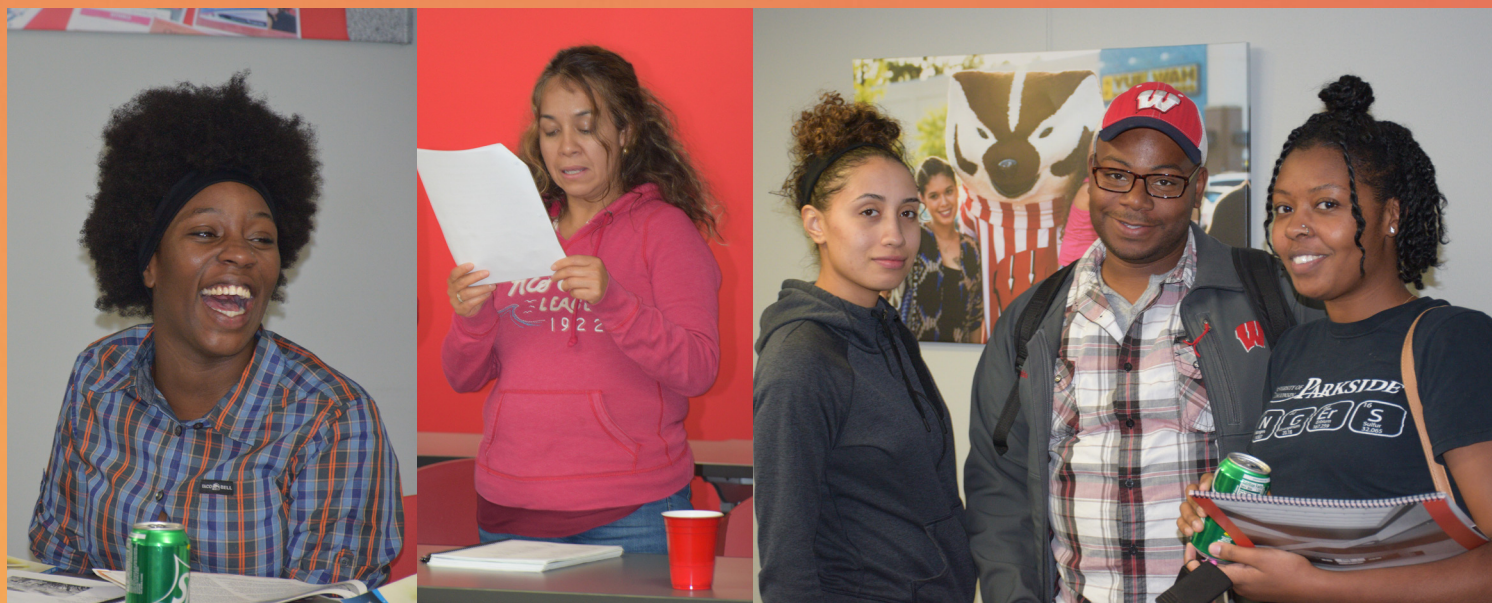


ODYSSEY ORACLE

ODYSSEY REFLECTIONS



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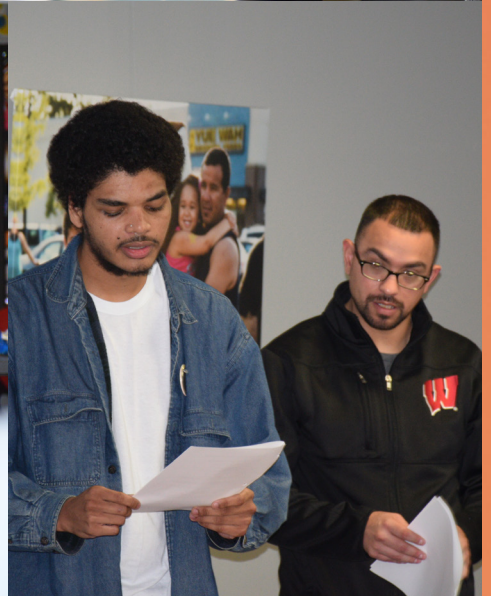
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MOVED BY MUSIC

I use music to express my emotions and to control my emotions. For instance, if I'm sad, I'll play uplifting, happy music that'll put me in a better mood. If I am feeling like I'm not worthy, I'll play music that reminds me that I am worthy and to love myself. Furthermore, if I want to party or need help waking up, I'll play music that turns me up. My favorite type of music is R&B from the 2000s; that music just helps me chill and relax. I love music and singing along to it even though I can't sing. I'm not a fan of music that doesn't have a soul or a point. If the message isn't positive in the music or something I can relate to, I honestly don't want to hear it. I feel like music impacts our subconscious too much to listen to garbage. **(Aerial Bailey)**

When I started school, my mom put me in chorus class. Ever since then I have always liked to sing. I always made sure I had a chorus class in every grade I was in. At home, growing up, my dad always had me listen to the oldies, so I loved the oldies. People would always ask, "How do you know these songs?" I would always tell them, "My dad." When I was growing up, my mom, on the other hand, liked Cher, Kiss, and Ted Nugent. I liked and listened to a lot of different kinds of music. When I turned 16 years old, I met this guy who was into Mexican music, like corridos, Roman Avila, Bobby Pulido, so that opened up a whole new world of music for me. Now I listen to Gospel music. It is uplifting and helps me out a lot. **(Margarita Barajas)**



I have a type of friendship with music. Music is a way or rather a vehicle I use to praise and adore God. It is an expression of my feelings and a tool for consoling my heart, especially when I listen to praise and worship music. I can be having symptoms of anxiety or depression, where I am

unable to even move my body, but once I turn on one of those songs and begin to praise, it is like a wind comes over me and the heaviness is lifted. I still do listen to other music, like R&B or Rap. I just pay attention to the words more. I don't really like a lot of cursing in my music. I like to jam without all the profanity, thank you! **(Ron Burford)**



Music means whether I'm upbeat or going through something. When I'm feeling low, I pick R&B or soul to listen to the words. They help me heal and feel a lot better. When I'm ready to party or excited, I love rap and sometimes pop. I'm goofy pretty much 80% of the time, so a good beat gets me moving. **(Arkeia Cameron)**

Music plays a huge role in my life. Music has helped me get through good times and bad times. Music has helped me get through heartbreak from a lover and the heartbreak of a death. Certain songs take me back to the day of the sad time or the day where everything was right. A song by a Rapper named Future that reminds my sons and me of our cousin who was killed a few years ago. It's weird how this one song reminds us all of him. He didn't play the song; it's just a sad song that came out around that time.

I love all kinds of music. I really don't discriminate. If it has nice lyrics, or especially a nice beat, I can vibe to it—even Rock or Country music. My favorites are R&B and Rap, though. Some of my favorite artists are Mary J Blige, Nas, Donell Jones, Musiq, Carl Thomas, Dave Hollister, and Future. Some of my new favorites are Megan Thee Stallion and Summer Walker. Music is therapy for me--always has been. **(Laisha Cooke)**

Music to me is life or death. It's a lord that saves me every day from being a statistic, a thick cloud made of hope that skims and sails through the stars of opportunity. Where would I be if it weren't for my mom playing country hits 24/7 when I was a child? Would I have wanted to explore different genres, like the blues, which would lead to my symbiotic relationship with hip hop? Life or death. I never had an answer for the dreaded "what do you want to be when you grow up?" until music and myself, through a journey that was definitely prolonged, not seen eye to eye; a thousand yard state of grace. MF Doom made me love words, performing mentally with my other musically inclined friends who I would have never met without music. Nelly from 2004 was a gateway drug. Music helped me get through college the first time via Lofi. Pink Floyd made me wonder if my life was worth living at 14. Luckily, I had friends who listened to the same art at the time that helped me out of what I thought would be forever: depression. Today music gives me hope that I'll one day be able to help my mom in the future with her inevitable medical problems. It connects me to my ancestors. It's life or death; a feeling, a cloud through the stars. Thank you, hip hop, blues, Lofi, country, and jazz. **(Corey Dean)**

"Music is therapy for me"

Music, to me, means everything. I could be going through the toughest time in my life, but if I play

some R&B or 90s music, my toughest worries seem to fade away. I personally like all kinds of music, from R&B to rap or pop; it just has to catch me at that moment. Music is powerful. Just the melody or the beat can change your whole attitude and the way you feel at that time. My childhood was amazing when it came to the music part. I recall a time when R. Kelly came blasting through the radio, and my brothers and I would just sing all the words as if we knew what they meant. It was one of those times where if you heard R. Kelly playing you knew it was going to be a good day. **(Tiffany Dixon)**

Music plays a very big role in my life. I love music, and I also love to sing. I like to play gospel songs and also any kind of church songs. I listen every morning specifically when I am driving to work. It helps me with my mood and emotions. It also reminds me of when I was singing in a church every Sunday in my country back home [Togo]. I love to sing church songs or gospel songs to make me feel connected to my God and worship him.

(Kosiwavi Eloh)

Music helps me be free. It's as if before the words start, I am putting on my super hero suit. The voice of the person singing allows the words to release me to conquer the things that are trying to end my joy. Music is an amazing tool that can heal anyone at any time. It helps me believe that I can hold on and stand firm at the end of every battle.

(Rasaki Emmanuel)



Music brings many things to everyone around me. For my children, it's an escape from the stress of being a teenager and young adulthood. For my coworkers, it's a way to focus on getting things done. Personally, music exists as neither happy nor sad, focused nor stress relief. Music just is to me, like it or leave it. **(Melissa Herriges)**

Music means a lot to me. I don't think I could live without music. It's the way I express my feelings when I can't talk. Music helps me cope with my emotions whether it be good or bad. Every song reminds me of a place or time throughout my life. Sometimes, these are happy moments and sometimes sad. Music is my spiritual healing. Without it, I would be lost. **(Jyneeva Hunt)**

Music means to me that every song has a story, and every song has a meaning in it. Every song that was written was meant to be felt. I love music. I love all types of music. Music opens your mind up to how people live and who they are. I listen to music when I'm down and when I'm up. The sound of music can help any situation you are in. Music can change your mood and put you in a better place. Music is my voice when I can't speak. **(LaDiá Key)**

My relationship with music is very strong. The reason I say this is because whenever I'm feeling down, depressed, or hopeless, I turn on music to help me feel better. I love slow jazz, R&B, and hip hop, but I mostly like the throwbacks from back in the day. Listening to music can change my whole mood. It makes me want to do better when I'm feeling hopeless. Gospel music works best for me when I'm feeling discouraged. **(Ashley Lee)**

Music has always made an impact in my life. Whether I was happy or sad, it always makes me feel better. I have such a love for music. I used to sing country music, and my mother recorded me. I guess I was pretty good. I was only about five or six years old, but that was a long time ago. Now, I like to listen to all kinds of music. When I hear people sing, it is so powerful to me that they have enough courage to sing in front of people without being scared. To have so much talent in music is a beautiful thing. **(Tina Marie Martinez)**



Music is a very powerful element in the lives of people. I personally like joyful music; I am not into the romantic or soft tunes. Music makes me happy and helps me stay in a good mood. There are a couple of songs that bring me good memories of my homeland and remind me of the streets, the

people, the sweet, sweet homeland (Mexico), the good weather, the beach, the delicious food, the mountains and places I visited while I was there. **(Eliázar Martínez-Munguia)**

"Music is my voice when I can't speak."

Music is a huge part of my life. Music is a main thing in my life because of what you can do with it and how it makes you feel. I've used music to express how I've felt being sad, angry, or even happy. I believe that you can find a bit or piece of music to describe any and every feeling or thought that you encounter or deal with. Musical interpretation is a natural part of life, but most don't even know they're doing it or understand. Through music, I found peace or whatever feeling or emotion I'm trying to express.

I love music. In a sort of way, music is my life. I feel like there's music for everything every day, even just for everyday moments. Background music helps me prepare for whatever task is at hand.

My love for musical interpretation grew when I joined Orchestra in second grade and Band in fourth grade. I played the violin up to now, with lots of concerts and competitions. I've done marching parades. There are many ways that I've used music and that it touched me in my life. **(Ashton McDonald)**



“Music finds what my soul needs.”

Music helps me to lock in on the specific emotion I want or need to feel. I have a broad range of music that I listen to, from Disney songs to rap. I play upbeat and loud songs to invigorate energy while working out or doing housework. I listen to sad songs when I need to release the tension that builds within me during the stressful challenges life throws at me. I play silly Disney or dancing songs while my daughter and I release energy with wild dance moves that we make up on the spot. I use music to remember loved ones that are no longer with me. Music finds what my soul needs. The sounds and words of music can hug my soul, make it laugh, and let my soul yell or let it cry. **(Krista Mellott)**



Music has always played a major part in my life. I grew up in a household where gospel was the main genre. My mom was a big gospel and church lady. We really couldn't listen to any rap music. We had to listen to R&B or we would get into trouble. I had my own Walkman, though, so I would sneak my rap music in. Hip hop is my favorite genre of music. Hip hop speaks to me because I come from a rough city where growing up can be a challenge. To me, hip hop gives you that “I've struggled my whole life and now look at me” kind of vibe. It tells the story of how down and out a person can be, but with hard work and ambition you can come from under anything. But being that my mom always listened to gospel, I tend to play gospel when I'm feeling down and need a little uplifting. Whenever I'm feeling down, I'll play something like “I need you now” by Smokie Norful or “We fall down” by Donnie McClurkin. Gospel just gives me this sense of security that I can get through any and everything if I just believe. I enjoy R&B, too. No matter what type of song it is, R&B just has me feeling whatever mood the song is about.

(Timothy Mosley)



Music is a part of my daily routine. I wake up to Hosanna by Israel Houghton. I only use that as an alarm when I have to wake up early. It's a really calm way to wake up. On Saturdays, my alarm has a more upbeat song so that I can keep that same energy throughout the day. When I shower, I listen to music depending on my mood. Sundays I normally start off with gospel and slowly transition into love songs. I listen to music to complete daily tasks such as cleaning the house. It takes a while because most of the time I am dancing more than I am actually cleaning. I also listen to music mixed with the sound of the ocean to help me

sleep because I have difficulties sleeping at times. **(Loché Mothoa)**

I have a real relationship with music. If I am in the blues I can't listen to music that's meant for high spirits. Music calms me, hypes me, gets me up in the morning, and relaxes my students and more. I listen to real feel-good music: Neo soul, R&B, soul, and intelligent rap music. Music also teaches me about love, loss, gaining, black culture, and history. **(Moriah Parker)**

I love music, all types of music, like R&B, pop, hip hop, and Afro beat. I love music that speaks to my soul so that when you hear it, you just want to start dancing. For a song called “Forever” by Labrinth from the Euphoria sound track, he doesn’t say any lyrics; it’s just a beautiful harmony that really catches my ear. I come from a family of musicians and singers; my whole family sings! My dad plays the bass and piano and drums, whatever he puts his mind to! Music plays a powerful role in my life; there’s a song for every mood I have. **(Natia Saffold)**

This music reminds me of the songs they play when they put me on hold at my psychiatrist’s office. I’ve been thinking that it’s purposeful for anyone who may be in a crisis; the soothing notes may help comfort or calm someone down. **(Nina Salisbury)**

Music has been the glue that keeps all people together. It tightens bonds with my parents when I listen to Curtis Mayfield with my Dad, or Whitney Houston with my mom. Music creates joy for me with my oldest son, JD, listening to his favorite song by Lil Nas X.

Can’t nobody tell me nothing!
Music brings smiles, tears of joy
and of sadness. Music can ease
pain, and even some music deeply
expresses pain. I listened to oldies
that my parents control our family stereo with,
mostly Motown dusties: The Temptations, Michael
Jackson, and Smokey Robinson. I now still go
down memory lane whenever I’m out in public
and a random car rides by playing a familiar song.
Memories instantly flood the mind vividly, as good-
smelling foods evoke the same thoughts.

(Jerome Sanders)

*“Music has been the
glue that keeps all
people together.”*



As the music plays, I listen to the beat. The beat is the most important part because without the beat, you have no music. As the beat plays, you are moved and feel the beat. Just like in life, your heart beats and you feel that you’re moved. We all are making music. **(Marcello Segovia)**

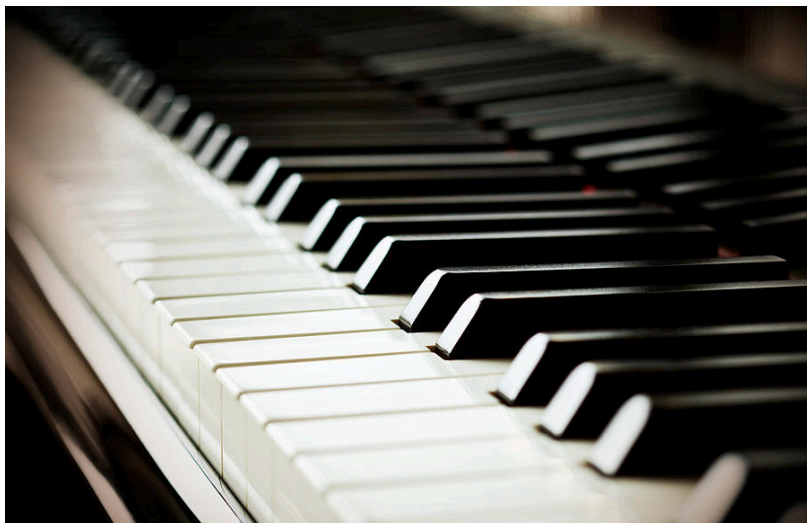
I love music! More than anything, I use it as an escape. I use it to get away from problems in life or even to just get out of my own head. The emotions that music brings out of me surprise me sometimes. Different songs or even hearing a couple notes can be so powerful. I’m no good at singing, but it’s a great way for me to realize what I’ve got going on. I find that all my favorite artists give off a lot of emotion when they sing, and I gravitate towards that. I think it’s easier to be vulnerable with yourself if you are listening to someone doing the same. Someday I’d love to learn to play an instrument. I feel it could work like therapy for me. **(Riley Sessions)**

Music plays a big part in my life. The music that I enjoy listening to most is old school R&B. I was brought up on a lot of Destiny’s Child, Tupac, Biggie, Mary J. Blige, as well as many other artists. To this day, when I am happy, sad, upset, confused, curious, or depressed, I turn on my old music and sing my heart out. It always helps me gather

my thoughts and focus on the tasks at hand. I also really enjoy that my girls are being brought up the way that I was and are not exposed to the profanity and nonsense that is being made today, as much as I can help it.

Being a daycare teacher and mother of two small girls, I love most Disney soundtracks and messages they give to the kids. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**





To me, music can be used to lift my spirit, help me focus, or express how I'm currently feeling. When I'm unable to say the words I want to say, I'll play a particular song or artist that relates to how I'm feeling. I prefer rap and R&B music. My favorite artists in order would be Wiz Khalifa, Drake, and Lil Uzi Vert. They all make music that is different than one another, so depending on the day or my mood, I might end up listening to one artist all day or all three. Music is a good way to relax and just listen to someone else's story and to relate to them or learn from them. Currently, my favorite song by each artist would be The Race by Wiz Khalifa, Do not Disturb by Drake, and New Patek by Lil Uzi Vert.

(Jaison Thomas)

The first thing that comes to mind when I heard the music was my little town's church. I think it was because there, they play the piano music every Sunday. In that time, just like now, piano music brings me a feeling of peace, joy, and calm. I wish we could have music every Wednesday. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

Music is life. Depending on what kind of music it is, it can really alter your mood. Sometimes it makes you feel better, sometimes worse. There's something about music that just calms the soul, especially when you can relate to the song or really feel the rhythm. I listen to music to clean and also like to listen to it when I'm sad. My favorite type of music is R&B, slow songs, positive

songs, inspirational songs, songs where I can really feel people who've been through the hurt explain the same feeling I'm having. It lets me know I'm not alone, that these feelings are normal, and that they do get better.

I always wondered why music calms people to own or change their mood. I know that when I listen to music, I get really into the song. I sing as if I were Mariah Carey, especially on long rides. We drive a lot, and we are a family that always listens to music. My children do not like my music. They say it is sad music. I tell them the sad music is what makes me happy and takes my mind

off things. Things have been rough lately, and I've been going through a lot. I would have to say music is life. Music helps me cope with everything that's going on around me. It sidetracks my mind and lets me know that there are better days ahead.

(Savannah Torres)

To be honest, I am not a music person. Occasionally back in the day I would listen to a song because my friends would discuss it and I didn't want to feel left out. I didn't really have an interest in music.

(O'Shane Wilmoth)



FINDING PLATO'S CAVE TODAY



Personally, I am really good with being self-aware. The only time I can really think of a time I felt stuck is when I was pregnant and shortly after I had my son. My relationship with my son's father

has always been unhealthy. When I was pregnant and caught him cheating, I stayed, even though I knew I should've left. I stayed because I loved him and because I felt stuck since I was pregnant with his son. I felt as if no one would want me if my own boyfriend /child's father didn't want me enough to be loyal to me. In addition, I didn't want to be judged for breaking up my family since in today's generation, cheating has been normalized. I also didn't want to be a single mom who had to pay all my bills by myself.

After I had my son and caught his father cheating again, I realized I had two options: accept it and stay or value my self-worth and leave. I left, and it was one of the hardest decisions I've made. I still love him to this day, but I know I have to love myself more. I struggle as a single mom, but I'd rather my son see me happy and struggling than have him live in and witness an unhealthy, toxic relationship just to say I kept my family 'together.' A lot of people are mistreated by their child's other parent and use their child as a reason to stay when they should use their child as a reason to leave.

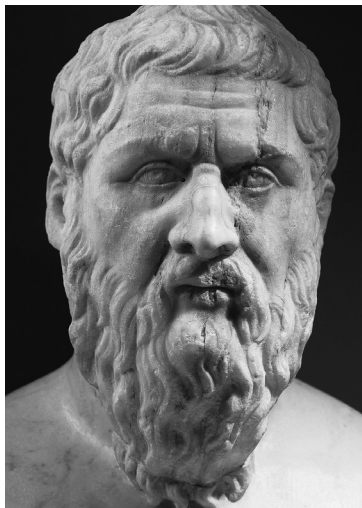
(Aerial Bailey)



One of my cave experiences was that when I was a pre-teen, I was led to believe that I was only on this earth as a sexual object. I was shown that sex was the only thing in my life and that was my purpose in this world. So I didn't question it. I just thought that was what my life was for. I was held

in this cave for a really long time, until about four years ago. I was helped out of this cave and shown that is not what I was put on this earth for. I am here for something bigger and better.

(Margarita Barajas)



My experience with a cave stems from my inner feelings of sadness, or grief. Once upon a time, I created an Allegory of the Cave every

time I did not want to deal with how I was feeling. I grew up being bullied about my weight, and I was always moving around from place to place. I would drown whatever I was feeling with video games and food. You're probably

wondering why my parents or adults in my family didn't do too much. Well, truth is I watched them handle situations/emotions and feelings with drugs, alcohol, sex, and also with food. That's when it hit me. After reading the Allegory, I realized that a cave is also a learned behavior (habit). I had created a habit of always playing video games because I could be a different person. I was the hero of the story; I was in control, even if it was only for a little while. Besides, I had no control over anything else in my life. It was my way of numbing because, let's be honest, I wasn't able to numb the way I saw all the older people live. So, for a long time it was like a revolving door. Sometimes without even knowing, you've done it for so long that it has become a place of comfort.

Socrates mentioned that it is important to escape the cave and really spend some time on the outside. Don't allow yourself to go back without learning about the new truths. See, when people come out of the cave, made by themselves or others, they gain enough knowledge to understand the why. Why did they choose that cave? Why is that a place of comfort? Why should they choose to go back? Why did they want to stay? If you give yourself enough time to be uncomfortable, you will gain a new level of growth that will allow you to learn that the cave isn't you, the person; it's a learned behavior; the mind. Anything can be made into an allegory of the cave: social media, food, alcohol, drugs, sex, always staying busy, you name it. And it's not to say that these things are bad; the difference is how you use it. **(Ron Burford)**



I became pregnant with my second child with a man who wanted nothing to do with him. I put myself in a cave by becoming depressed about a decision I already made. Through my pregnancy, I was sad and depressed. At moments, I questioned myself as to why I

kept him. I still have days of questioning myself. On those days I feel caved in, but most days I can see the light in him and myself. I'm thankful for him.

(Arkeia Cameron)



I once was in a cave with my first love. I couldn't see him or the relationship for what it really was. It was good at first, or maybe not. Now that I think about it, maybe there were telltale signs of misery ahead that I chose to ignore.

I always saw the best in him.

In a way, I still do. He does a lot of good when it comes to our children. The relationship part of him, however, needs lots of work. He cheated on me, I'm sure, more times than I know. He was very slick about it, though. There was also some abuse: mentally, verbally, and even physically. Still, I saw the best in him. Still, I thought we'd make it even when he moved out of town and got a condo without informing me. Even when he'd start to sleep on the couch, even when we went four months without intimacy, even when he came around less and less, he'd still tell me we were together. I was so naïve, almost out of my mind.

One day I couldn't take it anymore. I cried and begged him to let me be free, free from the bondage of the fake, miserable "relationship." To my surprise, he "allowed" me to walk away. Of course, by this time he was already involved with multiple women. So it no longer mattered. Our son knew who he was, and in his head I wouldn't be much without him anyway. That alone comforted him, I think. Now I am in another relationship and so is he. We don't talk. For some reason, it's like he doesn't like me as a person. He's trapped in another cycle of an unhealthy relationship and a part of him, I think, blames me. He'll probably never admit it and maybe that's not the case, but it feels like that's the case. **(Laisha Cooke)**



A cave I have personally been held captive in was a toxic relationship. Back when I was in high school, I had a girlfriend during my senior year who I thought was amazing. I had no previous dating experiences that were "serious," so in a sense I was flying blind and was in the dark about what

a healthy relationship looked like. Looking back, I should have seen the red flags; her family was racist, she turned everything into an argument, and she constantly said that the dreams I was working towards were completely hopeless. At the time I thought behavior such as this was common in relationships, so I didn't think anything of it, until we went off to MATC together and she started living with my mom and me. Once we were living together, I started to see "the light" and thought about leaving the cave because everything that was wrong with our relationship got worse by 100%. The reason I ultimately left the cave was because she said "your dreams are oversaturated and you have no real chance of achieving them." This was the chain around my neck breaking into pieces because the only thing I loved more than her was the idea that I could support myself and my community through music. I broke up with her a few days after that because, in a way, she attacked the "cave" I cared more about. It was so easy to be complacent, but it took courage to see the light. I'm happy I did. **(Corey Dean)**



I have been in a cave of situations, of poverty, when I was back home in Africa. I lost my dad at eight years old. We were a family of four with our mother. She needed to take care of all of us, and it was so hard. Sometimes we didn't even eat anything for the whole day. Also, I went to school

sometimes without eating. When we took breaks at school, we went to the market to help people in the market sell stuff so I could get money to help my mother and to pay my brother's and sister's school fees. Life was so hard for us. So I was always thinking of ways to change this condition. I worked hard to get my GED and come to the USA for better opportunities and to be able to help them out now.

(Kossiwavi Elohe)



One of the most over-arching caves in my life was overcoming the mindset of poverty. As children, we learn that all people are created equal, that we can do anything we put our minds to, and that the world is our playground. While this is a beautiful lie we are told as children, in America we soon realize during our years in high school that we have been led astray. We encounter the veils of racism, classism, educational status, and systemic oppression. The best way to relate this lie for others to understand is to compare it to learning that Santa Claus isn't real. Now take that feeling and apply it to everything you thought you knew about your opportunities that lie ahead as an adult.

This is a hard reality to bear, but it is very real for many people who grow up and attend schools in "poor" communities and neighborhoods. Having to be "the one" to bring my immediate family out of being poor is a very heavy responsibility for me.

Not only have I been able to provide my family with being able to live a better life, but I also have been able to help them change their mindset so our children do not have to suffer the same fate we did. In looking back, there was a lot of sacrifice on my end, but it is something I would do all over again.

Now I work to bring this same economical and liberating mindset to others through my work as a non-profit public servant [at the Urban League]. This was a venture out of a cave that began an odyssey.
(Melissa Herriges)



Looking back on my life, I have experienced being pulled over by police for no reason. I've not only gotten pulled over for no reason, but was racially profiled at that. I pulled my ID out to show my identification, as I asked "why was I pulled over?" The officer said I didn't make a complete stop at a

stop sign. I couldn't understand because I made a complete stop. It was also two minutes afterwards. He gave me a warning with an attitude and looked at me with disgust. He made it very clear that if I got smart, things could get worse. As of today, I still sometimes feel trapped in a cave. I feel like I can't be valued as important. I feel like because of

the color of my skin, I should be thankful to drive. I should be grateful to have rights, when all in all, I just want to feel safe. There are so many police brutality stories. I just try to be the best driver every day, because the police nowadays don't protect most African American men and women.

(Jynneva Hunt)



On a late and cold December night, my significant other, family, friends, and I were out celebrating that I finished my medical assistant program. The bar usually closes around 2 AM. My friends, significant other, and I were walking to the car when a group of people jumped us. I had

used pepper spray on someone. The police came and asked if we were okay. I replied yes, and the police let us go. A week later, the police came to my mother's house to question me, and they arrested me for using pepper spray. Seven months later, after court kept getting rescheduled 5/7 times, I was found not guilty and the case was dismissed. The police are inside the cave because they made assumptions about me based off of the person who I was dating, who has a troubled background. The assumptions were unfair because I never got into trouble or arrested a day in my life. Just because you're with someone who has a background does not mean you're a bad person; you should never judge a book by its cover. Now it haunts me while filling out job applications to work with senior citizens, in the healthcare field, and going to nursing school. The legal system is sometimes unfair because when you are applying for jobs, people may look at you as a bad person when deep down you're not. This one issue has affected my life because it's hard to find jobs in the healthcare field. My goal is to become a nurse, and I hope this does not affect it. Society needs to get out of the habit of stereotypes. **(Ashley Lee)**





My mother was in an abusive relationship when I was a child. I witnessed a lot of it as a child because I was not able to change much of that situation. It changed me. This was one time I felt in a cave. Another time was moving place to place, state to state, family member after family

member, sometimes even homeless. This also affected my education. When I was about six years old, my little brother passed away in his sleep. He was just a newborn. My mother turned to alcohol. Although she continued to provide the best she could, my life was anything but consistent. As years went on, my mother got better; she is alcohol-free today. I would write more, but these are not easy memories to talk about. I think all things do change for the better with time and good foundations. Also, just accept your own situation, figure out what could use improvement, and go after it (to some, easier said than done), with no more excuses. **(Tina Marie Martinez)**



These small, medium, large shadows are mere reflections of reality. Sometimes we believe something to be true but actually it's really not, such as telling the little ones that Santa Claus will bring them their Christmas presents.

And how about the big shadows that concern our adult life, such as poverty, hunger, drugs, greed of power, and the money in the hands of small groups which monopolize the wealth of the people? These puppet shadows can be controlled by the press, politics, and religion. These groups would correlate with puppeteers nowadays. Politicians make us look at certain issues in certain ways. The second shadow could be religion. Depending on the religion, it can make me have a different and sometimes close-minded opinion on certain things. The third one could be the media; media outlets make me look at certain subjects and certain topics in certain ways. So if I'm looking at a conservative party news source or a liberal party news source, each of them is from a different point of view. However I see the news, it is going to alter the way I perceive it. These can be the puppeteers that alter our reality. **(Eliazar Martinez-Munguia)**



I lived in a cave for decades of my life. This cave I was enslaved in was one in my mind. It began when I was in my early teenage years. The illusion of reality that I lived in was propelled by irrational fears that I believed were truths. The belief system that I created in my mind included insecurities

(fears of what other people thought of me), anger (feeling like someone had mistreated me), my victim mentality (thinking everyone was against me), depression (feelings of not being good enough or unworthy), and isolation. These thought patterns that I created without many facts or truths to justify them were binding me to a vicious cycle of emotional turmoil. My fear of the light, or my fear of feeling my true feelings, pushed me further into the cave. I started to use drugs to numb myself and to distract me from my destructive thoughts. I didn't think I would ever find my way out of it until I came across someone that inspired me to have hope.

The hope that I found was generated by discovering that I could escape. I could get out of this way of life, and I would be happier after I did. I found other people who got out of this cave, and they were willing to help me do the same. My entire soul was now focused on this knowledge that I desired to learn. The escape plan that my new friends were teaching me required some challenging and painful work. I had to come to terms with all the damage I caused and admit my faults. Only then could I "ascend to the light." The process was emotionally challenging. I cried for a week straight because my mind was working on re-routing my entire belief system. At first, I could only identify with the people in the groups that were also still struggling. Listening to their pain was my only comfort because I could easily relate to their stories. As I began to accept my life in this new fashion, I began to experience more insightful thinking. I was able to overcome the challenges and pains that came along with my process of growth because I was excited to discover new methods and tools that would truly help me. I spent night after night questioning all my current and past thought processes and examining what aspects of them needed changing. This process reminded me of William Blake. William Blake stated, "If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear as it is: infinite. For man has closed himself up, until he sees all

things through the narrow chinks of his cavern.” My escape plan was “cleansing” my perception by analyzing the thoughts that I had while I was in the “narrow chinks of my cave.” After accomplishing things that I never knew I had the ability to do, the doors to my new life were opened, and there were “infinite” possibilities before me. I had achieved a new level of understanding.

The next step in the plan was to return to those still suffering in the cave and be their source of hope. Upon working with several others, my levels of understanding multiplied. I had the ability to empathize with the people of the cave. Because I could understand their thought processes, I could help them more effectively. Through the eyes of the prisoners, I could see the things in my life that were of great value to me. I could see them so clearly because these were the things that I wanted the people who were still suffering to have: love, compassion, peace, open-mindedness, and the willingness to overcome challenges. These qualities were the things that saved me. The painful process

of learning to turn anger into love, and judgment into compassion, and forgiveness into peace was my journey to the light. Only through pursuing the knowledge of escaping my cave did I find my way to truth. After breaking through this cave of my mind, I wonder about the other caves my mind may be trapped in that I am unaware of. I have discovered how rewarding it is to break through the chains of our perceptions. Although they can be incredibly challenging, it is undoubtedly worth it.

(Krista Mellott)



I would have to say that my cave has been alcohol. When I was drinking, I was ignorant to everything I was doing. I was drinking and driving, putting others' lives in danger, and not really being aware of what I was doing. I always told myself that I never hit anything or anyone,

so I was good. In reality, I was being very stupid and endangering my life and the lives of others. Alcohol had me in an unreal state of mind. I was in the state of mind that no one loved me and no one cared if I was alive or dead. Even though my kids were around and showed that they cared and that they loved me, alcohol had me thinking otherwise. Other people tried to show me that they loved and cared about me too, but I just wasn't trying to hear it at the time.

I didn't see what it was doing to me until I was arrested for my fourth OWI. Sitting in jail for five months was the sunlight Socrates talks about for me. After all these years of being in the dark of what drinking and driving, and alcohol alone were doing to me, I finally understood. I finally came to the reality that I was allowing alcohol to ruin my life. I was treating people that loved and cared for me like crap. I was risking my life and the lives of others. I was taking away from my kids by not being the best father I could be, and not doing the things that I said I would do for them.

Now that I'm sober and thinking with a clear mind, I have seen my light, and I am on a different journey. We all have to see that light one day and pay attention to what's really going on around us and what is really happening in life. If we don't, we will be stuck in the dark forever. **(Timothy Mosley)**





I have two caves, fear and overthinking. I spend hours trapped in my own head, overthinking everything (not always bad). Then there's the fear cave. My own fear has deprived me from many opportunities. I stopped going to places because I do not want to attract attention. A week ago the police came knocking on my door. I had previously helped someone (everyone told me not to). I gave her a place to stay and tried to steer her in the right direction. Well, obviously she didn't want help, and her drinking and irresponsible actions made me give up. I told her to leave. Later that night she drank pills and called 9-1-1. The police came and questioned me and wrote down my details. My heart felt as if it had jumped out of my chest and to my feet. I stayed up all night overthinking: what if she killed herself and I was thought to be somehow involved when all I had done was try to help another person? So I was stuck in a cave of fear and overthinking. **(Loché Mothoa)**



that cave for the rest of my years on Earth. It was in the physical cave where I realized I had been imprisoned mentally much longer than I was physically. It was my number one priority to be free in my mind much more than I was worried about my physical cave. For I knew if I didn't free my mind, even if the physical cave failed at keeping me imprisoned this go round, there would certainly be a second go at it. My mental cave was the most destructive weapon I ever allowed myself to be imprisoned to, so I made my mental cave a paradise verse

a cave. It became my greatest weapon versus my kryptonite. I watched others around me content with both the physical and mental caves they were imprisoned in. This was simply for the implications that it added a touch, a street element to guys. Most can clearly see they aren't equipped for the darkness, and their eyes will never adjust in a sense where they ever clearly see, only what others convince them of what's before them.

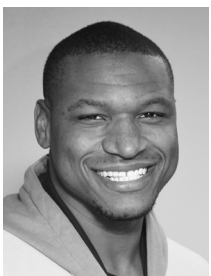
(Jerome Sanders)



I feel like before I got here I was stuck in poverty, but it didn't feel like poverty to me because I was so used to where I'm from. I was tangled in drama, not knowing how to keep a job. I was partying until I guess I saw my light. I wanted better for myself and escaped from the cycle and a rewind of mistakes. I finally got out to do better, be better. **(Natia Saffold)**



A lot of people feel stuck in a cave. Most people don't know or don't have the resources to take advantage of the opportunities that life throws at them. Life is just hard. For example, if you're struggling to eat or pay your bills, it takes a lot away from the chance to better yourself. If you can't fix the problems you have in your personal life, you're not thinking about or capable of fixing some of the problems the world faces. Climate change, racial inequality, and women's rights are just a few issues that need to be addressed by everyone. But I think most people don't have the time or energy to add something else to their plate. I think our system is set up and runs like this to keep the majority of people struggling, so we can't solve the issues that could really help us as a collective.



My cave was as real as it got. It started off on false bravado and confidence in all the wrong ideas and beliefs. I grew up in gang culture in a city where you were either food or you were the one doing the eating. I believed firmly that any individual stupid enough to not respect the gang I claimed or the block I lived on were as deserving of harm or death as someone guilty of a heinous crime. That cave, although it was only a mental one, led me to physically live in a real-life cave, where I served four years fighting a trial that could've imprisoned me in

For me personally, I feel stuck in a cave by the different obstacles our system throws at me. I focus and worry a lot about how I don't have health care, living in a country with an openly racist president, and not being able to afford my bills certain months. All of these things are the shadows on my cave wall, keeping me distracted so I can't take care of problems I face or help others with their own problems. I feel like the way our government is set up is to keep us distracted and struggling to make sure we stay in our caves. **(Riley Sessions)**



Caves are a dangerous thing. You often feel stuck in a rut without an escape. There is always a way out and a light at the end of the tunnel. I have been in a few cave-like situations. The first was being a young adult in an abusive relationship with the father of my child. Being fifteen and dating a 22-year-old, I believed that EVERYTHING was "love," when in reality it was all a part of control. What does a 15-year-old have to offer a 22-year-old? My entire outlook on life changed, and I began to believe that no one else would "love" me the way he did. I believed he was the best I could find. I could go on and on about my life, but I will keep it short and sweet. There have been a lot of caves that I have entered and also exited.

(Shiloh Simonsen)



I know of someone who has a drinking habit. They claim they want help, but daily they're making trips to pick up their drink of choice. They are well aware of their problem and claim the reason for their addiction is due to stress. I feel as if they could be trapped in a mental "cave" because a lot of the stress is self-inflicted. If they wanted to help themselves as much as they claimed, they would take ownership for their cause of personal stress and stop blaming others. Once

they realize they hold the key to their minds, they can "free" themselves from the "cave."

(Jaison Thomas)



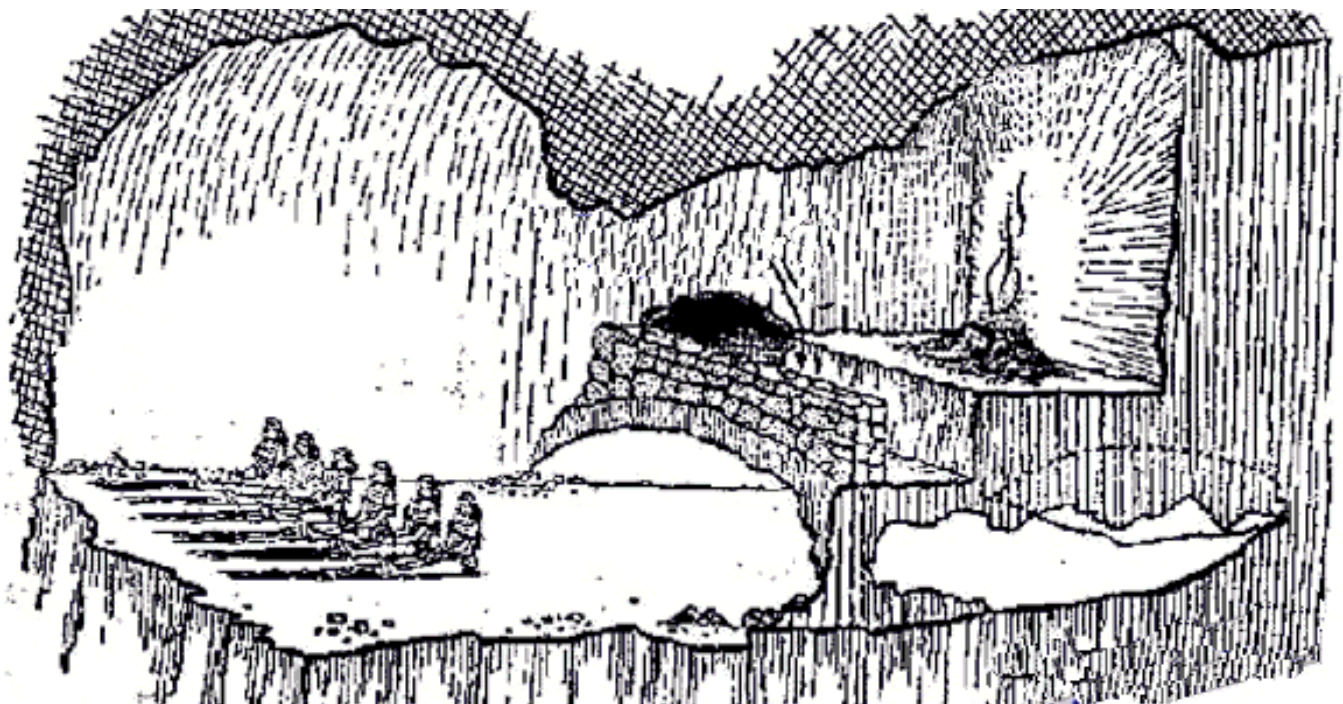
The first thing I can think of to make me feel like I'm in a cave is that I have not been employed for many years. This makes me believe that I am not involved in the community and I'm not learning new things, since a lot of my life is around my family. Another thing is that I don't have a higher education, which makes me feel as though I am in a cave. First of all, without an education I can't get a job where I can do what I like and make a good salary. Second, without a good job and a good salary, I can't do things that I want to do with my family like travel and live where I like.

(Carmen Tinajero)



I was in a relationship with a girl, and based on how we were, I felt like I couldn't get anyone better to be with. I felt that way even when I found out she was still with her daughter's father, and time after time she said she would end the relationship with him. I believed her, until one day, I just made up my mind and left that relationship. I then felt like a burden was lifted off my shoulders.

(O'Shane Wilmoth)



LOVING THE AUERBACH LOVE STORY

Honestly, I've never seen a successful, happy marriage. After reading these two stories, it gave me hope when it comes to love. If two people from two different worlds with different beliefs can be together for 62 years, then I may still have a chance at finding love. A lot of times I wonder if dating someone who was different or opposite of me would be better than dating someone who is like me. I think their devotion and dedication to each other is simply amazingly beautiful; they're like the ideal husband and wife. **(Aerial Bailey)**



out of. They prevailed, though. Together, they accomplished so much in their time together. 62 years of marriage is an amazing thing, and this is an amazing love story, one most could only dream about and hope for. So although I can't relate, I can still sympathize with his grief, especially when he faced death with his surgery but in the end she passed away first. I don't know if I'd want to continue without my love, so I think he's an amazingly strong person for that. **(Laisha Cooke)**

This man is a legend. I would really love to know how he "knew" that he found the love of his life. After going through so much in the past, I would wonder how/if

First, allow me to start by congratulating Bob and Wanda for 62 years of marriage. Thank you both for being an example to the masses of those who value marriage. I truly liked this story of adversity. Escaping possible capture, poverty, and discrimination, both Bob and Wanda – you stayed hopeful and persevered. I share a huge respect and high regard for you. I am also of Christian faith, and marriage is a huge value. I relate to the story of perseverance because my story also shares that of such. "Pick yourself up by your bootstraps and keep going despite the odds." Nevertheless, I know I can't fully relate because this was before my time. But, this story inspires the need to press forward – because loss can be turned into gain. **(Ron Burford)**

any of the events left him confused, and if so, how did he know that his wife was "the one" in a world full of uncertainty. I also would like to know how he sees the world compared to the world he grew up in! This story, overall, I think is a brilliant way to look at love because both people saw each other as equals, and that's how love should be. **(Corey Dean)**

After reading this inspirational story, I became emotional and happy to see that there is still love in this world. I couldn't believe that despite the opposition to the marriage because of different religions, Bob and Wanda went ahead and got married. That shows how they were really in love, and that is something you don't see today.

This is an amazing love story. They came from different parts of the world with different beliefs and cultural backgrounds, yet they found each other. When it's meant to be that you are with someone, it will be done. That's my look on love. You have to let love happen. Love is not forced—worked on, but never forced. Just think if one of them would've been searching for a love where they were from, not knowing the love of their life was actually 4,000 miles away. When Bob said time doesn't heal all wounds, I believe it doesn't. You may learn to cope or you may not, but you never really heal from the death of a loved one.

This testimonial story shows that there is still true love in the world. While I was reading the article, I could not imagine that they have been together (married) for 62 years yet still loved each other and stood by each other till death tore them apart, just as they promised when they were saying the vows at the altar. For me, this story is like a lesson about love. Whenever there is true love in a couple, together that couple can overcome any type of problems. Also, Robert's behavior toward Wanda is an example that all men on earth must follow. He treated her with respect and as his equal. Also, he showed her that he really cared. From now on, I will show more love and support to my husband, and together we will try to stay in our marriage for a long time. **(Kossi wavi Eloh)**

Bob and Wanda went through some things in their lives that a lot of people wouldn't have made it

Many times, love goes one of two ways when sharing what one thinks is good news with friends and family. Some give best wishes, while others reveal their cynicism about the relationship. It can be hard to hear this from those who we care about. But usually after the smoke clears, everyone comes together to support a union that means the world to the two who tie the knot.

Two people being able to share their life's journey together with their best friend is a once in a lifetime connection and opportunity.

America is about unifying cultures and freedom of choice. When the Auerbachs did marry quite long ago, America was much more of a conservative country. It was unfortunate to hear how judgmental some were about these two lovebirds wanting to spend the rest of their lives together. It was not long ago when they married and should serve a reminder that we have made progress in our mindset as a country, but it has not outweighed the thinking of past days.

Love transcends race, sex, and religion. It is unfortunate that the Auerbachs experienced this during the beginning of their relationship. The fact that they celebrated 50 years of marriage 19 years ago goes to show that the naysayers did not stand in the way of their true love. Thank you so much sharing this with us; it was just lovely.

(Melissa Herriges)

The Auerbach "Wedding Anniversary" article made me think how it's sweet to be married for so long; it made me cry. It makes me think that love is beautiful, and real love does not hurt. Marriage makes me feel good because Bob and Wanda took vows 'til death do us part and stood by each other's sides. "Passing it on" made me appreciate life more because sometimes I am very ungrateful and I should work hard. Getting older makes me scared because I know one day my time is coming, but while I'm still alive I should live life to the fullest. **(Ashley Lee)**



Reading these stories, I really felt that although they were from such different backgrounds, they were so dedicated. There was no head of the household. They had different religions, but they still came together and loved one another equally and respectfully. **(Tina Martinez)**

His life is full of impressive anecdotes. From a very young age he suffered one of the most horrible traumas. The Nazi persecution was an imminent danger to him and his Jewish family; due to the circumstances, family separation was inevitable.

Bob and his parents arrived in New York to start a new life from scratch. Over time, he met the woman of his life, with whom I am sure he lived the best moments of his life. He became an internationally recognized scientist. Now he is a retired man, but he does not stop cheering the lives of other people when he plays the piano. Even the most downcast and elderly feel the joy of the music.

It is an honor for me to meet Bob Auerbach in person, to know a little about his life, yet it seems that I relate to him a lot. I had to emigrate myself, leaving my dearly-beloved parents, whom I miss very much. His family values are exemplary, and I believe that the family should be the center of love and of mutual respect; despite the differences between siblings, the unity of the family should always be sought. About marriage, I don't have

much to say for I am still single, but one thing for sure is I do want to know Bob Auerbach's secret for a long-lasting marriage in a postmodern era of broken marriage promises and vows. It seems so common to have more than one marriage nowadays. If I ever get married, I would like it to be just the old-fashioned version--the "I do, until death do us part."

About discrimination, I am against it because discrimination is an illness in our society that does a lot of harm and can destroy lives. **(Elíazar Martínez-Munguía)**

I feel that it was a beautiful story. I love how it's a true journey of their life, two individuals coming together. I believe the love and compassion for one another was beautiful, and how they were so into each other even to the end. **(Ashton McDonald)**

The stories of Bob and Wanda Auerbach's lives are ones that are filled with hope, love, determination, and not just the ability to overcome hardships but the ability to utilize the hardships for a foundation of a greater purpose. I can only imagine escaping the Nazis and sailing to America.

I admire the relationship that Wanda and Bob so eloquently created. They were determined to effectively communicate and meet the challenges of life together as a team. **(Krista Mellott)**

In today's world, you don't find too many people like Bob and Wanda. After everything they saw and went through, they still found a way to love and adore each other. They turned all their pain and hurt into love and happiness. Loving someone the way they loved each other is almost a fairytale. Bob seems like a wonderful person, especially for donating such a large amount of money to a great program and even better cause. It's inspiring how he still lives with such care and love for others after losing the love of his life.

I hope one day I can live to tell a beautiful story about how I married the love of my life. I believe marriage should be exactly how theirs was: to love, care, and cherish the love of your life "til death do you part." I feel like nowadays people don't take marriage seriously. It seems like no one even thinks of marriage now. I believe marriage is a beautiful thing. When you say those sacred vows, both parties should cherish and honor them. **(Timothy Mosley)**

We live in a world where many people don't believe in marriage because they say they don't need a piece of paper to prove their love, yet money is a piece of paper they go to great lengths to get. Reading how Bob and Wanda Auerbach remained married for so long is really beautiful despite the obstacles they initially faced. It will give people who might not believe in love reason to believe in love. I already love love, and it made me love it even more. **(Loché Mothoa)**

I first thought how education brings people together. The Auerbachs met at a college, so despite backgrounds, the willingness to learn was present.

My grandfather is 90 years old and suffers with Alzheimer's, and he still cries about losing my grandmother: his wife, Dessie. He loved her so much. He doesn't remember when and how she died, but she remains in his heart.

I am overjoyed that Bob's family became escapees from the horrors of the concentration camps. I wish in 2019 everyone had the privilege to leave for a better life. **(Moriah Parker)**

The first article about Bob and Wanda gives me hope! They show that real love exists and that it can last you the rest of your lifetime. I love how

even when a fire burned down their home, they didn't let it come between them. It was the little things that mattered, like a love note. In their wedding, they made me realize it wasn't about how expensive the wedding was; it was about tying a knot and saying vows you want to keep forever. **(Natia Saffold)**



Reading Emily describe her parents' love made me feel hopeful for my future. I questioned all my past relationships and what I considered to be love. "Their marriage thrives on absolute equality and respect" really struck a chord with me. I believe that quote should be the foundation of every relationship. How wonderful Bob and Wanda's love must have been, and I'm saying that only from reading a few pages on it.

While I was reading "Allegory of the Cave" with Gabby (an Odyssey tutor), we wondered if anyone had fully made it to the ascent of sunlight, totally out of the cave. We thought about it and joked that Emily was probably the only one who had. After reading this article about her parents, it's apparent that her dad is up there with her. It takes a strong person to make it out of the mud, but to come back and help others do the same takes a very special person. **(Nina Salisbury)**

I don't recall ever reading about someone and the beauty within their spirit is immediately evident. From the wedding photos and pictures of Wanda and Bob together, their love is a sight to behold and inspirational. I was once a firm believer "time heals all wounds," but hearing Bob's reply deeply affected me in a sense that made me question how deeply I really loved some of my most loved and deeply missed departed loved ones.

Since learning of the Holocaust, I've always felt connected to all Jewish people affected by it in the same sense I view those affected by the atrocities of slavery.

I aspire to live as long and full as both Wanda and Bob. I hope to learn how to love a woman as full and as deeply as you loved your dear Wanda. **(Jerome Sanders)**

I thought that Bob and Wanda's story was incredible and truly inspirational. The way both of them made it out of their struggles to find each other and build a love that went unwavering doesn't happen often. I can't imagine what it was like to be a child in Nazi Germany. Or how it felt to leave your home and adjust to a new country, culture, and people. To then go on and give your life to helping others is amazing. It gives me hope that more people like him are out there, and it inspires me to be better myself.

It was unbelievable to read that after his wife's death, he started giving all his time to those in need. To take the pain he has and use it to bring joy to others is beautiful. He's like a superhero!
(Riley Sessions)

These articles hit me very close to home. I was not looked down upon because of dating someone that is out of my religion, but for the color of their skin. My dad does not see it "smart" to date African American men because they are not white. I believe that nothing makes a person who they are other than what's on the inside. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

The stories relate to my values because I also agree race, age, beliefs, etc. shouldn't stop you from loving someone or pursuing a relationship. I think it's always best to be open about meeting or being with someone of a different race. **(Jaison Thomas)**

I can relate my life to Emily's parents because, just like Emily's mother, I grew up in a small town where education was very hard to achieve. In my town, there wasn't access to libraries or education higher than ninth grade. In addition, I can relate my values and ideas to the Auerbach family because the day that I achieve my goals (higher education, the job that I dream about, and a decent salary) I would like to do the same by helping others to do better in their lives. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

After reading your story, I can relate it to my life. One reason is it's not been a reasonable transition from my home to live here in the States. Also, my wife's dad didn't agree to me marrying his daughter, because of my [Jamaican] background and culture. **(O'Shane Omar Wilmoth)**



SHOWING OFF STYLE

Alliteration

My menacing mad mouse made more movements mid-morning. **(Ron Burford)**

Books before boys because boys bring babies. **(Ashley Lee)**

I'm raving with rage after a Chicago Bears loss. **(Tim Mosley)**

Studious students study. **(Moriah Parker)**

Fantastic feelings are flowing freely through me today. **(Jerome Sanders)**

Irony

A sheriff pulled a police officer over for speeding. **(Margarita Barajas)**

The roasted chicken was as tender as a leather book. **(Loché Mothoa)**

For a man who talks about fake news, he sure lies a lot. **(Riley Sessions)**

Oxymoron

What an evil little angel my niece is—sweet when she's sleeping but so mischievous when she's awake. **(Laisha Cooke)**

The comedian was seriously funny. **(Elíazar Martínez-Munguia)**

Saying goodbye to my aunt for the last time was bittersweet because she's out of pain but I will miss her. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

Rhetorical question

For taking away our freedom with violence and fear, I have to ask who are the real monsters? **(Riley Sessions)**

Don't I bleed just like you? **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

Have I not the same right as the next man to a good paying job? **(Tim Mosley)**

Can Wisconsin weather get any more confusing? **(Loché Mothoa)**

Chiasmus

Dreaming of freedom is nothing once you are able to freely dream. **(Riley Sessions)**

Repetition

Every week day, every Friday, every Saturday, and every Sunday, I sit at my kitchen table to do my homework. **(Margarita Barajas)**

Figurative Language

I am empowered to stand tall, like the roots of an oak. **(Riley Sessions)**

I felt as fresh as a newly opened bar of soap. **(Natia Saffold)**

This room is an oven. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

Exclamation

What a shame for mothers to be taken away from their children! **(Moriah Parker)**

Allusion

This place is like a Garden of Eden. **(Eliazar Martinez-Munguia)**

Frederick Douglass didn't realize that learning to read would be like opening up Pandora's Box. **(Krista Mellott)**

Superlative

This is the most interesting book I have ever read. **(Eliazar Martinez-Munguia)**

My kids are the loudest they can be when they know I'm working on my homework. **(Margarita Barajas)**

I felt as though this moment was the greatest and most life-fulfilling moment I had ever experienced. **(Ron Burford)**

Onomatopoeia

The cats are meowing on the roof. **(Eliazar Martinez-Munguia)**

The first time I fired a shotgun, I wasn't expecting its loud BANG. **(Riley Sessions)**

I can never forget the sound of that cowhide going crack, crack, crack across the woman's back. **(Ron Burford as Frederick Douglass)**

Parallelism

To my father, my brother is family, cared for, and loved; to my father, I am property, beaten, and despised. **(Krista Mellott as Frederick Douglass)**

Analogy

Mrs. Auld's changed demeanor was like going from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde. **(Krista Mellott)**

White people treated slaves like animals and some still do to this day. **(Laisha Cooke)**

ALUMNI CORNER

MY JOURNEY

BY RENÉ ROBINSON '08

I was born in Chicago, number eleven of fourteen children. At one point in my life, we had ten people in a three-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment. It was lively, challenging, and sometimes disappointing, but never a dull moment. It was family, my family. I didn't have a choice in the matter.

We were poor. How poor were we? We were so poor that my uncle, who worked at the Campbell Soup Factory, would bring us cans of soup that couldn't be sold because of flaws (bends and dents). The cans didn't have labels but contained numbers, which identified the type of soup. We memorized the numbers because we had to. If you didn't know the numbers, you were stuck with the soup no one wanted, which in our house was the tomato soup.



Survival, that was my life. Not only did I have to survive on the south side of Chicago, in the ghetto, the low-end as we call it, but at home as well. Can you imagine fourteen children vying for attention? Fourteen children wanting to be loved? Fourteen children striving to be better than the next?

It wasn't all good but neither was it all bad. We were taught principles, morals, and Christianity. We were required to excel in school. You would think that such an upbringing would produce upstanding and productive individuals, and it did for ten of us. Unfortunately I was one of the four who didn't quite meet the challenge. I was persistent at taking the wrong path and making poor decisions. I had my oldest son at sixteen and was forced to attend a high school for pregnant girls. I married at seventeen and had my second son at eighteen. It was a blessing to have a husband who was also the father of my children (where I come from, that was a unique happening in itself), but unfortunately with that came physical abuse.

I could go on and on about the many ups and downs due to the poor decisions I made over those thirty years, but I want to talk about the good news! I made it out of that situation and relocated to Madison, WI. I got a job, an apartment, then a used car. I joined a church that made me feel at home, and then I heard about the UW Odyssey Project, one of the best decisions I have ever made.

Odyssey is for people just like me; those who wanted to do better but couldn't for whatever reason. Having made so many poor decisions in my life, I feel I'm somewhat of an expert in understanding how easy it is for people to mess up, to make mistakes, and choose the wrong paths.

Odyssey gives you the feeling like the little red engine we read about in elementary school, "I think I can! I think I can!" It releases the "Wow" factor as in "He did that? She did what? Really? They left Britain to do the same thing in America? I didn't know that." Then it begins, the desire to know more, the desire to understand, the drive and tenacity to do better and to critically think, analyze and understand what you are reading. And what's so fantastic about Odyssey, it's generational. I tell people that all the time. Not only does it change the lives of parents, it changes the lives of their children, which will change the lives of their children, etc. Odyssey is a "Mind Opening Experience"!

Before Odyssey, if someone had asked me to write a poem or told me that I would be analyzing Socrates, Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, and Frederick Douglass, I would have rolled my eyes up, down and sideways. But there I was, at my Odyssey graduation, earning six UW Madison credits and reading this poem I wrote about the value of lifelong learning:

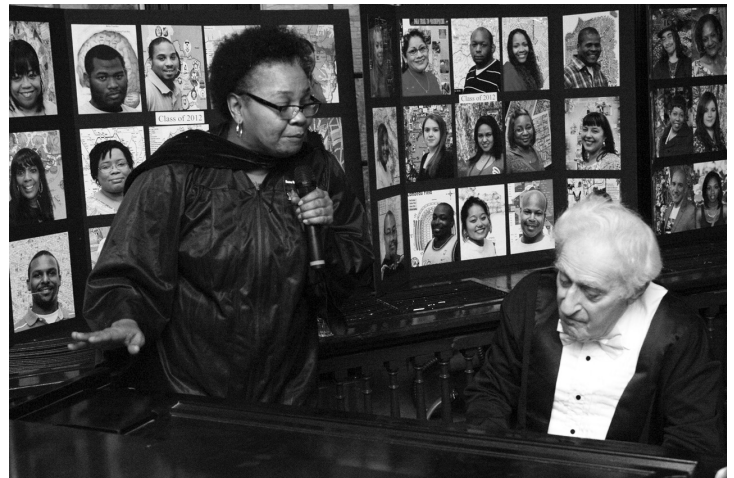
My Journey

My journey started about nine months ago.
 How I would fare, I really didn't know.
 Reading, writing for sure there would be,
 But from six to nine PM, that I couldn't see.
 The professors were there for all to meet,
 Outlining History, Humanities, and Philosophy.
 I was scared but I didn't know why,
 Maybe it was the thirty years that had quickly gone by.
 Getting acclimated was a little rough at first,
 But soon thereafter to read books I would thirst.
 See, prior to Odyssey, I didn't read.
 All the info I got was from the TV.
 But things have changed, mainly the screen
 From the TV to the computer, I'm now a Google Queen.
 My journey, my journey, who would have thought
 Would be the beginning of me being taught,
 Being taught the importance of opening my mind,
 Instead of sitting around wasting my time.
 Thank you, Odyssey, for choosing me,
 I've found knowledge, my greatest discovery.



Rene Riffs on Plato

I believe the prisoners in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" are us: people, human beings in general. It has nothing to do with race, economical or educational status; I consider those sub-caves. We have all been fettered (shackled and chained) from generation to generation. We have been taught how to think and what to think. The expansion of our mind has been limited to our surroundings. We have been made products of our environment by our communities, our neighborhoods, and our upbringing; we were all born in a cave.



The cave is like a one-sided coin: seeing only one side. If you are born rich, do you know what it is to be born poor? If you are born poor, do you know what it is to be born rich? The importance of getting out of the cave is to find out what's on the other side of the coin; such as Socrates' example of going from the darkness to the light. I believe every human being in this world is dealing with some form of darkness, whether by force or choice.

We need to walk towards love, passing by hate. We need to walk towards courage, passing by fear. We need to walk towards "I can," passing by those infamous words, "I can't."

René performs as a musician, motivational speaker, and dramatic reader (Sojourner Truth, Maya Angelou, and others) in church, at community events, on the radio, and for every Odyssey class.

ORACLE OVATION

BY RON BURFORD



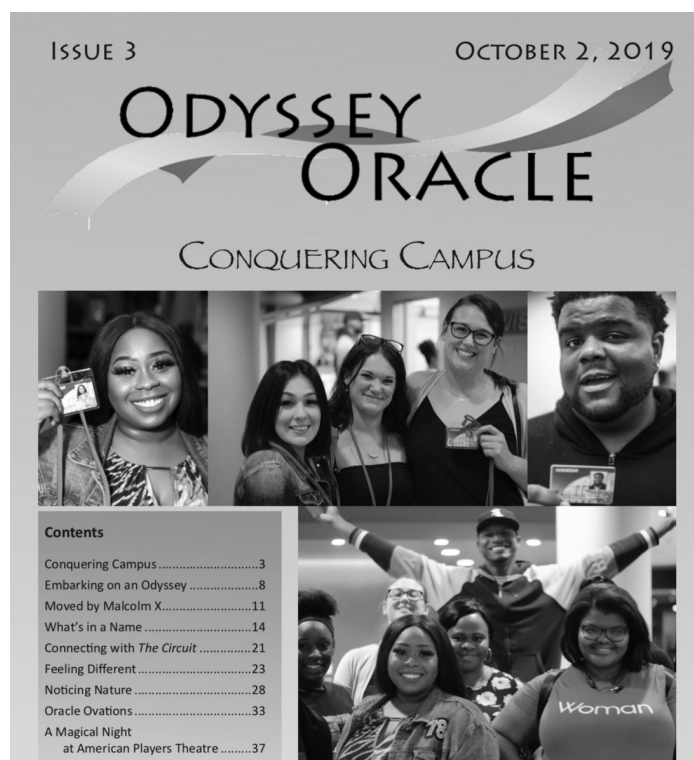
As I read my classmates' stories in the Oracles, my heart is touched. It is as if I can hear your voice, your pain, your struggles, your excitement, and your fears. My heart swells with every reading written by each person. I don't really want to say it, but I am even moved to tears as I am writing this response.



Know that I am honored today—filled with hope, compassion, inspiration, and gladness—to witness your bravery in choosing to walk this odyssey. May your destiny be laid out before you

and a clear path be made absolute. Please know that you are greater than people's words and your circumstances. "No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every word which rises up against you in just, you shall condemn. . . . This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord—and your righteousness is with Him."

The "Embarking on an Odyssey" section sets the tone for the roller-coaster of emotions that can flood your heart and mind if you allow it to. I was brought to an epiphany once I noticed that everyone wrote almost the very same thing—that no matter how different we are or how different we may look, we all shared this similarity: "The Odyssey is another journey." Each person expresses struggle, concern, elatedness, and care. It is like a sword getting ready to go into the smoldering hot lava so that it can be pounded, shaped, and sharpened into a mighty weapon.



FOOD MEMORIES

I remember my mother's enchiladas. My mother's enchiladas were huge, like she took everything you liked, cooked up, rolled it up in a flour tortilla, and lined them in the pan like the perfect rows you see in the field. Then she put on the toppings and baked it. When it came out of the oven, it was a Da Vinci painting or masterpiece that has been brought to life. With each bite, you could taste all the different flavors, one complementing the other, hot with cold. **(Ashton McDonald)**



One of my many favorite dishes that I remember is called "enchiladas." We used to have them in every Kermes (a traditional Mexican fiesta). We usually had them on Sundays. Enchiladas are corn tortillas dipped in a guajillo salsa stuffing with chicken. There were several different dishes at the Kermes. When people walked out of church, they could smell the delicious enchiladas. When you passed by the stand that sold the enchiladas, you couldn't pass by without buying some. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

My favorite food on this green Earth is chicken vindaloo. I'm actually salivating just thinking about it. To be honest, I don't even think I can taste the chicken and rice under the pile of rich, red, vindaloo sauce. The heat and pain is what I'm here for. It's a good hurt, though, like getting a knot rubbed out of a tense shoulder.

As much as my eyes water and my nose drips, I always come back for more. When I tell the server I'd like my dish "extra hot," they give me the "are you sure, white girl?" look. But that's okay because I'll be back next week, with tissues in hand. **(Nina Salisbury)**



I remember a Jamaican patty. It's a semi-circular looking pastry with a golden, yellow-looking color, and it's flaky and crispy on the outside.

The inside is filled with cooked ground beef, onions, hot scotch bonnet pepper, yellow turmeric, green onions and thyme with a smell of fresh-picked herbs and steam flowing from it. I would normally eat it for lunch or after work. The best thing about a patty is that it's best enjoyed when it's just baked, but funny enough, it is almost impossible to eat after just getting baked. So it's just fun to bite into it and try to let it cool in your mouth, while trying to chew and swallow it, at the same time trying to drink something cold. **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**



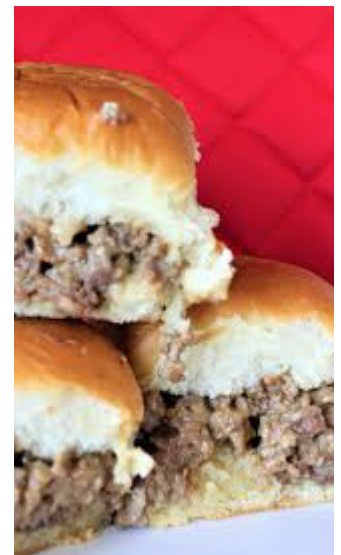
I made some chicken, lemon pepper to be exact. The crunchy, moist, seasoned, lemon-sprinkled chicken was amazing. Coming straight out, the greasy oil dripping down your chin has your tongue beginning to dance around. The flavorful, freshly-squeezed lemon pepper has you dancing around an empty sink, empty house, nothing but fresh Canola oil, seasoned salt aroma, as if I was walking down the aisle at Woodman's. **(Tiffany Dixon)**

The stuffed and buffed chicken breast melted in my mouth. The mushrooms, cheese, and spinach gushed right through my buds. It was so warm and delicious that I had to demolish another over a buttery bed of mashed taters. As I looked across the room, I noticed my significant other's jaws stuffed and buffed. I noticed him shaking his head and giving a thumb's up, signaling how delicious the stuffed breast and buttery salty taters were. **(Arkeia Cameron)**



The best memories I share of enjoying some mouthwatering, succulent food was when I had my first visit to a restaurant named Samba's. The tables and location were on an upper deck with wood and brick colored in maroon, yellow, blue, and black painted glass. It was a family friendly place. On the tables were these two huge, hourglass-like wooden pieces with red on top and green on the bottom. Once we sat down, we could smell the char of the grill that was seasoned with the aroma of garlic, salt, pepper, and other herbs mixed together with the scent of different kinds of meat: chicken, pork, and beef, with a sweet zingy smell of pineapple. Once the hourglass was turned over, the waiters and waitresses dressed in all black walked through in fours with different types of grilled meats: chicken, steaks, lamb, pork, and even grilled pineapple seasoned with cinnamon. The wait staff continued to circle around every five to ten minutes until we were all satisfied and had our fill. **(Ron Burford)**

It was at my friend's wedding. I remember I had a kind of salad made with ground beef and cooked on the stove, eaten with bread and mayonnaise. It was very sweet, and I loved it. I ate and ate three more times before the wedding party had ended. I also had a kind of fruit they mixed with syrup which was so delicious, fresh, and sweet. It smelled very good. **(Kossiawavi Elo)**





Growing up, we lived a low class struggle, from couch hopping every night to sleeping in bug-infested hotel rooms. One particular night sticks out the most. I was eight years old, and the school bell had just rung. I wandered out of the front doors expecting to see my mother's face, but instead my devilish aunt stood there waiting for me. Hesitant to go with her, I asked the teacher to call my mom... Ring, ring, ring ring... Voicemail. I was then forced to go with this evil witch. My mother had been arrested for shoplifting at the grocery store. Later that night, she was released and came back to pick me up and go to the better hotel room. As I laid in bed, she brought a sandwich to my bed: two pieces of fresh bread, and between them was... the crunchiest potato chips and white, creamy mayonnaise. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

Through osmosis, my little hands were engulfed in a beige-brown crunch of crust, seeping my weight in gold grease onto a starchy, hapless paper plate underneath. It certainly had to have been a birthday. Buried up to my wrist in loving pizza liquid, my Thomas the Tank Engine shirt was a necessary sacrifice. My eyes ate first when feverishly looking over boiling cheese and crispy, crunchy pepperoni that I could only imagine a mountain's peak would be textured like. Nowadays I rarely see you, but back when you and the smell of my grandma's all-wood furniture went hand in hand, that was where happiness was born. This cheese could run a mile in sweats. How charitable. **(Corey Dean)**



They say that your grandmother's cooking is always the best, and that is not a lie. One of my favorite childhood memories growing up in a big family is with all our relatives coming together for holidays, birthdays, and other get-togethers is waiting impatiently for our grandma to say that it was time to eat.

For as long as I can remember, we always went a little early to my grandma's to help prepare for whatever occasion it was. She was very picky about who she allowed in the kitchen to help. She did things her way and her way only, with no recipes and no dishes that didn't turn out. It was always perfect, always the best. Even to this day, I have not come across any authentic Mexican/ Hispanic food that tastes like or even compares to my grandmother's cooking, from her enchiladas to her rice to her own salsa. She has the best enchiladas ever with her own sauce, and also her rice is different from any others I have ever tasted. I am picky because I feel no plate will ever compare.

A part of me always wished that I could make food like hers. After a while, I gave up on trying to even think about making rice or enchiladas to taste like hers. I don't feel that anyone would have a chance at creating a meal that tastes even close to hers. Till this day, I have not even tried to make her meals as she does. It's a grandmother thing, with no measurements needed; she just knows these things. **(Savannah Torres)**



As a child, I remember my aunt always cooking fried green tomatoes. She told me that she used them as a snack every day.

"Timmy," she said. "Go out and take a stick and knock down a bunch of them ripe tomatoes. Look at them, see if they're hard, and bring them to me. Now I'm going to need you to grab a pan, salt, pepper, and a spoon of seasoning salt. I want you to pour two teaspoons of oil and let the pan heat up. Take the bowl of corn flour and toss the sliced tomatoes in them one at a time. Let them brown. Here is the best part, baby. Put a lil' mustard and hot sauce in. Now take your time and have some of this good yummy eating."

"Thank you, Tee-Tee," were the words I used.
(Rasaki Emmanuel)

When my grandma makes banana pudding, oh boy, you will know it. The house smells like fresh bananas, like walking into a candy shop. Grandma's banana pudding is very creamy and thick. Once you taste it, it makes you feel like you just walked into heaven. The moisture of the whipped cream dissolves in your mouth like butter. **(Ashley Lee)**



The burger was so juicy, bursting with flavor, like the sun. Pickles have a crunch of goodness. The smell of bacon is so good I stop to enjoy every bite. This cheeseburger is as cheesy as my smile.
(Marcello Segovia)



Whenever my man makes tacos, I get excited. He wants to be a chef, so he's trying to perfect his tacos. His tacos are simple yet so good. He prepares everything first, and then he cooks the meat. He chops the red onions, which are actually purple in color. The smell is so strong yet so lingering. The smell of the onions brings tears to my eyes. It makes them burn, but I don't care. I then cut the cilantro with scissors. The cilantro is so bright and green! The smell is also lingering and unforgettable. We usually buy salsa verde. The salsa is chunky, green, and filled with seeds. We use the cheese that comes in the shaker. It's almost white, like a pale yellow. It's crumbly, dry, and very necessary. Then come the tortillas. We always get El Milagro. They come so fresh; the steam is still in the package. They are fresh out of the box in Woodman's, stuck together to create even more moisture and freshness. Lastly, the meat! Sometimes we use chicken, sometimes steak. The meat is always so tender that it melts in your mouth. It is seasoned to perfection. It is topped with bright green parsley for color. The meat is always sizzling, and the brownish gravy spills from it. I love his tacos! **(Laisha Cooke)**



I can remember the first time I had my grandma's goat and fire dish. I don't remember the actual name, but we'll just call it "fire," not only because it was one of the most flavorful and complex dishes I'd ever had but



because it was so hot I had tears rolling down my cheeks. Trust me, though, they were tears of joy. Even now, just thinking of it, I can smell the goat and how it had a wild and untamed smell. It was almost as if she had hunted and cleaned it that morning. **(Riley Sessions)**

Chinese food tells you a lot about someone. Seeing if people like sweet foods, you know they have a sweet tooth. You also have people who like spicy. These are always funny to me with all the sweating and saying, "It's not too hot."

Me myself, I am a vegetable lover and always seem to get teased about eating like a rabbit. I've always loved vegetables and enjoy the drying tastes of root vegetables, beans, and vine crops. Everyone I know has never fully accepted vegetable dishes as Chinese, but they are Chinese to me. **(Melissa Herriges)**



I made baked chicken thighs, smothered in cream of mushroom, for the first time ever. It was by far one of the best meals I've ever eaten. The chicken was dripping with juices and hints of oil. The tops were crispy golden-brown. Before the thick, brothy, coated sauce was added, there was a nice little crunch to the golden surface of the meat. Finally done, I complement the exploding savory flavors in my mouth with a side of sticky white rice. This dish tasted like a letter from heaven. **(Jyneeva Hunt)**



While I was pregnant, I went to McDonald's and began to experience my first craving moment. I could not imagine what I was about to do myself. I ate \$20 worth of food by myself. I ate hot French fries that burned my fingers. The salt hit my lips, and the steam brushed up my face, and I began to see why being pregnant and eating so much was a big deal. The best part of my meal was biting into my Big Mac with the juice and crunchy sound of the onions and lettuce. **(LaDiá Key)**



Thanksgiving is full of meals that the family makes to share together. No one's food is like my grandmother's. There's creamy, mouth-watering mac & cheese. The turkey is so crisp on the outside, and the meat is so juicy and tender on the inside. Candy yams are my favorite, with their gold-layered outside and smooth, sweet, fulfilling inside. Walking inside Grandma's house was like walking into a cloud of paradise. You could taste the food just from the smell. **(Natia Saffold)**



For Thanksgiving, the food is done around three o'clock in the afternoon. We nearly starve until then. We spend all day preparing our stomachs for the feast we'll endure. Though Thanksgiving is a very painful memory of America's white supremacy and entitlement, it's a day out of work, a day surrounded by love, laughter, and sometimes shade, plus seeing the new girlfriends, wives, and babies. The younger adults have to run to the store more than five times because of forgotten items.

Finally, the food is done. We hold hands in the living room in a circle. The table in the middle of the living room has family members we've lost in recent and previous years: Grandma, Cousin Rick, Uncle Tommy, and Uncle Denny. We eat until we feel sleepy: ham, chicken, dressing, greens, macaroni, ribs, pecan pies, pound cake, etc. **(Moriah Parker)**

Every year, Christmas cookie day ends up being a day of pleasurable chaos with a sweet ending. We begin with a heart-thumping argument over different recipes from the recipe box passed down from my mom's grandmother, followed by a traffic jam of shopping carts at the grocery store. Kids are screaming,

people are hollering. Arriving home, chaos ensues, with flour filling the air and batter splattering out of the bowl. Mixers hum in ears. Soon, the aroma of the mouth-water lemon tarts strikes our noses. The sense of eagerness, contentment, and accomplishment flushes over us. The chaos simmers. I feel the warmth of the cookie on my hand and the gooey chocolate chips dripping on my fingers. **(Krista Mellott)**





Everyone makes their spaghetti different than others. My mom gave me her recipe that drives everyone crazy. She might kill me for writing this, but here we go. Spaghetti is a dish you have to make with love; it has to be saucy and full of meat. So when I make mine, I grind up some ground beef to give it the meaty sensation. I put Italian seasoning in the meat to give it that Italian taste. I add ketchup and barbecue sauce to give it the moist and saucy texture and add a little hot sauce that gives it that spicy sensation. To top it all off, I add a little sugar so it can be sweet, but not too sweet. **(Timothy Mosley)**

My order of hot Cheetos Tortas: Fried toasted white bread with hot melted butter as long as a foot; juicy fried small cut steaks, on top of the buttery toasted bread; crispy fresh cut lettuce and fresh round cut tomatoes on top of the juicy sizzling steak. On top of all that were fresh crisp hot Cheetos and green, spicy, thick guacamole sauce covering all the food. SO good! **(Margarita Barajas)**

When I was growing up, my grandma made the best chopped homemade orange slushy. The fresh ice chips complemented the sweetness of the mandarin oranges. The oranges gave my taste buds life! The drink is so refreshing, rejuvenating, and delightful. She would add extra sugar to the natural juice to enhance the natural sugary goodness. The good thing about blended mandarin oranges is that there isn't too much pulp, but there is still so much juice. Everyone needs a cup of orange bliss. Your taste buds will thank you. **(Aerial Bailey)**

I can remember the taco dip my mother still makes. Sometimes I help her melt Philly cream cheese into a bowl. I sprinkle a little taco seasoning in the bowl and smooth it all together with a spoon. Then, we put in crispy, cold lettuce, and finally cut black olives and fresh sliced tomatoes. And of course don't forget the cheese! Lots of cheese! **(Tina Marie Martinez)**



No one makes better nachos than me! The key to mine being magical is the fact that I don't over-season the meat. Like the first day it snows, I sprinkle seasoning salt lightly, like powdered sugar on a brownie. I brown the meat until it's two shades darker than my mocha-colored skin.



Doritos and flaming hot Cheetos blend in a bowl like two long-lost friends eager to smother the other with their cheesy and spicy aroma. Hot, melted cheese oozes over the meat and chips covering them like a warm blanket after a cool day. The smell of goodness penetrates the senses, mouth-watering, finger-tingling in anticipation of tasting the stomach lover's nachos that please all who try them. **(Jerome Sanders)**

So as soon as I opened the main front door of the apartment building where I was living on the west side of Madison, I say to myself somebody's (frijoles) beans are burning; the smell was so intense in the hallway that I felt sick to my stomach. Surprise! As I was approaching the door to my apartment, I could smell the nasty odor coming out of my apartment. I opened the door, and my frijoles were so burnt, like pieces of charcoal in the slow cooker pot. The worst thing was that the smell of burnt beans stayed in every spot of my place for several days. **(Eliázar Martínez-Munguia)**



am what some people consider a picky eater. So until this day, I cannot explain why I love Tiramisu. Tiramisu is an Italian dessert – it's a coffee-flavored dessert (I do not drink coffee). It is layered with

a whipped mixture of eggs, definitely sugar, and mascarpone cheese. It has a hint of cocoa in there, too. It is really moist, and it feels rather weird in your mouth at first, similar to when a baby puts food in their mouth, takes it out, and expects you to eat it. It's still good, though. You'll have a Dessert-gasm. **(Loché Mothoa)**

Before my grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, she used to make a creamy, rich, sweet, priceless ice cream. My mom and sister have both tried to recreate the special ice cream, but have both fallen short of getting the exact taste my grandmother's had. I'm not sure if I'll ever experience that taste again, but with all the memories I have, I'll never forget my grandmother's ice cream. **(Jaison Thomas)**

