looking up, his throat screaming in pain. The belly also had many different people sculpted on it, which told different stories that the main sculpture was feeling or had gone through. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

The most memorable moment from last week's field trip was being able to not only see the art in person, but also being able to learn and talk about it as we went from room to room. Being able to walk around campus made me feel like a real student. I'm really proud of my Student ID. **(Jaison Thomas)**

One memorable moment about our trip to the Chazen Museum was when we went to the top floor and saw those bizarre art works, especially the one of people being cannibals and eating each other. It was a bit weird seeing things like that in a museum. Then again, thinking about it, I realize life is somewhat strange and weird most times. **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**



EMBARKING ON AN ODYSSEY

odyssey: a long wandering marked by many changes in fortune; from an ancient Greek poem by Homer about the warrior Odysseus' adventure-filled journey home from Troy.



The class is called The Odyssey Project because, as students and teachers, we will all be embarking on a journey together. I doubt that we will face the same challenges that Odysseus faced on his journey home from Troy, but I know there will be challenges. There will be

times we struggle and wonder if we're making the right decisions. I hope there will be times where we feel we are in exactly the right spots doing what we need to keep our journey moving in the right direction.

When I first thought of how this class could be an odyssey for me, it started with day one and ended with graduation. I pictured walking down the graduation stage, like I'm sure Odysseus pictured walking down the beaches of Ithaca, ending his journey. Now I see this class as a tarmac with tons of runways, all of which are offering us opportunities and avenues in life, whether it is jobs or more schooling or just a chance to be more confident in ourselves. **(Riley Sessions)**



I believe this course is called the Odyssey Project because it is a journey where we will grow and overcome challenges through the lessons carefully designed by our teachers. This class

is an odyssey for me

because, before being accepted, I felt like I was walking in place, wanting to go places but having mountains in my way. My desire to achieve certain life-long dreams began to feel unrealistic. The Odyssey Project opened a door for me. Through this door I saw a path, though I do not yet know where this path may lead me. This path feels different beneath my feet. I feel more confident, motivated, and hopeful. This class is the beginning of my odyssey. **(Krista Mellott)**



The Odyssey Program is a long journey to help people from all walks of life come together and learn not just about books but also about each other. It's a new life journey. I hope this Odyssey Project will help me find myself and show both my kids and me that there is

more to life, more to this world, than the life right in front of us, the life we have been living these last years. **(Margie Barajas)**





I see this project as an epic retelling or rewriting of the story of one's adventure. It is a poetic training camp to begin the journey of

conquering the battle of fears, misperceptions, and self. Yet another story begins today.

(Ron Burford)



Odyssey is a journey, so I believe the Odyssey Project can be the start of the journey to the rest of our lives. The class can be an odyssey for me because it opens up opportunities that I was not aware of before. It will test my commitment and show me that I can succeed and graduate, even as a young single mother. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**



I think this class is going to take us on a journey, a journey we'll never forget. A lot of emotions and new things will come from this class; a lot of information new and old. I think we'll meet some amazing people and learn about their lives and experiences. **(Laisha Cooke)**



This course will be a long wandering marked by many changes in our fortune, also our future! I for certain see the direct connection in how the class will be an odyssey for me, for I am wandering in life, struggling to regain balance, stability, and focus. I don't expect it to be or get easy, so I'm buckled in for the Odyssey to change my fortune. **(Jerome Sanders)**



Odyssey inspires people to be their best selves. Getting in the routine of school, holding yourself accountable to showing up and completing your assigned tasks, being in a positive, uplifting environment, attaining new knowledge, and participating in class can and will be transforming to students. The transformation that will take place during the course is a journey from where one started to where one's going. **(Aerial Bailey)**



Education is a journey that can take you places you never thought you could go. I hope to reach places I've never been by reading important texts and expanding my world view. The Odyssey Project can help me reach my goal by exposing me to more literature and writing-based projects. Odyssey to me is a brand new experience. **(Corey Dean)**



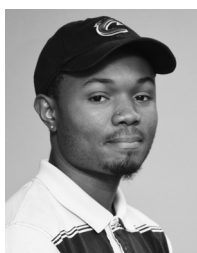
I think it's called Odyssey because we're going to face many challenges on this journey. This class is an odyssey for me because this is where I start my journey into changing what I want for my future. **(Tiffany Dixon)**



We all come from different walks of life / backgrounds. However, we all want the same thing in this course: to learn more, achieve, take a step forward to education, and maybe even go further and get a degree from some college. This class may be an odyssey for me by surprising me with opportunities I never thought were available to me. It could also show me other students just like myself who are striving to have an education. **(Jyneeva Hunt)**



This class will be an odyssey for me because it's going to be a journey full of knowledge and wisdom that changes my life for the better. I believe this class is going to open so many doors for me in bettering my future. This class is going to get my foot in the door so I can pursue my college dreams. **(Timothy Mosley)**



Over the course of the next nine months we will go through things that will make us sad, happy, and mad. Experiencing these trials and tribulations will make us stronger and better people. Therefore, going through these things starting at one point and ending at a later point in your life would be considered an odyssey because you went through things that changed you as a person. **(Jaison Thomas)**



Odyssey will help me to achieve my goal and change the story of my life. It will help me start a beginning of my new life. **(Kossiawavi Eloh)**



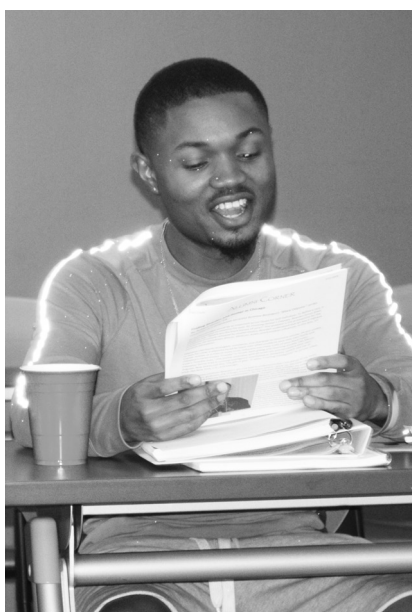
The first time I was interviewed by Emily in her office, I saw many photos of multi-racial people. That in itself made me think of the great diversity and the multicultural background that each person has. Teachers, students, staff from the youngest to the oldest create an environment of unexpected, wonderful experiences, definitely an odyssey.

Taking this program is a challenge, particularly because I am having a hard time writing. To me, writing is not only a matter of talent but of art, science, and the ability to express what the heart is saying, what the mind is loudly speaking. To translate it on a sheet of paper is immortal. **(Elíazar Martínez-Mungia)**



It's called the Odyssey Project because a lot of people who have taken the class have overcome certain barriers in their lives that have made it hard for them to continue their education. It also gives us hope just in the name that, no matter the trials and tribulations we've gone through in life, we can still succeed as long as we keep going.

I would like to think of my life as an odyssey. This class is part of my route, helping me advance closer to my destination, even though I may not know exactly where that is at this point into it. **(Nina Salisbury)**



All of us in the class are starting our odyssey into education, and the course is going to guide us from the beginning to the end of our journey. **(Carmen Tinajero)**



Odyssey is a path that keeps going towards your dreams. **(Rasaki Emmanuel)**

MOVED BY MALCOLM X

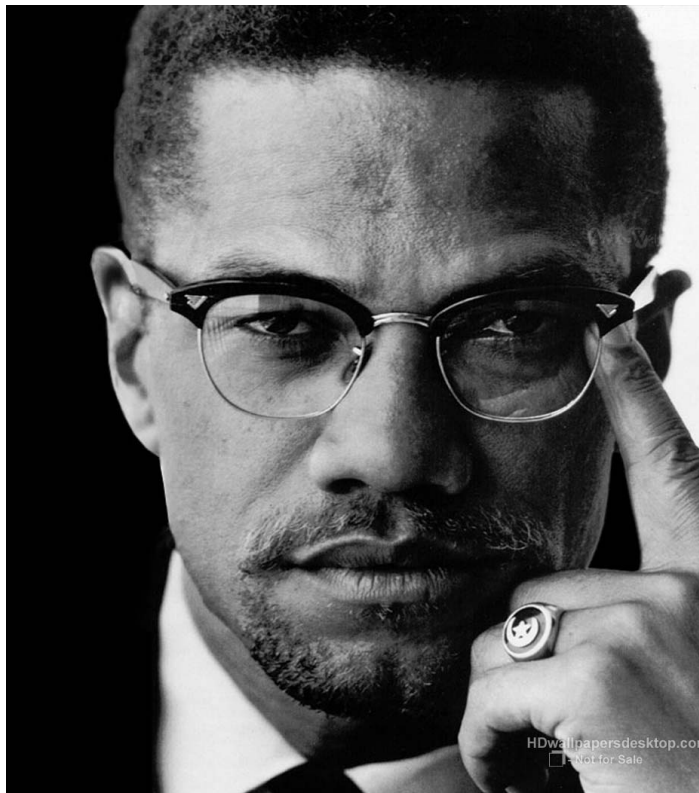
"My alma mater was books, a good library.... I could spend the rest of my life reading, just satisfying my curiosity." –The Autobiography of Malcolm X

I, like Malcolm X, attacked my ignorance while in prison. I noticed a trend where all young black men were only checking books out in the Urban section, so I took it upon myself to walk the aisle. Not many who looked like me were walking, though, and I came across 500-600 page books I was determined to start and finish. Similar to Malcolm X, I tried skimming over words I didn't know until a buddy encouraged me to get a dictionary. From that point on, my mind was forever changed.

So in the spirit of Malcolm X, I'd say "homemade education" happened within his cell, a place he was sent for punishment for crimes, his mind robbed of all things good until within himself he sees the opportunity to build more and become more by empowering and educating himself intentionally to advance his purpose and endeavors. **(Jerome Sanders)**

Malcolm X used the resources he had to educate himself every chance that presented itself. He felt liberated by the fact he could read and teach himself anything, as opposed to the traditional school setting that was mostly a whitewashed curriculum, taught by predominantly white men. Even though he didn't have his physical freedom, he was able to unlock mental freedom by reading and learning.

While I was reading this piece, I also thought a lot about my son's father, Smoody. He is currently incarcerated and considers Malcolm X a role model. I see a lot of similarities between the two



as I read. Smoody is an avid reader and is full of knowledge (and s**t at times). Smoody is also Muslim, which I know played a huge role in Malcolm X's life.

My heart breaks for the men and women who are incarcerated and don't know how to read or write. What a lonely place that must be for them. What also really resonated with me was when Malcolm said he was able to read and UNDERSTAND. That is something I feel like I struggle with. I can read five pages, then realize even though I was reading, none of it

registered in my brain. **(Nina Salisbury)**

Malcolm means the best person to learn from is yourself, meaning you should be your own "teacher" in terms of providing yourself with knowledge and power. I agree with him that we ourselves are our own "roadblocks" when it comes to learning as much as we can and being our own source of information. **(Jaison Thomas)**

Malcolm said that although he was imprisoned, the time he spent drowning himself in books and knowledge was the freest he had felt up to that point. That speaks volumes to me. It means that no matter what situation we find ourselves in or how low we are, we can always free ourselves through books, information, and just using our imagination. Even if it's only temporary, we have an escape through stories. Malcolm X is proof of that. He's a man who was molded by books and went on to change the world. **(Riley Sessions)**



Malcolm X's "homemade education" came from being in prison and knowing he only had a little education that wasn't enough for him to get by on. He started to write every day and read every day until he fell asleep. He enjoyed reading more than the average person

While reading Malcolm X's "Homemade Education," I thought of the Odyssey Project. Everything is new, uncomfortable, and interesting, and it makes you want to understand everything you see in life and class a little more. "Homemade Education" lets you know you have the power to have as much knowledge as you want. The power is yours to own your education. **(LaDiá Key)**

Sometimes being self-taught rather than learning in an institution (school) is best because you know what your needs and wants are. You best thrive off getting exactly the teaching style you need. **(Arkeia Cameron)**

The priceless pearls of knowledge were found while Malcolm X was in prison. Ever since then, he became a radical reader with his own light to shine on the darkness of ignorance. I would say that his education came from being self-taught by reading books after books. . . . My enthusiasm grows just to think that I will be attending class each week—reading, philosophy, history—accompanied by a group of people from whom I can learn new things. **(Elíazar Martínez-Mungia)**

Malcolm X was imprisoned and could have easily given up; but he did the best he could with the tools available to him. . . . I feel inspired to learn more words and teach my children more words. This reading has helped me to understand some major benefits to seeking out knowledge of words and how this knowledge gives us the ability to obtain further education with ease. Homemade education allows us to eliminate our perception that learning can only be completed with a teacher and a

student. Homemade education can only be bound by our own lack of curiosity. **(Krista Mellott)**

Malcolm is pointing out that if you really want to learn the truth, you have to do some research and studies of your own, especially if you are a black individual in this world. As blacks we were always robbed of our cultural history, sad to say. This world has always been racist and ashamed of blacks. So if we really want to learn about our people, we have to be willing and able to do the research. **(Tim Mosley)**

Malcolm X basically educated himself, taught himself how to read and write. Once he perfected the art of writing and being able to read with comprehension, he started reading more and more, educating himself. I don't think he would have spent that much time reading books had he not been in prison. There's also a possibility that he gained more knowledge than he could have ever obtained in college. **(Loché Mothoa)**

Malcolm wanted so much to speak to Mr. Muhammad that he copied the dictionary. He grew, and the more and longer he practiced, the more he thirsted for knowledge. He made a goal and achieved it. I value his commitment and dedication to learning to read, write, and learn. **(Ashton McDonald)**

Reading and studying in prison is how Malcolm attained his knowledge. He expanded his vocabulary by studying the dictionary. I believe everyone has their own way of learning. For Malcolm, his was reading and isolation. I know from personal experience (my father was in prison) that prison can be very resourceful and educational to people. It sucks that he had to be in prison, but prison is what molded him into the respected man he is today. **(Aerial Bailey)**

Malcolm gained a lot of information after he copied the entire dictionary. He did this because he didn't like how he had a hard time expressing himself while writing and because he wasn't the strongest reader. I think a homemade education is, in a way, an odyssey. Everything about Malcolm's story is inspiring, and it really puts how important literature is into perspective. **(Corey Dean)**

Malcolm would be able to learn more about history if he learned on his own because he thought he wasn't being taught everything. He could teach himself about anything he wanted and whenever he wanted, all without distraction from school parties, girls, and so on. He could teach himself more about the African American race and history because this was not being taught in school. He educated himself on things he knew would be most helpful to him to help educate black men. **(Margie Barajas)**

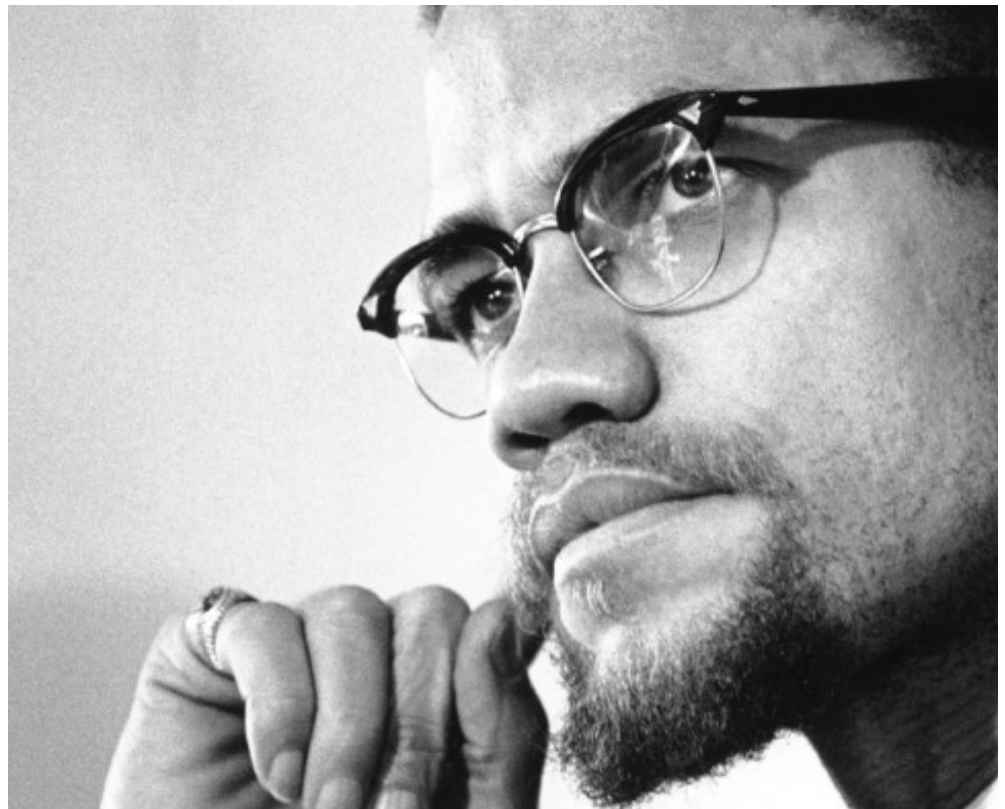
Malcolm's concept of homemade education is the opportunity for someone to learn at their own rate or pace, outside of the constraints of trying to keep steady pace with another person. He could move at his own pace and take his time, little by little; his knowledge of what he learned grew exponentially. He had time to create his own love for his own learning. **(Ron Burford)**

From an early age, we are poked, primed, and prodded to have an excitement around education. Many, like Malcolm X, have to find

an internal motivation to find a personal fuel for learning. Malcolm X's determination to learn even if he had to teach himself shows us that education is about a curiosity to learn. It shows that education is not about getting an A on a test or your school getting the highest standardized placement test score to compete for federal tax dollars.

Education can be "homemade"—self-taught, self-directed— from an internal ember for learning that fuels the mind to discover an unlimited well of information. "Homemade Education" represents how we learn when we hold ourselves accountable for learning and see its unlimited potential to mold and share our lives. A "homemade education," just like Grandma's apple pie, is probably a lot better than the store-bought education our children and young adults receive today. **(Melissa Herriges)**

Homemade education is self-taught education that doesn't involve an actual school. Education can be at home or wherever you dwell. I enjoyed reading about Malcolm and his life, I've never known much about him. I've seen the movie about him, which I loved, but I don't know much about him and his studies. We were all taught about Martin but not much if any about Malcolm. I think that's for a reason. **(Laisha Cooke)**



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

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



Elíazar Martínez-Munguia

Ever since I was a child, the people who know me have called me Eli. It's a short way to say my name. On one occasion, while reading the Old Testament, I came across the name Eliazar, which is a very common

name in the Bible and basically means "God is my help." In the year 2003, I had an accident. The truck I was driving turned over several times due to the failure of a front tire. That day, I thought I wouldn't live to tell the story. Although the truck was completely destroyed, I got out alive. "God is my help."



Margarita Barajas

I was given the name Margarita by my father. I am my father's first-born daughter. I was to be named after his mother, my grandmother Margarita (Marge). My last name is Barajas. I was given my last name

from my mother, due to the fact that at the time I was born my parents were not married. The law in San Antonio, Texas, at that time was if two people had a child and were not married, then the child had to take the mother's last name. I was named Margarita Barajas and not Margarita Ramirez.

Growing up, I was given the nickname Margie, short for Margarita. I was named after one of my older cousins (Margaret).

Later on, when I was about nine or ten years old, my uncle Robert, who is disabled from a self-inflicted gunshot to the head, gave me two nicknames. The first one is Moo Moo, and the second one is Medusa. My uncle gave me the name Moo Moo because he said it was fun for him to say. He then gave me the name Medusa. He said it was because I was pretty and had long hair, and it reminded him of snakes. To this day, he still calls me Moo Moo to be funny sometimes.



Loché Mothoa

The name Loché was given to me by Gramzeel (my mom's mother). There was no deep thought put into my name. The agreement was that if I was a boy my dad would name me, and if I was a girl my mom

would name me. According to the scan, I was a boy. On Thanksgiving '94, I was born. There I was, nameless and dressed in blue (I was supposed to be a boy, remember).

Eventually my grandmother arrived, looked at my mom, took one look at my dad, and my name just popped up in her head. The "LO" in my name is from my mom's name, Lorraine. The "Ch" is from my dad's name, Christopher (Chris), and the "E" is because both of their names (almost) end with an "E". I guess the accent on the E is for flavor. I honestly love my name because I am the only one in the world with my name. It has no origin, no meaning. It is unique and made just for me.





Ronald Vincent Burford

My name is Ronald Vincent Burford. Ronald means advice, decision, and ruler. Vincent means conqueror and to conquer. Burford means a stronghold, fortified manor, and beautiful fortress.

I go by many names, for in Hebrew, the name Ron, which I tell people to call me by, means Song. I accept that I am my song. I move and operate as a song. I can sing. I have a beautiful sound and a magnificent voice. I am like a sweet scent, a delicious aroma, a satisfying full course meal. I sing because I am happy, and I sing because I am free. I sing to praise God and to war against everything that wars against me.

This is the declaration of my name. I decided to do this because my family didn't give us a lot of history on things such as our name. I would ask, but much of the family has passed away. However, I do know that I was given the first name after my dad and the last name after my mom. My middle name came from my grandma. We are a joined married/blended family of Smiths, Wilmers, and Burfords. This is due to the elder women in our families taking the last names of their husbands and passing them on to their children. My grandparents lived in the era of slavery, so this was a way to keep the name of the men alive in case they were killed, traded, or sold. This way even if they married or were forced to marry, the children would possibly have a way of knowing and finding their father.



Riley Sessions

My name Riley is of Irish descent. It was given to me because it was my great-grandfather's last name. The Irish version of the name is O'Reilly, which is how my great-grandfather's last name is spelled.

The name Riley isn't as common and is unisex, so as a kid I was insecure about my name. Now I enjoy having a different name than most people. I get my last name "Sessions" from my father. The most I know about that is that was his and his dad's last name. When I looked up the history of the name "sessions," it said that it was of French origin, which leads me to believe that at some point in my family history, we were given that name through slavery. That is something I think about from time to time. How would my story be different if I knew the name and history of the African side of my family?



Laisha Marie Cooke

Laisha – Well, when I was younger, I would look up my name, but it never really popped up. Now I look it up, and it says the meaning is prosperous and is American in origin. Yet another site said it was

of Indian origin. Prosperous means flourishing financially, bringing wealth and success.

Marie – Well, this is interesting. The name Marie is French, and its meaning is bitter, even in Hebrew and in English.



Cooke – the name Cooke is Scottish. It's derived from Latin "Cocus." This name was also given to a keeper of an eating house or a seller of cooked meats. Even in English, it means a cook or a man who sold cooked meats.

The 'eshas and 'ishas were popular in the 90s. I was told that my mother named me. I am not sure why she named me Laisha, but I always assumed it was to be different than the other 'eshas or 'ishas. Also, my dad's name starts with an L. My middle name was given to me because it's the middle name of my mother and both of my sisters. The last name, Cooke, has changed in my family. Some of my family goes by Cooke or Cook. I am not sure why that is.



Jyneeva Hunt

My name is Jyneeva, and it's a beautiful name. It's pronounced Geneva but spelled with a J. My name is unique because of its spelling. Also, it sounds lovely and looks great on paper. It doesn't mean anything; my mom said she just "always loved that name." ☺ The difference from my name and all the other Genevas is the spelling. Jyneeva fits me in my life because it automatically portrays uniqueness, difference, and beauty, all at once. I think my name reflects my identity because of the kind of person I am. I am beautiful and unique, and all my siblings' names start with J. ☺

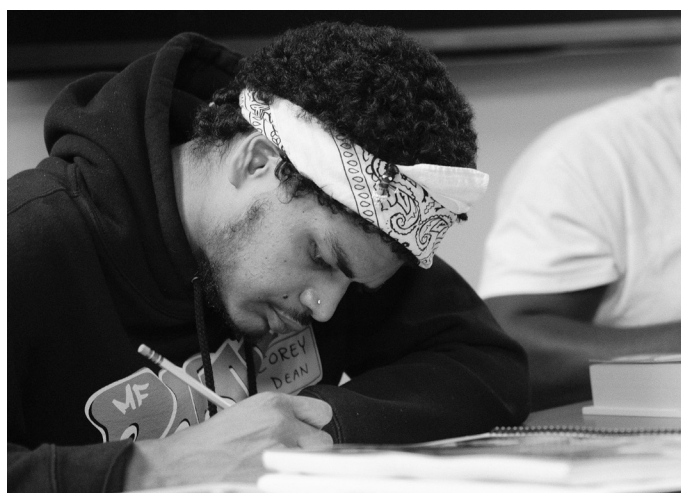


Corey Michael Dean

Corey: Corey is a name deriving from Irish roots. This name was given to me from my grandfather on my mother's side once I was born. Its significance to me comes from the fact that it's not a name I hear often. To me, it is somewhat special in that way. I used to hate my name because I thought that "Corey" was a "soft" name, but I have grown to appreciate it because when combined with the rest of my name it sounds sturdy and has a level of finesse. I believe this name has made it so I don't sound "hard" but instead has turned me into some sort of character in my own world.

Michael: Michael is rooted in Hebrew and means "Who is like God." This name does not mean that much to me by itself. The importance comes from the connection it gives me to my father. He and I share the same middle name. Though I hardly use my middle name and am not a huge fan of it, my father always used it instead of my first name when he addressed me. Part of me appreciates the aspects that it brings to my life, and the other half is apathetic towards it, but necessary evils exist everywhere.

Dean: Dean is a name that's rooted in English. Unlike my middle name, I have an affinity for this title. My mother's maiden name is Vandenberg, and that was almost passed on to me, but she didn't like the idea of me not representing my father's half of the family since her dad named me. Vandenberg is also super awkward to spell. If my



first name has transformed me into a "character," then Dean is the name of the world I live in. I don't think I could appreciate my first name if it weren't for my last name. It holds a special place in my heart because it brings me closer to my father's side of the family, and it is a great "period" for the finished product that is my name.

Corey Michael Dean: though it might seem like an outlandish idea, I believe your name might have something to do with the type of person you become. If I hadn't been given the name Corey but instead something more "traditional," I'm not sure if I would be as open, entertaining, or characteristic as I am now. Michael is the necessary bridge that links the beginning of the story to the end conclusion. This name does not come up much in my day to day life anymore, but when it does, I am always reminded of who I am on the inside. To me, my middle name is sort of like a mirror that you are always anxious to look at, but once you do, you are happier than ever with what you see. My last name really rounds out this whole rodeo. I like the name Corey, but I don't think I would hold half of the weight I hold now if it wasn't for the slick, quick, and impactful title that is my last name. No other last name I've tried feels as complete to my three-word story as the one I currently have.

Throughout my entire life, I've struggle to love myself and my name, but over time I've learned that Corey Michael Dean is a human experience that is based on self-improvement and love; one that understands the seriousness of life but also sees hope in the humor; somebody or something that is always searching for more while simultaneously being happy with what they have. It's not about how "hard" or "soft" you sound; it's about who you are.

**Ashley Marie Lee**

My name is Ashley Marie Lee. I'm not sure why I was named Ashley. My mother liked a girl named Ashley, and she always said if she had another daughter, her name would be Ashley. Marie, I just feel, connects, and Lee is my dad's name. Lee sounds like it is Asian or white, which can lead to misunderstandings. For example, last week I was at an interview at Unity Point, and the lady who was supposed to interview me sat next to me for ten minutes. I went back up to the desk to make sure I was at the right location. The lady next to me said, "Oh, you're Ashley." It made me feel really sad because I feel like my name does not meet people's expectations, and I felt as if I wouldn't get the job.

**Nina Dillon Salisbury**

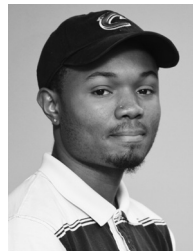
When I was younger, I never really liked my name. It was different, and I wanted to fit in. Now that I'm older, I embrace it and appreciate my uniqueness. My middle name is Dillon, which is my mom's last name. My parents are divorced now, but my mom never took my dad's last name. I've always admired her for it, and it makes me proud. I think taking a man's last name keeps the patriarchy alive and also has ties to slavery, which I obviously disagree with.

**Shiloh Simonsen**

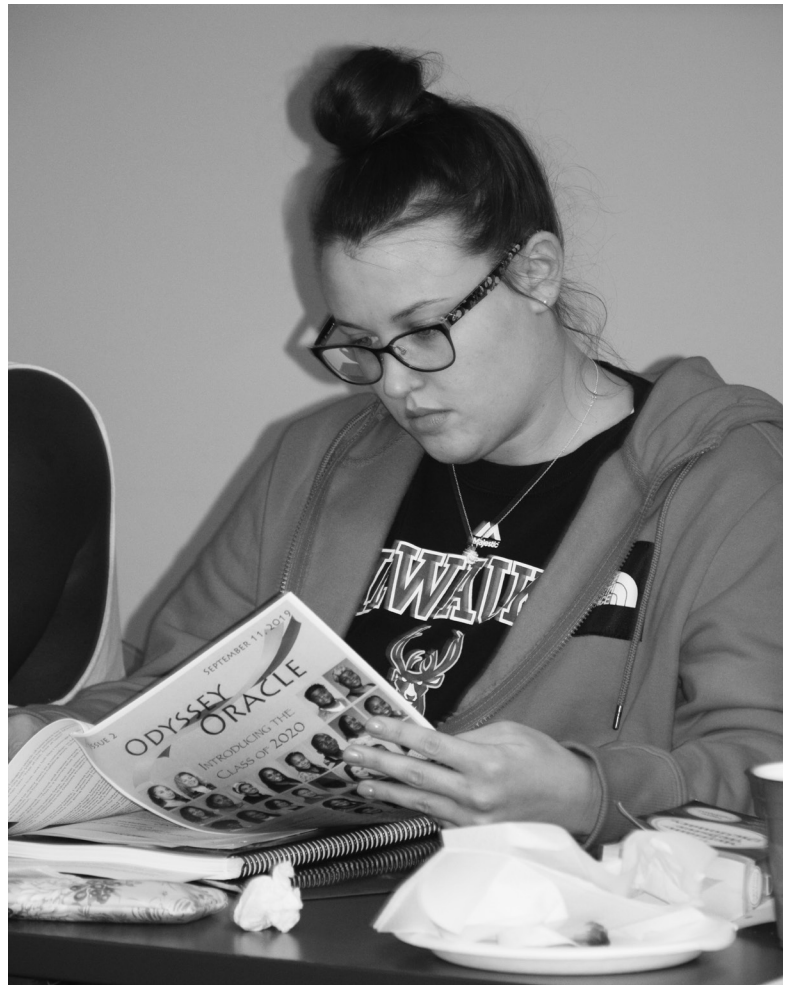
My name is rare and unique. In Islam its meaning is "peace." I believe that is the most accurate definition and has a huge impact on my life. Growing up, I was always shy and quiet. I have always enjoyed quietness and keeping the peace within myself and others. Hostile and unpleasant situations have always upset me, and I never understood why people can't just get along. My name was chosen for me by my mother. Her childhood best friend that passed away at a young age was named Shiloh. I believe my name is very special because you do not hear of many people my age and older named Shiloh, and that makes it very unique.

**Marcello Segovia**

My name has been important to me because it is mine. Its interesting name meaning is "little warrior." The reason the name Marcello was picked was because I was premature and very tiny at birth. My parents didn't know if I was going to make it. I spent the first six months of my life in an incubator. Marcello is significant because I am a warrior every day of my life. I fight for my kids and my family.

**Jaison Christopher Thomas**

Jaison means healer, Christopher means bearing Christ, and Thomas means twin. My older sister chose my name. She really enjoyed scary movies, so it was either Michael (Myers) or Jason. My mother says they added the "I" to make it unique.





Carmen Tinajero

My first name has a special meaning for me and for my family. It means a lot because it was the name of my grandmother, who was very dear to all of us. It is special to me because it is the name that my dad chose for me. This was the name of his mother-in-law, not his mother's name, so for me that reflects the great love my dad has for my mom.

Carmen in Latin means song, music, poem. The name Carmen is popular for the virgin of Carmen. My saint is on the 16th of July. Every year until my 23rd year when I left Mexico, I had a special celebration offered by my mother. Also in Mexico, there is a well-known song called "Carmen se me perdió la cadanita."



Kristina Mellott

Shakespeare wrote, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." The question arises when I apply this concept to my own name. Would that which we call Krista by any other name be the person she has become? I believe that my name has helped develop me into the person I am today. My first name, Krista, means anointed by Christ. But the meaning of my name does not hold the reason for me becoming myself. I believe there are other factors that contributed to it.

Krista is a shortened name for Kristina. It is a common and short name, so most people can recognize and remember it. This name is not one that you find more than a few people with in your life. I do not fall into the crowds of people with the name Krista; there just simply aren't enough of us for that. Also, it was slightly modified with the K instead of the Ch, which I believe adds a sense of uniqueness to it.

When growing up in a small town where I was the only Krista, I had to own it. I had to be comfortable with the fact that when someone mentioned my name, everyone knew it was me. There was no confusion whether the story was about anyone else. I grew to become accepting of myself and being who I was regardless of what anyone thought



of me. I became the individual I am today because I could not fall into the shadows of the halls, like the Bens and Johns of my school. I had all my mischievous behaviors known to all, and I couldn't deny them. I had to become bold and hide my insecurities behind the confidence I portrayed. My name ties me to my past, and I had to accept that. My name is my identity. But my identity can change.

My last name is Mellott. This name holds a lot of meaning for me. My father was abandoned by his family when he was a child. We still have the family name of the family that left him. My dad had an opportunity to go down and meet his father about ten years ago. My dad's father was dying, and it was one of the last chances he had to meet him. But it was strange when my dad returned from the visit. He was very secretive about his father that he had met. My dad did not want to tell us anything about him. My dad said that we only have each other and that we are all the family we need. I grew up with the mentality that when I thought of my last name, I felt like it was us against the world and we had to be there for each other because we have no one else. Due to these events that surround the name Mellott, the name to me means strong, united, and a little mysterious. I feel like the mysteriousness represents my life, that there is more to his life that I haven't learned yet. But I am excited to search for the answers.

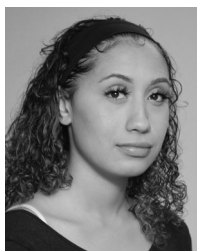


Timothy De'Andre Mosley

When I looked my name up, I found out that it came from the Greeks. It's funny that we have this question because I did this assignment years ago. The Greek is Τιμόθεος, meaning Timótheos, meaning honoring God. It's funny to me that my name meant this because I am a true believer when it comes to a higher power.

With that being said, I think my mom did a great job at naming me. I'm not sure what her reasons were with naming me, but my uncle's name is Andre, so that's where my middle name comes from, which is De'Andre.

My last name is Mosley, which is a powerful name for me and my family. We have always taken great pride in the Mosley name. There are a lot of us and we've always strived to be the best we can be and to do right by others. We have this saying in my family when things get rough. Every time one of us is feeling down or feels like life is getting the best of us, someone always says, "You are a Mosley, and don't you ever forget that." That's just our way of saying that we are strong people who believe we can overcome anything. I have so much pride and faith in my name that I named my son after me.

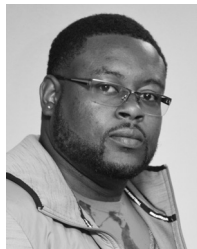


Aerial Dru Kathryn Bailey

The dictionary defines aerial as existing, happening, or operating in the air. Behind the name "Ariel" it means "lion of food," influenced by Greek aer "air."

I don't necessarily think my name shaped my identity, but my name means up high. I personally hold myself to high standards. It is ironic and amusing that those two things align the way that they do. My full name is Aerial Dru Kathryn Bailey. My mom named me Aerial because she liked the name.

My middle name is Dru because my dad always wanted one of his kids' name to be Dru, but my mom thought it sounded too much like a boy. Kathryn is my grandmother's first name, and Bailey is my dad's last name. I love that all four of my names can be first names. I love my middle name. For a while I thought about going by Dru instead of Aerial; I just love how unique it is.



O'Shane Omar Wilmoth

O'Shane – What I find interesting about this name is that my mom said when she gave me my name she liked Oshane, but it was a common name back in Jamaica so she made it a unique spelling--one in a million, she said.

Omar – One difference Omar has made for me in my life is that I use it when I talk to friends I like because it makes me feel special. Back home they would say Omar, a gallis name. [Gallis is a Jamaican Patois slang expression used to state that one is skilled at manipulating and seducing women.]

Wilmoth – Wilmoth is not a common name back in Jamaica, so I use it a lot because it makes me stand out in a crowd or class or at work.



Natia Acacia Saffold

Well, my first name, "Natia," was my mom's choice, and my middle name, "Acacia," was my dad's choice. He named me after my aunt, whom I look and act like! My last name, "Saffold," is very famous.

Everywhere I go, someone is asking me if I know a certain person. It's my dad's last name (Corey Saffold '06). He's pretty known, just like our last name.



**Jerome Sanders**

Seeing as though Googling my name has been a bit tainted, I'm all for filling you all in on the magic that makes me Jerome. Based off the Greek name Hieronymos meaning Sacred

Name, that was all the fancy hoobla-goobla I needed to hear.

My cousin Tim named me in the hospital just as my mother, out of breath and ten minutes after having me, admitted she did not have one pre-picked. I have grown to love my name, for it's a part of me. Throughout my childhood there was a very popular TV show called "Martin" where the main character dressed up as other characters, one being a bad-teeth pimp-wanna-be. All in all, because the character was named Jerome, this led to many unwanted or unneeded jokes that automatically came my way.

I lived to hear my name called in school halls, over PA systems playing basketball, as well as in a court room. My proudest moment was in the delivery room being told I'm a father of my healthy baby boys. All these helped shape my identity, in a way. I embrace my name and sense of self, just as I do my past, present, and future.

**Melissa Ann Herriges**

My name is unique to only me; not everyone has that advantage. Here's a little bit about what my name means to me.



Melissa has become a typical name over time. Most people I've met with the same name have a similar personality: outgoing, friendly, private, and bubbly. It's interesting how that matches up to its Greek meaning of honey or bee. So, when you are working with a Melissa in the future, just know not to take their kindness for granted.

Ann comes from Hebrew and means grace/favor. My life has been filled with much grace and favor from God. Many times, no one would believe the things that happened to me unless they were with me. Funny how parts of our name dictate parts of our lives or personalities, and we don't even know it.

Herriges is German, which is a part of my heritage that I don't really know a lot about, but "heri" means army. I have always been a strong, gentle giant in standing for others when they cannot stand for themselves.

Oddly enough, my names explain exactly who I am!

CONNECTING WITH “THE CIRCUIT”

When I opened the door to our shack, I saw that everything we owned was neatly packed in cardboard boxes.—Francisco Jiménez, “The Circuit”



This story makes me think of my own children and the times that I have had to move due to financial difficulties, incarceration, and my own personal struggles. It helps me to see things from my son’s point of view and some of the feelings he may have felt. My line of thinking has been, “Well, we are in a much better place now. We are stable, together, and have everything we need, so everything should be better.” As I was reading this story, my mind kept reminding me about my son expressing, on several occasions, how much he misses his old school. Does my son share Francisco’s pain of leaving a trusted teacher or friend behind? Is Francisco’s story comparable to the feelings my son experienced with the unstable aspect of our lives? **(Krista Mellott)**

I related to having to move often growing up in foster care. Trying to make friends was very hard, and having to read out loud was very scary as well to me. **(LaDiá Key)**

He finally found something to look forward to, only to get home after school to realize he is moving again. . . . Being a military child, I constantly had to move wherever my parents had to go. Eventually my mom made the choice to have me stay with my granny because she wanted me to have a sense of stability. I’m grateful for that. **(Loché Mothoa)**

He was just getting so comfortable and was actually starting to learn! I was hurt to see it ripped from him. . . . I moved several times. I don’t think I was ever stable in one home attending one school for a while. I bounced from mom to dad back to mom back to dad. I hope I can change that for my son. **(Natia Saffold)**

Once he gets comfortable and happy, his family has to pack up and is leaving again. I relate because I have adjustment issues. I hate getting attached to people only for them to leave. I love the same routine, and I am not a big fan of change. **(Ashley Lee)**

The story is so inspiring to me. It makes me believe that I am a fortunate person because I have been able to be back in school. It is not something to take for granted. **(Elíazar Martínez-Munguía)**

I can relate to being excited to finally achieve something, like learning new words and meanings or joining a new class, just to find out it’s time to move on to a different location and start all over, feeling like you’re never going to fit in or be well off. **(Jyneeva Hunt)**

It was painful because when he finally was comfortable he had to relocate and start over again to build confidence. I can relate to the worrying about what others think. I was shy and afraid of moving forward due to lack of confidence. **(Savannah Torres)**



The part of the story I can relate to is when the teacher walked up to him in the classroom and asked him to read a page from his English book, and he felt the blood rush to his head. He felt dizzy, and as he tried to read, his mouth was dry and his eyes watered. I think I can learn from this by practicing speaking in front of groups.

(O'Shane Wilmoth)

I moved a lot early in life at key points. A lot of excitement, fun, and enjoyment was at an all-time high before being plucked and uprooted like crop on to the next location, so I immediately related to the pain of moving away from things and people you hoped to establish roots with.

(Jerome Sanders)

I feel like a lot of us in life feel stuck in a circuit. Some people definitely have worse circumstances than others, but I myself feel caught in a circuit. For me, it's because of work. Everyone has to work in order to maintain the lifestyle they choose. But sometimes I feel with the amount I work just to stay afloat that I don't have time to do the things I want or need to do to live a healthy life. I know I have it better than a lot of people, but I still struggle with the repetitiveness.



I can relate personally to the story because that's how it was when my dad, my brothers, and I moved to Madison. We were constantly moving, switching schools and apartments on different sides of town. Bonds were broken or not given a chance to form because of it. Once we settled I made friends, got in tune with my neighbors and the people around me. When you're constantly moving, you're mainly focused on you and your family, sticking together and focusing on your parents or whoever's looking after you.

(Laisha Cooke)

I can relate to moving around a lot. My mother and I used to always bounce between apartments and my grandparents' house because of income. While I never had to transfer schools in my life, the feeling of "not knowing" where to call home was very present. I learned, though, that although my situation was hard, it could have been a lot worse.

(Corey Dean)

I can relate personally to the end of the story because I could feel the disappointment and sadness in his voice, having to move again and get comfortable all over again. As a child, my siblings and I constantly had to move and learn things all over again due to my mother being on drugs, so when Francisco came home and saw the boxes packed once again, I knew he was hurt.

(Tiffany Dixon)

I can personally relate to this story due to the fact I have gone into a new school as a new girl and not knowing any English at all, not knowing what my teacher was talking about.

(Margie Barajas)

I have some personal experience as a youth being homeless and moving around. I can relate to the idea of how being unstable can create a sense of anxiety, learning struggles, and dysfunctional family dynamics, resulting in internal struggles between whether or not you should work or go to school as a child.



What sustained my being able to break through was my family's love and their insistence on hard work, respect, faith, and hope that no matter how difficult life was, if we worked very hard and applied ourselves, we would break through. I took those values that I learned from my family and applied them to my education.

(Kossiawavi Elo)

FEELING DIFFERENT LIKE WILLIAM BLAKE

Poet William Blake (1757-1827) differed from others of his time and felt he did not fit in. After reading Blake, students were asked to write in class about a time in their lives when they felt (or still feel) unlike those around them.



In high school, I was in honors English, and I was the only one in the class who wasn't white. I remember I went home and told my dad that I felt like I didn't belong, so I wanted to switch out. Of course, he didn't let me or agree with me leaving the class. Instead, he told me it wasn't

that I didn't belong, it was that the class was all new to me. He told me to act like I belonged there, and then maybe I'd learn to enjoy it. Long story short, honors English became one of my favorite classes.

I am a financial planner, so I have no problem working with those who can relate to me (young moms, minorities, young people), but when it comes to older people (40-60 years old), I get extremely nervous. I don't know why I get nervous and anxious explaining to them the same information I can recite in my sleep to my usual market. **(Aerial Bailey)**



My job is a place I don't feel like others around me. We have people that work in offices, and they make me feel like I'm not good enough to work next to them in an office. But whether or not they make me feel like this, I don't really care because I come in to work with a smile every day, and I am ready for almost

anything. I am here for our clients and for helping and/or working with them, not for my coworkers. Little by little, my coworkers will come around. I will fit in and do fit in. **(Margarita Barajas)**



The first time in my life when I felt differently than others was when I began to be rejected by other students that I had gone to school with because I looked different.

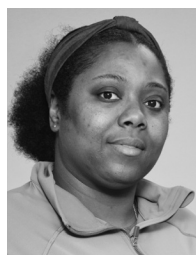
"They Called Me Fat"

It felt as if all the students teased me
My heart was heavy and uneasy
Daily was a struggle
So, I created my own bubble
And my mind, just for a minute, felt free.

I endured the pain
Through my fist I wanted change
Over time, I overcame
Yet, the fight is still within me.
They called me Fat. **(Ron Burford)**



Blake and I can relate when it comes to my religion. I'm spiritual. I believe "I am that I am God." God is me and I am God. The topic of discussion with people who are religious seems to get a little overbearing for both sides of the fence. Most people I come across are religious and can't grasp the concept of a non-religious yet anti-atheist believer. **(Arkeia Cameron)**



I always feel different from those around me. I often have a lot of thoughts and feelings in my mind, and it takes off. I've been through a lot, so at an early age I had to grow. I went through things in life that my friends have never been through nor gone through later in life. I always feel a little more advanced, yet behind at the same time. Sometimes I feel a lot younger than what I am, then I feel a lot older at times. I find myself alone as far as socially and as far as friends goes. I also enjoy being myself, though. I also enjoy crowds. It's like I'm neither here nor there. I don't like this or that, but I like that and this. I also see things before they happen. I feel when something is going to happen. **(Laisha Cooke)**



A time I really felt out of place was when my father passed away and I had to attend a family reunion later that year, and then for years to come after that. I felt very out of place because, sadly, I lost contact with that side of my family. It didn't quite help that I didn't really know

anybody else on that side of my family because I lived with my mom. Since these life events, I have been making a conscious effort to get to know that side better. I have since been accepted by this side of the family, and they love when I come around.

(Corey Dean)



A time when I felt different is when I applied for the Odyssey program. I felt as if only those who were smarter than me or who have never been in trouble would be accepted into this program. My first day made me a little nervous because I felt as if there was no one like

me. But as we all opened up, I saw that we are all reaching for the same thing: success.

(Tiffany Dixon)



I remember one day I was invited to a wedding and wasn't dressed as beautifully as others, and my seat was right in front of the podium. I was so ashamed of myself. I was feeling very bad; I didn't know how I would be

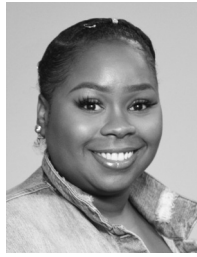
able to stand on my feet to dance when other people did. People around me were looking at me like a stranger and were even trying not to laugh. In conclusion, it was a bad experience I had in my life.

(Kossiwav Eloh)



I remember making a choice that removed me from my family for a long period of my life. Upon returning to them I had to learn about them and teach them who I have become. I allowed love to

be the tool for us to grow. Time allows you to pick out anything that can help or hurt you. **(Rasaki Emmanuel)**



Where should I start? I often feel like I don't fit in. First, I tend to compare myself to everyone around me. It starts with me being a middle child, the only one with a biological father not shared with my four siblings at the time. I guess you're wondering why that

would make me feel out of place. I'll tell you why. I was the only one who didn't have a full biological sibling! Also, I looked different from everybody. My older brother and sister used to joke around and say that I was adopted, or that FedEx dropped me off. It was funny at times, but over time it started to sink in. I've always looked to see who I look like and what my father's side of the family looks like.

(Jyneevea Hunt)



When thinking about a time I felt like I didn't fit in, I remember when I was working at a preschool and was told that I would just be there to help and clean. While being there, I was talked about, mistreated, and not paid, just because of my skin color. I asked

myself, "why me?" Never fitting in at work has always been a big deal for me because I have not been able to work in a friendly environment.

(LaDiá Key)





During my whole three years in high school, I never wanted to go to college. All of my friends and classmates wanted to go, but I never had an interest in school. My mom and dad never went to college, so I barely finished high school because nobody really

stood on me about education. My junior year in high school, I enrolled into AVID/TOPS, a class that helps you get ready and organized for college by doing binder checks every week. Ms. Cabalka, my teacher, motivated me and pushed me to get good grades and always strive for me to be the best I can be. Education is important because I know I want to be a nurse and be successful. From my junior year on, I've received nothing but As. **(Ashley Lee)**



Honestly, I still feel like this a lot, mostly in small groups but sometimes in big groups. I would say in school settings, like the "bird cage" Blake describes in "School Boy," or in orientations for work and training, I can usually find someone like-minded, but most of

the time I feel different. **(Tina Martinez)**



When I was 12 years old, I was on a middle school field trip to the ancient Mayan civilization. For some reason that I still do not know, my friends did not want to hang out with me.

(Elíazar Martínez-Munguía)



I've always felt a sense of not belonging and being different. My upbringing was something different; I was my nana's first grandchild. I've experienced many different things, but one thing that has always made me stand out or feel out of place is how I took grammar classes

and went to private schools. I had an excellent vocabulary, but not everyone has the same appreciation that I have for understanding and being able to say what I want and how I want to say it. When we're younger we're different and afraid of indifference, but I always got jokes or cracks about speaking "proper," or as some say "white." It took time to adjust and be comfortable. I just started talking and associating with people who don't judge me or care how I speak. It's not always easy, but I am proud of who I am and hope that people will first get to know me or others before they judge me or anyone. We all want to be loved and be appreciated, not humiliated or belittled. I'm content with who I am; I just had to grow into me myself. **(Ashton McDonald)**



I often feel different than other parents at school events like football games, student pick-up/drop-off times, and kids' birthday parties. I have a tendency to perceive their thoughts as judgmental towards me. Even though they may not have

known I have been to jail or experienced certain struggles, my brain has a way of making me

believe they know. I feel uncomfortable and anxious in these situations. I feel as though my past is my identity. This is one of the reasons I am excited for Odyssey. It will help me to create another experience in my life that is a positive one, which I hope is the first of many more. I believe experiences like this will help me change my identity. **(Krista Mellott)**





I ran into some trouble last year that led me into going to jail. Once I got sentenced and the reality set in that I would be in this place for a while, I felt out of place. In my mind, I wasn't a true criminal. Here

I was behind bars for drinking and driving. Meanwhile these other men were in here for selling drugs, gun charges, fighting, rape cases, etc. At first I was nervous, scared, and overwhelmed. Never in a million years did I see myself landing in this position. Being from the Southside of Chicago where there is endless crime and people going to jail every day, I've never put myself in a position to be one of those people. I have plenty of friends that have been in and out of jail, but I guess I just never got caught doing my dirty work. So sitting here in jail around all these people that I've tried so hard not to become truly put me in a different place. But all in all, it was a very humbling experience. It gave me a different point of view about drinking and driving and just how dangerous it really is. (**Timothy Mosley**)



by whiteness on a larger scale was a big culture shock because I felt the lack in seeing people that looked like me. It sometimes discouraged me. (**Moriah Parker**)



Growing up I always felt different. I am multiracial, so I could never fit in with a group of people. I've always had people make mean commentary about me; I've had people constantly pulling my hair to see if it was real. I made the decision to cut my hair short in the

hopes that people would stop pulling my hair. My dad's mom is black, and no one accepted me simply because my dad's father was European. People spread a story that my grandmother was raped, and that my father is a product of rape, and of course I am his daughter so we all know how that goes. My mother's side of the family is a rainbow (Indian, Dutch, German, English, Malaysian, Scottish, etc.) and still I was the outcast. Now being 25, I embrace being different! (**Loché Mothoa**)



I always feel different in pretty much every environment I am in. In high school, I couldn't relate to a lot of my peers because of my parenting and structure. Moving to Madison, I didn't feel like I belonged either. Being surrounded



Well, right now I have a new job as a document imaging specialist. Everyone there has a degree or is earning their degree. Everyone there is married and has a lot of support with their children, and I don't. My son and I are new here, so besides my dad, it's just us. So

when their children are sick, they still have help and come in, but when mine's sick, it's only me. My dad is usually at work. So I feel I don't fit in. I feel as if I am being judged and they don't understand me because they haven't walked in a "single mom" shoes before. But I like being different, so whatever. I am still going to work hard.

(**Natia Saffold**)



For a long time I did not feel like I fit in with my family. I struggled through high school and ended up following a completely different path than the rest of them. I spent a lot of time at family functions insecure about what my family may have heard about me. Now that

I am older and on track to getting my life back, I embrace my alternative lifestyle and experiences. I wish I could tell my younger self to not compare myself to others. I still need to remind myself that from time to time. (**Nina Salisbury**)



I have been tall my entire life, from grade school, high school and so on. Earlier in life I was teased about my size and left to feel like an outcast. I recall hearing my aunts, uncles and other family members work to build my confidence by telling me things like I'm "tall, dark, and

handsome," a phrase I heard a lot on television shows and movies for men that women found attractive. I moved to Wisconsin, and never in my life have I seen so many white people. Instead of having people simply shocked by my height and leaving me to feel like a freak of nature, here I had people endlessly happy to see me and curious to know if I played for the college basketball team while I was only 14. Standing 6'8" has made me feel as if I did not fit in, and I've learned to love not fitting anyone's mold. **(Jerome Sanders)**



I feel different all the time. I don't want to be like the next person. I want to be me. Feeling different can be a good thing. **(Marcello Segovia)**



In the fourth grade my mom moved us out to Belleville, WI. Originally we were from the Southside of Madison. She wanted to provide a better life for us. My mother, who is white, didn't really think about how there was no one who looked like me. It was difficult

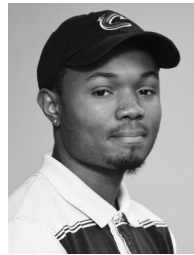
being so different and standing out every time I walked into a room. Feeling different in school led to me focusing on that, and not being able to give my full attention to my school work. By the time I got to high school, I found that I was very angry, frustrated, and using drugs, and eventually I was pulled out of school. **(Riley Sessions)**

There have been many times in my life that I have felt unlike others around me. Right now is a time in my life that I am feeling this way. While I'm a mother and currently in school part-time online,



most others that graduated the same year I did are graduating from a four-year college. Although I have chosen a different road in life and have my daughter on this journey with me, I would love to have been able to have the same child in every way, just ten years later, so I could

have been more established before being a mother. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**



A time when I felt different than the others around me was when I applied for an assistant manager position. I felt as if I wasn't qualified because I had no prior experience as a manager. I felt that another candidate may be more qualified, but luckily Dollar Tree didn't hold

that against me and offered me the job on the spot. **(Jaison Thomas)**



One time I felt different from others was when I registered for an English class, and when it was time for the first class, it was a different class than I was registered for. It was a writing class. Everyone seemed to know what to do, but I did not know what to do. All the people in

the classroom knew English very well. **(Carmen Tinajero)**



I often feel different from others. I think a lot of it comes from the things I have been through. Even though people can't see through me or the things I went through. I constantly feel they can and that I will be judged for it. Even though it is my past, I feel different from

others, and it prevents me from allowing me to be myself. **(Savannah Torres)**



A point in my life where I felt I didn't fit in was when I went in for an interview as a sales representative. I was the only one dressed casually, while everyone else was in their formal wear. I felt as if I was not qualified for the job after seeing all the other applicants.

(O'Shane Wilmoth)

NOTICING NATURE, LIKE WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

"Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher."—William Wordsworth

The view is priceless. The deep breath you take gets lovingly stuck in your chest while your brain and heart try making sense of the scenery you're blessed to see. Fresh water, pine, and seaweed flood your senses like fresh baked cookies.

With each step, as the sun gets even more acquainted with my skin, as the breeze blows and the grass bends, as I hear the sound of water crashing against the rocks, and I let my feet sink in the sand, I usually pause just a second longer to take it all in. There could be a festival, a party, a concert, or even the loudest of loud crowds, but when I go to James Madison Park, I, like Wordsworth, find pleasure and bliss in nature and wander lonely as a cloud. **(Jerome Sanders)**

I love nature. I love the sounds of birds chirping in the morning letting you know it's too late or perhaps too early. I love the sun shining on my melanated skin, making my face glow, bringing out my natural oils, brightening up my natural coils. I love the invigorating smell of fresh cut grass, letting you know someone cares. I hate the noise, though (squish). I usually get up and shut my window. I



don't like the bugs that fly, creepily crawl or crunch when you step on them. I hate the way it sounds when you step on the ground. I love nature, but I guess not all of it.

Ofentimes, in the summer I would sit on top of the car and watch the bright stars in the sky, or I'd sit in the car with the sunroof open, just thinking about life, where I want to take it, where it's already been. These are the best times to me, the best dates, the ones you'll remember for a lifetime. **(Laisha Cooke)**

The same unsheathed grass that loved me also pierced my exposed flesh. The same sun that blasted clear, clean heat onto my face turned me into a middleman for the elongated shadow. Nature was my current event horizon. The same hands that helped me shoot a jump shot also held a breeze so nice it ushered me into jumping out of my skin. Though it was too dark to read the hoop, everything became full circle. **(Corey Dean)**

My son, my mom, and I went on vacation to California last month. If I close my eyes, I can still hear the crashing and rolling of the waves, and I can feel the heat from the beaming sun, soaking into my hair. I can still taste the salt from the blue and white waves catching me off guard and smacking me in the face. And as I'm trying to take myself back to this peaceful place, my mental vacation is cut short. Instead of seeing my son getting tossed around by the never-ending waves, shrieking in excitement, I see a second grader, with blood dripping from the cracks of his fingers that are cupping his nose. I'm back to reality, and it's bloody nose season here at Huegel Elementary. **(Nina Salisbury)**





In January 2017, it was my first winter in Wisconsin, which was very bad for me, especially when I was waiting for a bus. I will never forget it. I was so cold until I wore three layers. **(Kosiwavi Elo)**

I always like to go to a beach or just go on walks in general. When I'm really stressed, mad, or depressed, walking makes me feel good because the summer makes my skin glow. The quiet relaxes me and keeps me calm. When I'm alone, I think more about what I'm mad about and try to find solutions to the problem. Especially in the summer when the weather feels good, birds are chirping, and people are running, nature makes me really relaxed. **(Ashley Lee)**

Where I grew up [in Mexico] it is very dry most of the year, but when it rains, it rains a lot. Huge puddles form after heavy rain in the canyon. When I was a teenager, all of the kids from my block went to the canyon to find the deepest puddle. The water in the canyon is not clean. It is the color of cappuccino, or coffee mixed with milk. We didn't care about the dirty water. All we cared about was to learn to swim because none of us knew how.

Because it was so dry most of the year, we were excited every time it rained, so we went to the canyon. The puddle we found was not that deep, maybe three feet deep and eight to ten feet wide, but we pretended we were like professional swimmers.

Every time we moved our arms and legs to swim, bubbles came up from the dirty water. It was like

the puddle was boiling. We took turns and pretended to dive in. Some of us would say that we were such good swimmers, like sharks. The others would respond kiddingly that we were more like piranhas.

We spent a few hours there, getting muddier and muddier as if we were dipped in chocolate. All you could see was our teeth and our eyes. At the end of our swimming adventure, we had to walk the two miles back home under the hot sun. All the mud dried on our skin. We looked like walking pineapples because our hair was sticking straight up and the mud was cracked and caked onto our skin. Even though now I look back and see the danger of the dirty water, the potential to get sick or get an infection, I still think nature is good and can be a lot of fun. **(Elíazar Martínez-Munguía)**

I love nature. It is so soothing and calm. My family and I used to go camping every year. Just being at the resort, away from the city life with all the traffic and things it brings, is relaxing. We would barbeque, play games, drink, laugh, and just enjoy each other's company. There's nothing like sitting under the moonlight on a warm summer night enjoying the weather. The way the breeze and quiet summer take you away from all of your thoughts and worries is priceless. **(Timothy Mosley)**

I drive a lot to and from different cities. On the road I love to have my windows down because I can smell the fresh green trees blowing with the wind, and the air just fills my car with outdoors. I love when the wind blows the smell directly at me; it's like I've been slapped with a leaf. On the way back, it is usually dark and moist. You can hear the wind bouncing off the small lakes and can see a cloud of white smoke. **(Natia Saffold)**

I think nature is very important in the lives of people. At least in my life, I can tell the difference in how I feel if I spend my day outside. I have more energy, and I am more positive to begin with. Any time I think of nature I'm brought back to the time I spent in Missouri or my grandparents' ranch. I remember spending summers boiling hot in the heat—heat so hot and still that it felt like we were stuck in an oven. When we would get a slight breeze, it was like Mother Nature turned on the A/C and we could all breathe again for just a second. **(Riley Sessions)**

We hopped into a deep blue four-seater water car and started pedaling away. The ripple in the tides from the speed boats coming past us gave us quite a challenge. We made it to the middle of the deep mucky green lake and stopped. As we looked around, we were surrounded now by still water and nothing else. As we looked into the water, we could barely see anything but algae-infested green seaweed and tiny black and silver fish. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

I enjoy nature. A moment for me in nature was when my girlfriend and I went for a nice relaxing hike at Devil's Lake. It was a nice, sunny summer day. The birds were chirping, and the lake was peaceful. **(Jaison Thomas)**

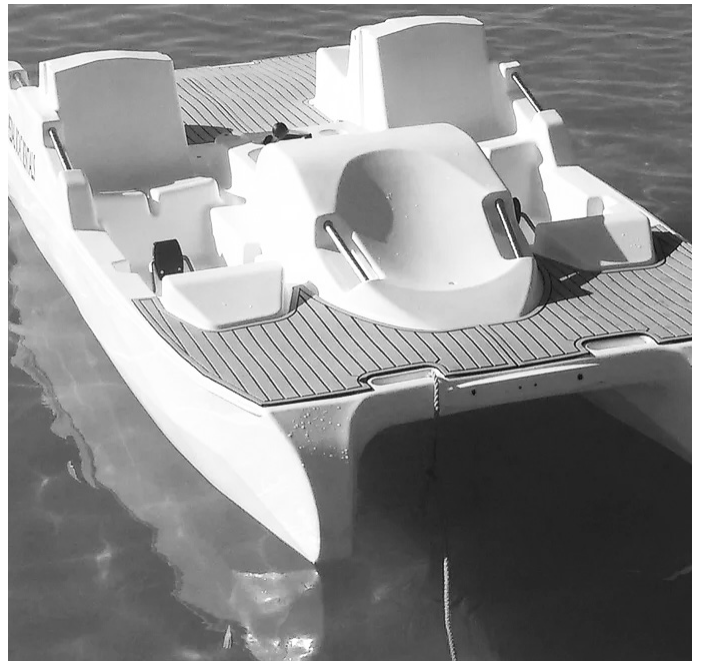


When I first met the sea, I fell in love with its immensity. That precious deepness brought me so much inner peace, I felt free as the wind. For me, the sea is like a beautiful sunset, as if it were created by someone heavenly to marvel more at something already wonderful. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

Calm but steady waves, clear as the sky makes the time go by.
Ducks are quacking and swimming.
There's something about the fresh, crisp air that makes my thoughts start whirring. **(Aerial Bailey)**

Moment in Time

With every step
My feet sink deeply into the rough, pale yellowish sand.
Wind blowing ever so lightly
Waves crashing on the rocky shore
I sit and stare deeply
Sun on my happy face. **(Marcello Segovia)**



Foggy Night

As I lie in darkness, the mildewed grass drenches my backside. I lie peacefully in my sorrows, pain, confusion, mistakes, and happiness. I lie cold in sight.

Staring up, I see that all that surrounds me is the fog from condensation. Bats are flying in and out at the Big Red Farm House. In spite of the loud cricket noises and wildlife in the night, all I can fathom are the beautiful stars God created so bright. As my brain overflows with dreams, and as fast as a bullet shooting out of a gun, a shooting star beams. Oh, what a sight. All your dreams will come true, as innocence sleeps in the Foggy Night. **(Jyneeva Hunt)**

On one particularly average day,
 Mother Nature took my thoughts away.
 It distracted my mind with mini worlds at play,
 When my mother, sister, son, and daughter took me for a day at the bay.

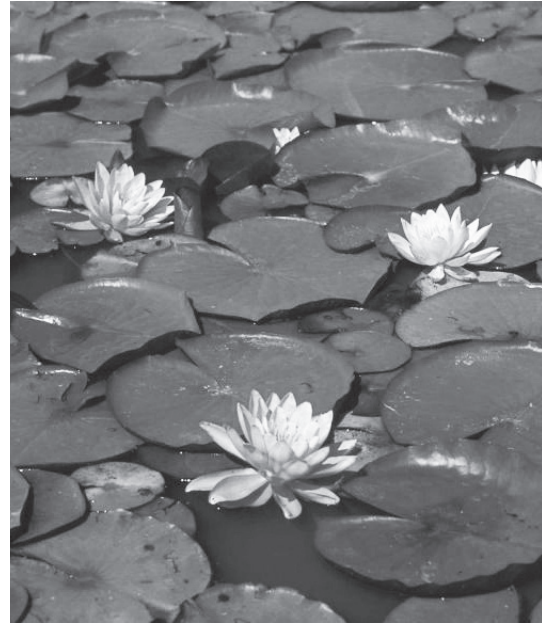
My mind no longer worried with fear
 When I sensed the water that was so near.
 We walked barefoot across the wooden pier.
 With sounds of fish, frogs, and birds all that I could hear,
 My troubled thoughts began to disappear.

Fish splashing as they leap,
 Frogs croaking throughout their keep,
 Dancing from lily to lily pad trying to seek,
 Birds fluttering through the air and muttering their soft cheeps,
 Soaking up the sun on the sand trying not to sleep.

I lay there with the sun and breeze gently kissing my face,
 My thoughts were nothing but of this place.
 The day flew by as if it were a race,
 And before I knew it the fireflies had begun their nightly chase.

We were coming to the end of a seemingly average day,
 And nature's distractions began to fade away.
 The troubling thoughts flooded back my way,
 But they were different, I should say.

They lacked the exhausting emotional appeal,
 Reason and logic were now all that I could feel.
 Nature's distractions had allowed me time to heal. **(Kristina Mellott)**



The crisp breeze of wind on my face,
 Although you may seem so far away,
 I can feel the light of the moon upon my face.

As I look up, your light is almost blinding
 But all at the same time quite astounding
 What a beautiful sight
 What a beautiful night, standing in the moonlight
PISCES FULL MOON (Tina Martinez)

It was a beautiful blazing hot summer day.
 The land was parched,
 The trees were bare,
 The grass was dry and the water was in poverty.
 Miles upon miles we had to walk,
 With streams of salty water flowing down our lips.
 We came to that place where all streams collide,
 Where we splashed and touched, until the sun went down.
 Now it was time to go, so with heavy hearts,
 We filled our jugs and home we went,
 To await the next glorious day. **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**



Hike at Devil's Lake

Walking up a path of green, green grass in the hot summer heat,
 The path of green grass turns into hard stone stairs.
 Walking by, passing big brown trees and jumping over other dead trees,
 Slipping and sliding on the hard stone stairs, due to wearing the wrong pair,
 Finally making it halfway up the cliff, now sitting on a cold hard flat stone surface.
 Looking up to a hot summer sky, now seeing a beautiful blue sky gone dark
 With lots of bright little lights called stars. **(Margarita Barajas)**

Lonely in the Crowd

You awake with this headache and heartache, looking to take on another day.
 Your body feels heavy, lacking, and in disarray.
 Yet you force yourself to go, all out of tone and all out of flow.
 The air is thick even though the sky is blooming,
 You want to slow down yet time is zooming.
 Masking dark moments with laughter in that fresh atmospheric meeting place.
 The guilt seeps in, 'cuz you know you're being fake,
 And you hope that one of these people will see the hurt in your face.
 You just want to end this race. Who can know the hardship that you bear,
 'cuz you're the only one, life's just not fair. **(Ron Burford)**

ORACLE OVATIONS

YEAR 17, ISSUE 1 SEPTEMBER 4, 2019

ODYSSEY ORACLE

WELCOME, CLASS OF 2020!

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The person that caught my attention was Luis Perez-Olguin: “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.’” What I learned from reading the Odyssey Oracle is that every Wednesday night is a part of your life, and it is important to come to class all the time and be open minded. My goal: destination graduation! **(LaDiá Key)**

Each story told by all these alumni shares the beauty of their soul. By sharing a little of their experiences, it seems like there is a connection between the writer and the reader, in some cases from the ordinary to the extraordinary, from misery to glory, capturing life’s adversities, nightmares, dreams, fear of failure, and those aspirations that suddenly seem unattainable. Like a dad (or mom) holds the little child’s hand so he can learn to walk, the Oracle is a hand that reaches out to the student, lifts us up, encourages, and cheers up the spirit. It is a trigger of encouragement, a banner saying “You can do it! Don’t you dare give up!” **(Elíazar Martínez-Munguia)**

Reading the Oracle made me feel that I am a part of something really special. I am glad I chose to further my education. Education is very important to become successful. No matter what you’re going through in life, you can overcome anything. **(Ashley Lee)**

Alice’s story “We Ate Dog Food” is like Jiménez’s “The Circuit” because her father was like his father: they couldn’t read and her family was poor, like his family, but they had strong-willed parents and were surviving. Reading some of the stories from the Oracle gave me hope. There was nothing but positivity from the past class. They give you hope to succeed! **(Natia Saffold)**





boyfriend, with no friends, family, or community. I'm excited to learn new faces and names. A positive community or village behind you is motivation to be better and do better.
(**Moriah Parker**)

Education is the key to a better life for yourself and your family. The Odyssey Project is a truly amazing program. Learning is a process, and the courage and the strength you carry will make everything possible.
(**Kossiawavi Elohi**)

What did I learn about the Odyssey Project from reading the Oracle? I've learned you're never too old to increase your levels of learning. I also learned that someone is always willing to help and that you should never give up. Also I learned always to listen to others with an open mind. This class will help you come out of your shell with a voice all your own. (**Margie Barajas**)

The Oracle is a wonderful idea. It shows many different people on all different walks of life, but their happiness and success is something that I want to share in. Carmon Caire wrote that she was proud of her graduation from the Odyssey program, so do what it takes to complete the program. Apply myself so I may get everything I can from this wonderful opportunity. Breonna Hawkins wrote, "Not every door is locked, so push!" To me, it's saying there's always a way and much to be learned, so be open-minded and don't give up. There's plenty of support and encouragement. From everything I read, this program was life altering and great for everyone. As long as I'm here and participate, listen, learn, and live it, it's time for my life-altering opportunity. (**Ashton McDonald**)

Muhammad Abdullah said, "Don't be afraid or too proud to ask for help." I have difficulty asking for help because I want to figure everything out on my own. Most times I do eventually find a way, but there's nothing like support. Everyone needs help sometimes. Muhammad also said, "Become a part of the Odyssey family and the UW community as much as you can." One of the main reasons I wanted to be a student in the program was because I lacked being part of something. I moved to Madison from Milwaukee knowing only my

There are some really great poems and stories from the Class of 2019. It seemed like an interesting and fun group. Reading all the amazing things they wrote and the ups and downs made me even more excited than I already was. The struggles the students had jumped out to me because they were relatable to my life, like not feeling like you were going to make it, having so much going on in your adult life at home, yet still prevailing through it all. I've done this so many times, and I feel so good when I succeed anyway. . . .



Because I had my first son at 15, my education took a turn I didn't expect. I did go on to get my GED the same year I was to graduate from high school. . . What I didn't realize was getting an education, a career, and experience was also just as if not more important than money. Money is important. It will always be in the world, but not having the knowledge of how to get it and keep it will leave you broke anyway.
(**Laisha Cooke**)

Reading the Oracle made me feel like I am right where I belong. I know there are people who felt some of the same ways I did: nervous, determined, scared, and happy. . . . Yet all found their gifts or just completely had one of the most wonderful experiences ever. **(Tina Martinez)**

After reading through the Oracle, I discovered a common theme: excitement and fear. I can see that these two things have more in common than I realized. Galeca McCain says, "Just like you, I was nervous and I doubted myself. Although I was scared, I was overjoyed and felt extremely blessed that I was one of the chosen 30 students." This statement fits my thoughts exactly. I felt that everyone's letter spoke about how excited they were to be a part of something so special, that it is an incredibly transforming experience, and that it is just the beginning of their new journey. . . .



The other aspect of the reading that made me feel excitement and fear is the part where the alumni tell us how our classmates and teachers become our family. I am generally afraid to open up to people. I feel like people won't understand my story. I have a hard time making new friends. But Sandra Zintzun says "leave your fears at the door," and I am going to try to do that and take advantage of the advice given by those before me. I vow to challenge myself to overcome some of the fears that these letters help me identify. I will do that by stepping outside of my comfort zone, asking for help, and trying to make new friends. Ultimately you cannot be excited for an opportunity without seeing the fears that may prevent you from achieving your goals. **(Krista Mellott)**



Now I can feel myself less nervous and with more encouragement. I want it to be Wednesday again to see what happens in the classroom. I'm excited to learn new things to feel better about myself. The stories of all the students are very encouraging and help me feel that my life in general will improve. I'm here putting all of me into the class to make it happen. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

After reading the alumni's words of encouragement, I feel confident in the task ahead of me. It really shows that no matter what your barriers and struggles are, with the right support and guidance, you can achieve anything. I think a big reason we fail at things is due to lack of support and confidence in ourselves.



Juanita Wilson said, "I felt like I am no longer a slow learner." That statement really gave me hope that I, too, can feel that way. For the past 14 years I've let the learning disability I was branded with define my ability, or lack of ability, to learn. I was never given the key to open the shed in my head where all the tools to success have been waiting for me this whole time. I believe Odyssey has the key to that shed, or at least a map to where I may find it. **(Nina Salisbury)**

Reading the Oracle in a lot of ways eased so many thoughts of my own that were causing anxiety, doubt, and fear of failure. One of the sentences that jumped out to me from the letters from the columns of alumni was "Don't quit!" I've walked away from things in my past that I felt wouldn't reap the reward I wanted most. Another sentence that kept jumping up in several alums' letters was "This is life changing!"

Alice's "We Ate Dog Food" was quite the shocking tale, and I easily related to having a parent that could not read or write. Thankfully my mom got tutored through an Urban League program to help with that. I learned from the Oracle that in the Odyssey Project, all the resources I need are at my disposal. It's on me to make good use of them. **(Jerome Sanders)**

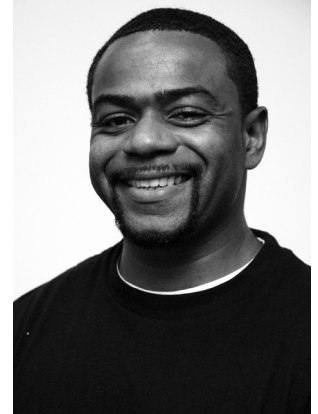
Reading the Oracle made me feel more comfortable about this journey. When I first got accepted, I was nervous about failing and not having the right support. After reading past students' input, I realize that the support system from my classmates as well as faculty will prevent me from failing. I learned that the Odyssey Project may be my path to furthering my education and succeeding in college courses. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**



After reading the Oracle, I felt inspired, and I also felt a little relieved. It was really cool to read the advice and different perspectives on this class, especially from people with such different backgrounds. The relief came as I kept reading and realized that all the letters came to the same conclusion: that Odyssey offered them a chance to better themselves with a support system that you often can't find in life.

My favorite passage was from Abdourahman Sallah. He wrote, "This class is not an avenue to compete but rather a family union where you learn and share ideas and experiences in a most informal way." I really liked that sentence because I could

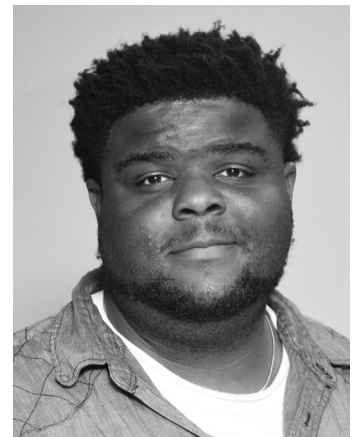
feel what he was describing in the first class. I also liked "I love my Webster's" by Tosumba Welch. It reminded me of Malcolm X and how he learned so much with his dictionary. **(Riley Sessions)**



I learned from the Oracle that "every start refers to a new beginning." Many of the students expressed how they, too, struggled, and they reminded me to never give up. I learned from Joyce that it is never too late to pursue anything. This is an opportunity to find my own voice, take advantage of the help, and be accountable. . . . For the Oracle this year, I share my poem "Today Is a New Day":

Today is a New Day

It's a New Morning, a New Love, a New Favor, and a New Mercy,
 A New Devotion, a New Attention, a New Foundation,
 A New Effort, a New Harvest, & a New Impact,
 A New Joy, a New Strength, & a New Courage,
 A New Boldness, a New Righteousness, & a New Peace.
 A New Learning, a New Blessing, & a New Healing,
 A New Deliverance, a New Patience, & a New Innocence,
 A New Insurance, a New Assurance, A New Endurance, & a New Obedience,
 A New Serenity, Hospitality, Honesty, Loyalty, Sincerity, Humility,
 Capacity, Accuracy, Authenticity, Authority, Identity,
 And a New Sense of Security. **(Ron Burford)**



A MAGICAL NIGHT AT AMERICAN PLAYERS THEATRE

Thanks to generous contributions from American Players Theatre, Hubbard Avenue Diner, Dane Arts, Jenny Pressman, and individual donors, the UW Odyssey Project (www.odyssey.wisc.edu) was able to take a group of students and alumni by Coach bus to Spring Green on Sunday, September 22, 2019. We enjoyed a picnic on the grounds of the theatre, held a thought-provoking conversation with APT's first African American company actor, Gavin Lawrence, and then watched a powerful performance of August Wilson's "Fences." The rain that had fallen all day held off during the performance, and we watched characters come alive on stage as a whippoorwill sang in the evening sky. What an unforgettable trip! Thanks to all who made it possible.



I'm very happy I pressed my way despite the weather. The diversity and anticipation of the crowd was

off the chain. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that such an awesome gem (APT Theatre) is just about an hour away from Madison. By the way, the picnic dinner was delicious! I've found a new spot to hang. Looking forward to the 2020 season.

(Ruthie Allen)



around the alcoholic. It lasts even when the alcoholic dies. Also, it helped me see the family dynamics, and how in the end no matter how big the mistakes you make, your family will be there for you. My favorite part was when the friend said some people put fences to keep strangers out but some people put them up to keep a family in together. Having Gavin Lawrence talk to us and share his personal story made the end of the play extra special. Thank you very much! **(Marisol Gonzalez)**



It was truly a magical evening. I am so thankful to everyone who made it happen and to Gavin Lawrence for taking time to dialogue with us before the show. While waiting for the bus, one of the staff members said that last

night's show was one of the best so far. I can't help but think that the cast was showing out for Gavin's mom as the Pearly Gates were opened for her. Gavin sharing his truth with us made it more real and personal for me and the sisters who joined me. I can't wait to come back to APT! **(Hedi Rudd)**



What a pleasant gift. Fences hit home to intimate and challenging life experiences of my own, yet it shed light on optimism for the long run. **(Mai Neng Thao)**



I'm very thankful for the opportunity to be in that theater, watching that show. It makes me see alcoholism as a family disease that affects everyone





OMG. Last night was amazing. I only wish I would have taken my son with us. It was so cool getting to talk to Gavin Lawrence, and I was bummed about his Mom dying last Monday. Gavin telling us about his character (Gabriel) made me understand the play a little better. It was a night I won't forget. The best part was just being outside and not inside a movie theater. Just being up close and personal with the characters was an amazing feeling. Thank you so much for this experience.

(Margarita Barajas)



I was glad that I got to experience a play of a story I already knew! The characters were so amazing, and it made the production so good. The most memorable part for me was the dialogue between Troy and Rose after she found out about the baby.

(Kayasia Blake)



Thank you for the opportunity to go the APT. Great actors and actresses. Wonderful story and play. The crew did a wonderful job. At the scene where Rose was giving a reality speech and speaking her heart

out for the first time, it touched my heart and put some tears in my eyes—"Don't you think I have wants and needs just like you?" Because she chooses her husband, she knew it was her responsibility to put it all behind her. She devotes herself and focuses on her family and shows what it means to hold her "Wife" and "Mother" title. As bitter as she felt about the situation, her soft motherly heart takes over, and she takes her husband's baby and raises it as her own. **(Bao Thao)**



My soul was unlocked. My emotions were scattered, and most of all my heart was happy. I learned so much through this play. Wow! Again, such a powerful performance. It was the ending that illuminated the whole play.

I am so happy I attended. Thank you for this amazing opportunity. Today I'm still full from yesterday's performance. **(Yolanda Cunningham)**





There is no better way to spend a Sunday than being surrounded by nature when the sun is going down in the distance while watching a fantastic play. I had not been to APT since I was in elementary school, and it was just as special as I remembered it. From the bus ride there and back, to our delicious dinner, to the incredible entertainment, it was altogether a wonderful experience. **(Nina Salisbury)**

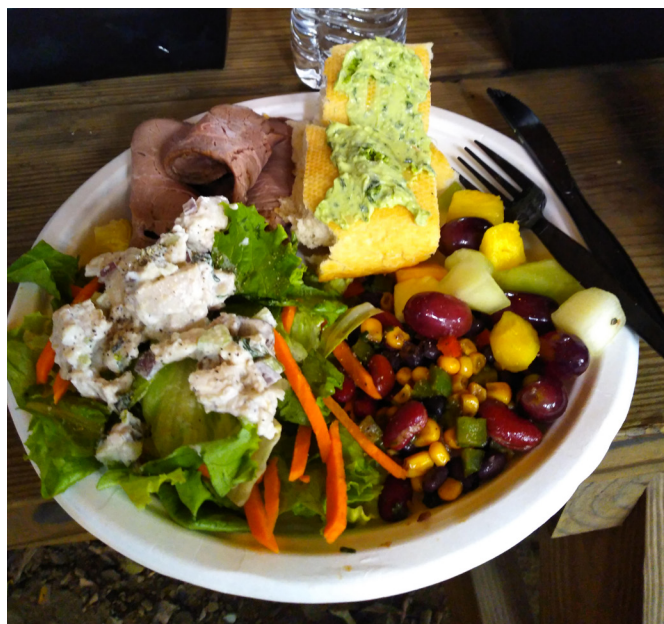


It was definitely a once in a lifetime experience. The actors were amazing! I hadn't watched the movie, so I was on the edge of my seat a lot. **(Victoria Patterson)**



I was in awe that Gavin Lawrence shared his experiences with Odyssey students in person! The realness of his performance blew me away even though his Mother passed away last Monday! This moment will stay with me

always! **(Char Braxton)**





Sidney (age 11) and I truly enjoyed Fences!

In many ways, Fences reminds me of myself and my father and our relationship. It also reminds me of other black men I knew growing up in and near the west side of Chicago in the sixties and seventies.

It reminds me of the social and emotional class struggles and how we thrive and find solace in situations that define and galvanize how we see ourselves and how others see us.

For me, the scenes that referenced a black man finding where he fits in, his identity as a blue collar black man, father, son, friend, and husband truly transcend time.

For me, things that were inferred about a black family's human conditions and their resilience moved me in ways that could be difficult to understand unless you've lived some parts of it



as an African American or as a first generation immigrant.

Sidney and I talked about how Fences mirrored me and my father and our relationship numerous times, so much so that the scenes were like reliving my reality, while reinforcing my choices and convictions, to understand our condition... and remedy them as best as I can.

I kept having lumps in my throat because I was truly moved. **(Bruce Moore)**



I'm so thankful to have had the experience to be a part of something so magical. The cast was amazing and definitely made every character come to life. The atmosphere was different and unique in its own way. So thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to participate!!!! **(Kyisha Williams)**

