

ODYSSEY ORACLE

EXPLORING THE ARTS



Contents

Being Dramatic with Baron Kelly	3
Envisioning Eight Years From Now.....	7
Loving Langston Hughes.....	13
Goodbye to the February Blues.....	18
My Woman of Courage	22
Becoming Metaphors	23
Responding to <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	27
Responding to <i>Hamilton</i> Lyrics	28
<i>Color Purple</i> Reviews	31
Chazen Choices.....	38



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BEING DRAMATIC WITH BARON KELLY

Baron Kelly, Professor of Theatre and professional actor and director, visited Odyssey on February 12th and got students up on their feet doing vocal exercises, Shakespeare lines, August Wilson scenes, and improvisational games. We are thrilled that Dr. Kelly will join our Odyssey faculty next year.



Working with Baron Kelly last week was really inspiring and motivational. I love acting; any time I'm acting out a scene, all my troubles disappear. I was having a bad day last week and almost didn't come to class, but I am so glad I did.

Acting out scenes ignites so much happiness and excitement within me. I am contracted as a model/actress through MTM. I haven't had the chance to have an acting role, but it's my dream to.

It was a pleasure meeting him and I hope to be a part of his acting class next year.
(Aerial Bailey)

My experience last week was awesome with Baron Kelly. When he asked for volunteers to recite their lines and

he was pushing you, it was one of the best experiences ever. I love having been pushed like that, and it made me push myself harder and in front of the class. It was awesome. It was very fun, too. **(Margarita Barajas)**

My experience with Baron Kelly was profound. His style of teaching was unorthodox, and his methods were even stranger, yet I enjoyed gaining knowledge and playing games that helped us build confidences and even relationships. He reminded me of one of the typical performing arts directors that I see on T.V. You know, the ones that talk with longer sentences, perfect pronunciation of words, and seem almost like they have an accent that they didn't grow up with. The difference, though, was that Baron had this aura about him that made you know that he really does care and that he wants us to find our voice. **(Ron Burford)**



It made me realize that “I can act.” I’m thinking of going to try out for a stage act. I’m not sure when or where. I appreciated the time and energy Mr. Baron put in with the class. **(Arkeia Cameron)**

Last week, working with Baron Kelly was absolutely amazing! It was so fun and so silly, yet so serious and necessary for all of us. I feel a lot of us came out of our shell during this class. We opened up and released some tension as well. I’m so excited about Baron starting an acting class (if I heard correctly). He’s good at what he does, he’s kind, and he helped us as a class. We all worked together, and it made it so fun for all of us. By far the best class! **(Laisha Cooke)**

That man the g.o.a.t. I ain’t ever acted in Odyssey, but I had a really good time. I didn’t know what to expect at first because here came this 6’4” man telling me that if I want to be like Beyoncé, I’ve got to “pretend my head is a mop and clean the walls.”

Huh? This thought was vanquished. I soon started getting into it by just accepting that “whatever happens, happens,” and I can get over myself and express myself how I’ve always wanted to in Odyssey. From our group performance of *Macbeth*, to Natia’s and my performance of *Fences*, to even improv acting, it was all a hoot. Don’t get it twisted, you guys, my hands were shaking every time I had to perform, BUT It was one of the ‘funnest’ classes I’ve attended. It’s always good to try something new because one day we will all die. **(Corey Dean)**



Last week, working with Baron Kelly was amazing. I was so happy, and I was telling myself that next time I will try to act a scene with him like other students do. I also learned a lot of new things. Last week’s class made me laugh and relax. In the past, plays or acting out scenes in class was always fun. It helps you to distract yourself and it gives me a freshness of mind. It also takes my mind off stress. It teaches me a new thing. **(Kossiawavi Elohi)**



My experience working with Baron Kelly was so amazing. It opened me up to coming out of my shy space. I love acting and improv, but doing them in front of people can be very hard. He brought that side of me out. Wanting to show people I can improv and act was hard; however, it was a great feeling. **(Jyneeva Hunt)**



My experience with Baron Kelly was fun! Even though I am shy and hate speaking in crowds, seeing others have fun always makes me happy. The exercises he taught us were amazing too, to help you get ready so you won't be nervous.
(Ashley Lee)

We learned techniques with Dr. Baron Kelly like breathing exercises and really loosening up (tension). Standing up and acting made me feel like I was finding my voice. It was so much fun interacting with all my classmates.
(Tina Marie Martínez)

Working with Baron Kelly last week was hilarious. The techniques we did just to relax ourselves and feel comfortable in our own skin really helped me bring down the tension. I definitely would like to have him more often because it is like therapy to the alumni. It lifted the confidence within us.
(Eliazar Martínez-Munguia)

I thoroughly enjoyed last week's class with Baron Kelly. It brought up one of the things I have been very insecure about: stumbling over my words when I speak. But it was a good thing because he mentioned a number of techniques that I could do to help me overcome it. Tongue twisters and adlibbing would help me work out some of my "kinks" with public speaking. Education and the Odyssey Project presented me with another opportunity that I want to take to overcome this obstacle. Drama classes to improve my speaking, here I come.
(Krista Mellott)

Getting in front of people always scares me. I'm not afraid of what they think of me, though, I've just always had stage fright. My heart beats fast and I start stumbling over words that I know I know. I don't know if I will ever get over this feeling of stage fright, but one thing I do know is that Odyssey has taken me out of my comfort zone, and I'm getting better at speaking in front of large groups.
(Timothy Mosley)

The experience was amazing. Baron said, "I just look at you and you're already tensing up." Well, obviously, he wasn't lying. I was trying to stay hidden. I wanted the earth to split open and swallow me up. Overall, I obviously was not swallowed up. The class was very informative. It allowed you to be outside your comfort zone, which can be really scary for someone like me who likes to stay in my comfort zone. What I also loved and hated was using my voice. I am and was always voice-conscious. Hopefully, I will apply this class with Baron Kelly to real life situations and use my voice more.
(Loché Mothoa)

Working with Baron Kelly forces you to get out of your comfort zone and challenges you to be a bigger, better you.

I haven't acted since high school and even then, I wasn't the best, but if Baron Kelly had been my acting coach, I'm sure I would have pushed myself harder.
(Moriah Parker)





I loved it. Baron brings out the free-spirit side of people. You get to be a kid again with Baron. At first, I felt scared to act in front of people, but Baron gave comfort. **(Natia Saffold)**

At first, it was uncomfortable doing all the vocal exercises, but after a while, we all began to loosen up. It was fun working in small groups, too. I like working with others without feeling like the whole class is looking at you. I'm not much into performing in front of people, but I really enjoyed watching my classmates who do. **(Nina Salisbury)**

Acting with Baron Kelly was mind-altering. I've never experienced an acting workshop. I'm not a loud person, but the techniques we learned, like opening up your vocal cords to project your voice, were helpful. The way the class enjoyed saying lines and acting them out was a fun and very cool experience. **(Marcello Segovia)**



I enjoyed the class with Baron Kelly. It was nice to have a change of pace and try something a little different. The voice drills were pretty cool. They really showed how important your diaphragm is when speaking. I also liked watching some of the class participate in the improv. Although I didn't join in, it's always motivating watching others be vulnerable and having the confidence to get up in front of others. **(Riley Sessions)**

My experience with Baron Kelly was very fun and entertaining. His time with my individual group helped me have confidence and force behind my lines, and I also got to hear my group members put confidence behind their lines as well. When we did improv, it was very entertaining how my classmates got into character and put on a show for the class. I see that Baron can get individuals to come out of their shell with enough work and energy put into them. Although I didn't come out of my shell, I really enjoyed our class with him. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

The experience I had with Baron was very positive because I was able to learn very good techniques to relax the voice and body, thus reducing tension. This will help us to speak in public. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

I've seen a play once when I was younger, but it wasn't all that I had thought it would be. But half way through the play, I was enjoying it, seeing all the props and glancing behind the stage, with the actors mingling with the audience and making them part of the show.

While acting out these scenes in class, I was still a bit timid, but I wanted to do it. I had fun like everyone else. **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**

ENVISIONING EIGHT YEARS FROM NOW

Odyssey students were asked to imagine themselves and their lives in February 2028.

I'm 46 years old. My oldest son, Jr, is now 28 years old. My son Jay is 22 years old, and he is in college. My son Michael is now 20 years old, and he is in college as well. I'm now working in elementary schools, helping out kids with disabilities. I wake up in the morning and get ready for work. Both my kids, Jay and Michael, have gone to school this morning. Jay and Michael are also working and saving money for after college to get their own place.

I hopefully have a better life than being described. I'm hopefully helping out in a good way and taking care of my mom. After work, I'm still going to the gym with my mom and keeping her strong and going. I'm hopefully going to basketball games with/for my nephews, then coming home after a long day and relaxing with music and a good shower. Hopefully, life is good. **(Margarita Barajas)**

My son Alex is now eleven years old, so I have a lot more time for myself in 2020.

I am speaking fluent English. This is my dream come true, and I feel great. Also, I am working as a translator in a hospital and as a cosmetologist, too. I love to help people look and feel better. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

On February 5th, 2028 at 1 PM I should be checking the grades of my son or daughter from my office. I hope to start the day waking up next to my husband and preparing my kid for school in the morning. I will go to work and see my bachelor's degree, master's degree, and PhD diplomas on the wall.

I hope to have travelled out of the United States at least four times before 2028. **(Moriah Parker)**

Eight years from now, I hope to be financially stable and in West Palm Beach. I'd be turning 31, so hopefully by then I would've made up my mind in terms of starting a family. As I mentioned before, hopefully I will be financially stable and debt-free. I hope my health is still intact and my family's health as well. I will be disappointed in myself if I'm still living in Wisconsin. Honestly, I'm just hoping that eight years from now, I've made positive progression in terms of accomplishing my short-term goals. **(Jaison Thomas)**

I'm content with my life. I'm happy with who I am, mentally, physically, and emotionally. I now have a job that pays well and has all the benefits. I'm in a space where I can not only take care of myself, but I can help others with their struggles. I've got a house, a place of my own I can take care of and tend to. I've got a family--a beautiful woman, some kids. Well, maybe just a dog. I'm undecided. I have a reason to be happy, to be positive, and just enjoy the little things in life. **(Riley Sessions)**



My day begins with a cup of water at 6 AM, hitting the gym, and then making breakfast for my family. After everyone eats, they'll proceed on with their day.

My day will continue with getting everything cleaned back up and then getting myself ready.

I'll go oversee the properties I own – making sure tenants are satisfied, doing the tedious everyday work. After that, I'll work on writing my second book somewhere in nature. I'll check on my loved ones.

After school, I'll go watch my son play sports and help him with his homework. I'll also be helping my grandma fulfill her needs, getting everyone ready for bed, and then brainstorming my next stream of income.

Goals by 2028:

- owning my own home
- moving my grandma in with me
- owning two to three rental properties
- writing a bestseller
- being a great, active, involved mom
- having a flourishing modeling/acting career
- being happy and healthy! **(Aerial Bailey)**

I am at the gym prepping for an audition to choose my wrestling character. I have been training for the past three years, and I sign the contract this day for multiple millions because the producers, writer, and other wrestlers love my work. As I lift weights, I am singing. As I run laps, I am cheering, and as I look in the mirrors, I am dancing. I am living my dream.

(Ron Burford)

My life isn't perfect, but it's great. A standard morning starts when my 6:30 AM alarm clock goes off—that's if my son didn't beat it to its job. It starts with me helping my favorite little person brush his teeth and wash his face. Then he's off to his bus after he puts on his snow pants and boots. After that, it's my turn to get dressed. I usually take a 30-minute hot, steamy shower. Before that, I brush my teeth and I give myself a morning facial. After my little morning spa, I'm off to work. A typical day at work is plenty of paperwork, meetings, and a ton of phone calls. After that, I'm off to get my son from karate. We go home, I prepare dinner, we say our prayers, and we're off to sleep. **(Natia Saffold)**

I now have a 15-year-old and 10-year-old. I'm living in a beautiful space, still running Ess'leigh Skin Products & Co. Essence is very proud of her role in the business and is doing great in high school so far. The pool is nice and cool with the sun shining over here in California. I hope Wisconsin is treating you well because the blue, salty beaches are doing wonders to my energies. I look back and thank the spiritual world for turning my heart and mind to places that match my lifestyle. Goodnight! I have a long day ahead of me as usual with running a successful business and taking care of my children as well as my husband, whom I adore and am overly thankful for. **(Arkeia Cameron)**



Well, I'll be 38 years old. A typical day for me at that age would be waking up to get ready for work as a registered nurse, getting some cold water after brushing my teeth, and making sure everyone is getting ready for school. I'll have something simple for breakfast and hop in my all-white Range Rover Truck to go to the hospital I work at. I'll smile and make someone's day, come home after work and take care of kid duties, and love on my husband and kids after dinner. Then, I'll do it all over again. **(Jyneeva Hunt)**



Today is February 5th, 2028. I am in Mexico. Winter is cold, but nothing like the Wisconsin winter. I'm glad my parents can come with me to the beach and other wonderful places throughout Mexico to have a good time. It is something I value the most in this time—having my parents around and enjoying their company as much as possible. Since we have been apart for so long, now is the time to appreciate them and embrace them. **(Eliazar Martínez-Munguia)**

Eight years from this day in the future, I am strong and have hopefully finished business school. I still love to cook. I wake up early and go to work at my business, a landscaping company. It's not too big—myself plus three to seven employees year-round. Hopefully I am married to a true beautiful queen. I should be in a house by now, a lot more established, helping and participating in the Odyssey Program in some way or another. I am also working with the Urban League to help young African American men to more options for bettering their lives, applying themselves, changing, and helping communities.

I am still handling life with my family, friends, and associates, and I pray I'm truly

happy. It's going to take more work, I know, but the challenge is all in the journey. I want to leave a good impression on the world but just my world—my inner circle, my children. I hope I don't lose myself but continue to learn and grow. Learning is forever, and I will gladly set myself up as a student to learn. I will be more determined than now. The more you do and accomplish, the bigger the follow-ups are. Along the way, I will love and cherish the moments that started this all for me—the Odyssey Program giving me my voice back and showing that people care and can help. **(Ashton McDonald)**



It's February 5, 2028 and I own and direct my own low-income based childcare center. That annoying alarm is blaring, and it's time to be productive. I walk into work and see my genuinely happy and caring staff. Each and every day consists of finding ways to become more active in the community and seeing who I can help financially, emotionally, or mentally.

When the pens are put down and 6 o'clock hits, it's time to go home. I wrangle up my—hopefully—five kids and head home to hear all about their experiences that day at the dinner table and tackle homework and personal issues, a bedtime routine. February 5th, 2028 I will hopefully be more than successful, married, and whole-heartedly happy.

I will also own a TLP (temporary living placement) for men coming out of DOC custody. Someone else will physically work there, but I will be behind all the financials and brains of the operation. I will help organize any treatments and groups that are needed for the men and provide all transportation, clothing, housing, and food, which the government will of course fund. These are far-fetched dreams, but too many men are released with nothing to come home to and end up right back in custody. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

I'll be 30 mothaf**kin' years old. I thought I'd die at 24. I'm calling Kanye right now. I wake up and I love myself. I, black night, went through raging white rapid of early adulthood. And damn, ain't it great? My self-worth is maximized, and my self-stature is salient. I've accomplished my biggest dream of becoming the best and most influential hip hop artist of all time. Though the way it's lookin', my mom's livin' better than me. She's got her health and a paid-off house. I might even go pick up my honorary master's degree today, but I'm too busy still hosting two great Open Mics in Madison, Wisconsin every month. I raise a fist when I know it's the end. I am Corey Dean, I am Soup the Fifth the Master Plan, and I am Supa Friends. I'm hip hop. I know the world knows I'm HAPPY! **(Corey Dean)**



It's February 2028. I'm sitting in my office in L.A., closing a deal on one of the many homes I have available. The children are in school, and my son is off in college, furthering his education. Within the next two weeks, the girls and I will be travelling back home to Madison, Wisconsin to check on our hair and nail salons that we have placed on the west and south sides of Madison. Close family members are helping us run them. My husband is back in L.A. waiting upon my arrival, for when his queen touches back down. But in all honesty, my dreams have come true. I've made my mother proud and gone after my dreams. **(Tiffany Dixon)**

I will have a routine. My children will be a little older so they will be very helpful, I'm sure.

I will still be learning because there is no limit on what you can learn.

I see more doors open than closed. My future is bright.

I will be a part of my community in a big way, and I will help the next person along just like I was helped along. **(Tina Marie Martínez)**



I wake up and tell my wife and kids good morning. I hit the shower, brush my teeth, and put on my clothes. I walk down the stairs of my beautiful three-story house. After telling the wife and kids to have a good day, I go into my three-car garage to decide which one of my lovely cars I will drive today. I pick a set of car keys off the wall, get into the car, and head off to work. I am a computer coder, so when I get to work my office is high. There are big screens and all types of technology and gadgets around. After a long, successful day at work, I go home to my wife and kids. We enjoy each other's company for a while, until I have to go to bed and do it all over again. **(Timothy Mosley)**

I'm 42 years old. My oldest son, Nick, is 27 years old. My youngest son, Martell, is 20 years old. Martell's rap career took off, so we're all living in a mansion. I became a nurse and Nick a dentist and fashion designer. Martell's rap career gave us a jump start, to say the least, to financial freedom. Nick's clothing brand is doing very well, I might say. I'm so proud of my boys, not just because of their accomplishments but because of their hard work.

My accessory boutique is also successful. I've opened up new locations in Miami and New York. Nick's two boys and girl are my loving grandbabies

and the light of my eyes. They are so cute, and they love their grandma Isha (Mrs. Carroll to others). We've been together twelve years now. My brothers and sister are also successful. My oldest sister is an actress, something she always was; now she's famous, though! My brothers are set for life. They never have to work again. They also have a mansion. They live together, and we all live on the same block. Everyone is happy, healthy, and financially secure. **(Laisha Cooke)**

Today, I woke up to my thirteen-year-old daughter throwing a fit about not having the shirt washed that was supposed to be a part of her "outfit" for school today. I am in a hurry to get out the door because I have a client to see in twenty minutes. I am working as a counselor at the hospital. The days are long, but the feeling of being there for people when they are struggling (as I once was) is the most rewarding feeling. I head to the car and let my husband deal with my daughter's major crisis. I pull out of the driveway and I realize I have forgotten something (some things never change). I run in to grab the book I told Noah I would lend him for one of his college classes. He will be meeting me for lunch today because college is stressful, and he misses his mama. **(Krista Mellott)**

On February 5, 2028, I see myself operating a family business with my family.

I wake up in the morning and get dressed, after which I drive to work in one of my many cars (a Tesla). Opening up my Jamaican restaurant, I start making preparations to serve my many customers. My sons and I are in the kitchen, cooking up some sweet Jamaican dishes. The pot's on the fire; ingredients are being prepared and added to them.

Orders have been sent to the kitchen; food is being sent out to customers who have smiles on their faces just from the food's scent alone.

(O'Shane Wilmoth)

Good morning, my love. Hey, don't forget we have plans to have lunch today. It's the one day neither of us works. Our oldest, Nyjua, will be coming home for break, and we have to remember to plan that out. RJ will be going off to college this fall. I can't move around as fast as I used to. My birthday is in a couple months. I'll be 56, and I'm passing my food cart on to my oldest son, Nasier. He has shown me that he's ready. I remember receiving my job offer eight years ago; now I am traveling across the world speaking about how we can help people dealing with life.

(Rasaki Emmanuel)



My typical day would be me waking up in my own house, then getting up and out of my bed to make Kingston breakfast and pack his lunch for school. Then, I get myself ready for work. I'll be an RN in the trauma unit or labor floor. I will love my job, and all my co-workers will be so nice and helpful. Then I will come home, cook dinner for King, and help him with his homework; we will start over the next morning. I also would drop Kingston off and pick him up from school and take him to basketball practice.

(Ashley Lee)



LOVING LANGSTON HUGHES

Still Here

I've been scared and battered.
My hopes the wind done scattered.
Snow has friz me, sun has baked me.
Looks like between 'em
They done tried to make me
Stop laughin', stop lovin', stop livin'—
But I don't care!
I'm still here!

In the poem “Still Here,” Langston Hughes uses repetition to make the stanzas stand out. He uses words that end in “ed.” Then he uses parallelism in the line “snow has friz me, sun has baked me.” He uses the weather to help us imagine the struggles he is expressing.

I love this poem. I feel as though Hughes explained my feelings while I was in addiction. Addiction made me “stop lovin', laughin', and livin'.” But I came through that storm, and “I'm still here.” This poem tells me that no matter what “storms” we are experiencing in our life, we don't need to lose ourselves while they pass overhead. **(Krista Mellott)**

I think this poem is about trials and tribulations. It talks about somebody who has had a rough life but just kept on going and pushing through. It seemed most times people tried to put him down, but he held his head up high.

I can relate a lot to this poem because in my old community people would try to break me, saying that I wouldn't amount to anything. I persevered, and I held my head high. I am still moving on up in life. **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**

Monotony

Today like yesterday
Tomorrow like today:
The drip, drip, drip,
Of monotony
Is wearing my life away;
Today like yesterday,
Tomorrow like today.

In “Monotony” by Langston Hughes, the poem has a theme of the current state of things. This idea is supported by the line “today like yesterday, tomorrow like today” and by using the analogy of water dripping. Hughes's poem centers around life's status quo.

As human beings, we all have a routine, but we can be prone to falling into a monotony which silently makes us sick and carries away the true meaning of life. It can get to a point where we stop laughing, loving, dreaming, and even feeling. **(Eliazar Martínez-Munguía)**



Helen Keller

She,
In the dark,
Found light
Brighter than many ever see.
She,
Within herself,
Found loveliness,
Through the soul's own mastery.
And now the world receives
From her dower
The message of the strength
Of inner power.

"Helen Keller" is short and sweet. I think it means that even though she was unable to see or hear, she was able to find strength within herself. She found a way to love herself even with her disabilities. Hughes's ideas paint the picture of her being a positive person who looks past the negativity.

Even though this poem wasn't long, it made me feel as if I'm able to breathe a bit—especially this week, when I have felt like giving up. As it is, I'm drowning a little, but reading this poem shows me that no matter what, don't give up, and this too shall pass. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

What I took from "Helen Keller" is that we make our own reality, and everything we need is inside ourselves. Even without sight, Helen Keller was able to make her own metaphorical light. She brought courage and hope to many, and that is still widely remembered today.

Learning about yourself and how to be a good person is the ultimate beauty and joy in life, our "soul mastery." I really like how Hughes uses words like dark, light, and brighter to describe feelings rather than sight. **(Nina Salisbury)**

Helen Keller may have been in a dark place (blind) but was able to find her inner light and spread the love. The author used images of light, dark, and inner power.

When reading about Helen Keller, I felt inspired. What I took away from the poem is to find your inner beauty in the darkness and take back your power. **(Tina Martinez)**

Langston Hughes in "Helen Keller" is talking about a woman who finds her own power and inner strength within herself. Helen Keller found a light inside of herself that she didn't know she had. It shines so brightly that, to this day, people still see it and feel it.

I love this poem. It talks about a very strong woman who doesn't know herself until she finds herself, and that's powerful. This poem makes me feel like there is always hope, even in our darkest of times and places. **(Margarita Barajas)**



I believe this poem is written from a mother's perspective. She is explaining to her children the history of African Americans. She wants them to know how bad things were during the slave era. She wants her children to be prideful in their heritage and to continue to strive for equality. Langston Hughes writes the poem in a way that makes it seem like a song as opposed to a regular poem.

My response to the poem would be that I agree it's important for the younger generation of African Americans to know about our history, to learn about oppression, and to fight back and strive for equality. **(Jaison Thomas)**

The Negro Mother

Children, I come back today
To tell you a story of the long dark way
That I had to climb, that I had to know
In order that the race might live and grow.
Look at my face—dark as the night—
Yet shining like the sun with love's true light.
I am the child they stole from the sand
Three hundred years ago in Africa's land.
I am the dark girl who crossed the wide sea
Carrying in my body the seed of the free. . . .
God put a dream like steel in my soul.
Now, through my children, I'm reaching the goal.
Now, through my children, young and free,
I realize the blessings denied to me. . . .
All you dark children in the world out there,
Remember my sweat, my pain, my despair.
Remember my years, heavy with sorrow—
And make of those years a torch for tomorrow. . . .

"The Negro Mother" basically was saying how she wanted her kids to have a better life than her. She didn't have any blessings: she was a slave, and she fought to get free. She didn't have her family because everyone was sold separately. No one was there to comfort her. She's saying her kids will not have to worry, and they will do what she couldn't do. She's saying they will have the comfort from her. They will have the support from her to do and be what they want and live how they please because she brought them the spirit of being free.

(Natia Saffold)

The title "The Negro Mother" caught my attention because it describes an African American mother. This means to me history. It means a strong, black woman who is a mother. I get a deep poem vibe from phrases like "look at my face—dark as night—yet shining like the sun with love's true light." Hughes uses metaphor and descriptive words to get across his idea.

Overall, this poem made me feel sad. It gave me slavery vibes. I put myself in the mother's shoes, and my heart aches. This poem reminds me of our ancestors who paved the way for us to have a better life, for us to be free and not have to pick cotton or be a slave. The mother in this poem is fighting for our black children. She wants no white man to put down black kids because of the womb they came from. **(Jyneeva Hunt)**



The Dream Keeper

Bring me all of your dreams,
You dreamers.
Bring me all of your
Heart melodies
That I may wrap them
In a blue cloud-cloth
Away from the too-rough fingers
Of the world.

“The Dream Keeper” is short and simple. This poem touched me because it’s about dreams. Dreams are so important. They keep us believing and push us towards actually manifesting our dreams. Dreams keep us all optimistic and hopeful. They keep us confident, knowing that we will someday live out our dreams. This is what wakes us up in the morning and makes us go to work and school.

This poem made me feel good about my dreams, better than I already do. That’s why I chose this poem out of the other poems that were suggested. This poem to me is saying that we all need a



dream keeper, a dream protector, someone or somewhere. Our dreams need to be protected and preserved.

More often than not, people forget about their dreams because they are killed by society’s doubts, fears, and naysayers. Our dreams get deferred. Life

happens, and we chase stability and short-term gratifications. Our dreams get pushed to the side for quick fixes and so-called solutions. I can’t count how many times I chose quick money over going to or finishing school. I chose jobs I knew I didn’t have to have any real qualifications for and that I knew would hire me quickly instead of jobs I’d have to “get it together” for. Bills don’t wait; bills come quickly and unexpectedly.

(Laisha Cooke)



The South

The lazy, laughing South
 With blood on its mouth.
 The sunny-faced South,
 Beast-strong
 Idiot-brained . . .
 The magnolia-scented South.
 Beautiful, like a woman,
 Seductive as a dark-eyed whore,
 Passionate, cruel,
 Honey-lipped, syphilitic—
 That is the South.
 And I, who am black, would love her
 But she spits in my face. . . .
 But she turns her back upon me.
 So now I seek the North—
 The cold-faced North.
 For she, they say,
 Is a kinder mistress,
 And in her house my children
 May escape the spell of the South.

In the poem “The South,” Langston Hughes is telling the reader how the South was for black people. He describes how beautiful the South is and how cruel it can be at the same time. He tells you his thoughts by calling the South “idiot-brained” and “child-minded.” He also shows you what they went through in the South by saying “cotton and moon.” Langston Hughes is trying to tell people how badly blacks were treated in the South. Even though they were treated badly, he still loved the place he called home. He shows this by saying, “And I, who am black, would love her but she spits in my face.” He also says, “And I, who am black, would give her

many rare gifts but she turns her back upon me.” Knowing all this, he decides to go north to seek a better life.

I chose this poem because it spoke to me personally. It made me think about my decision to move to Madison. I’m originally from Chicago. I love my city; to me, it’s the most beautiful city in the world. However, Chicago is a very rough city. Chicago has so much violence and unnecessary drama that it makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe living there. I come from the south side of Chicago, which is considered one of the most dangerous places in the world today. I’ve seen so much as a black boy growing up in the ghetto.

The things that I’ve seen could damage a person for life. Like Langston Hughes, I too love where I’ve come from, but I too have felt the pain and agony that comes from living in my city. With this being said, just like Langston Hughes, I too had to relocate from my home town in order to seek a better life. Where you’re from can be a beautiful place, but the things that are going on around you can make it so ugly. That’s what I got out of Langston Hughes’s poem “The South.”

(Timothy Mosley)



GOODBYE TO THE FEBRUARY BLUES



I've got the February blues,
I feel as if I've lost myself and can't find any clues.
They say sometimes you have to lose yourself to find yourself.
I don't even know where to begin.
Times are tough now, but in the end I will win. **(Aerial Bailey)**

I've got the February blues
My phone has broke
My bills are due
My job sucks
And the people too.
I've got the February blues. **(Margarita Barajas)**

It's dark and gloomy, dan-da-da-dan (repeat after every line).

On a February night
Can't see the stars
'Cause life don't seem too bright.
Just got some news
My contract is null and void
Promised millions of dollars
And my pockets most will avoid.
But laugh's on them
'Cause they made it easy to quit
It's no secret
I got sick of dealing with their sh**.
Oh, I've got the February blues. **(Ron Burford)**

I've got the February blues
I put on my shoes
run out the door and get on the move
Ya girl will be 29
She cannot lose
Hold ya head up high
and do not remove
that beautiful smile
that will light up a room
'Cause I've got the February blues
Oh yes I do! **(Arkeia Cameron)**

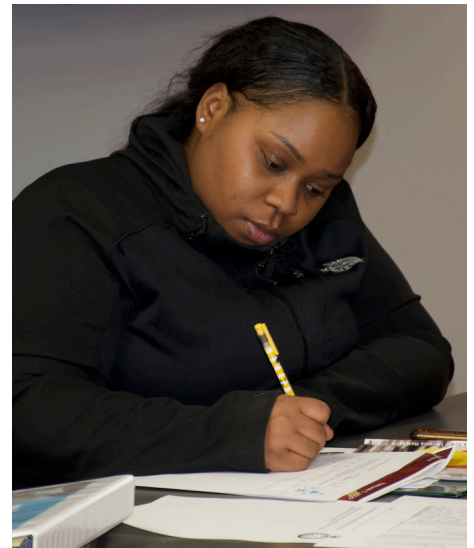




I've got the February blues,
No, I haven't received bad news,
I don't even know why I've got the
February blues.
I got new shoes,
I got new clothes,
I got no woes,
My bills are paid,
Hair is laid,
I got it made,
Kids are safe and secure.
I see good things in the future,
So why do I have the February blues?
Because Emily said I did,
So I wrote about it. **(Laisha Cooke)**

I ain't been living long, but life's so doggone hard.
Yes, I ain't been livin' long, but life's so doggone hard.
But the more I love myself, the more I carry on. **(Corey Dean)**

I've got the February blues
Running off different emotions and pointless clues
I've got the February blues
Trying to hold on, keep my head up
And stay focused. You think you
Can walk a mile in my shoes? **(Tiffany Dixon)**



"I've got the February blues." Could you walk a mile in my shoes?
"I've got the blues." It runs through my veins, I am a tool.
"I've got the blues." Smooth, sweet, gentle, vibration,
sounds like a black queen walking in the room."
"I've got the February blues."
"Listen carefully," my grandfather says.
"That's smooth jazz," I reply.
My grandfather replies, "I know, and it gives me the blues." **(Jyneeva Hunt)**



Why does this cold weather have to be so rude?
I just wanted a little sunshine.
Am I asking too much from you?
What are we gonna do because of
this cold weather?
I'm not sorry to say
I do not approve. **(Tina Marie Martinez)**

Well, here it goes.
 I've got the February blues
 59 miles behind the wheel
 Back and forth on Highway 14 West
 A round trip to Odyssey class.
 I've got the February blues
 Odyssey is freedom from my ignorance
 A sacred roll unfolds before my very eyes.
 I've got the February blues.
 Oh, yes, I do.
 Odyssey, a sweet music to my soul
 Odyssey, a challenging task to my mind
 Oh, yes, I won't give up on you, Odyssey.
 Odyssey don't give up on me.
 I've got the February blues
 Between Odyssey class, tutoring, homework, and reading books,
 I am leading my way out of ignorance.
 I've got the February blues. **(Elíazar Martínez-Munguía)**



I've got the February blues.
 I've never heard anyone call it that before.
 I've got the February blues.
 Been trying to figure out my next move.
 I've got the February blues.
 You can't mess with my groove.
 I've got the February blues
 But feel like I'm going through a weird transformation. **(Ashton McDonald)**



I've got the February blues
 And all I wanna do is hit the snooze.
 Everything is dark and grey.
 Why won't this damn cold go away?
 I dream about the sun, beaches, and sea.
 I feel like a junkie fiending for that Vitamin D.
 I've got the February blues. **(Krista Mellott)**

I've got the February blues.
 This is the only month that my people make the news
 Not for the bad but the good.
 They acknowledge our wisdom and strength,
 the shortest month of the year.
 They down us and make jokes but not this time of year.
 We are nothing all year round, but in February we're special.
 Don't limit my people to just one month, the shortest month, at that.
 Give my people the respect we deserve all year round
 Because we are the heart and soul of this nation. **(Timothy Mosley)**



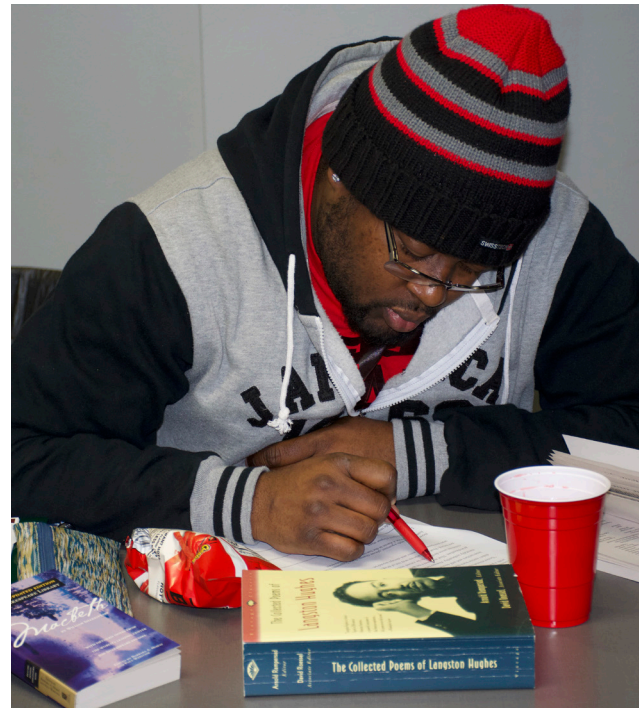
I am grateful I don't experience any February blues.
As to why, there are still no clues.
I am not saying that I never have a frown.
I always manage to turn my frown upside down.
For those suffering with February blues, I know it must suck.
Just hold on; you might just have better luck. **(Loché Mothoa)**

I've got the February blues...
It's still the beginning of the year!
Summer is still months away,
But it is tax season, so at least some of my worries will go away.
It's too cold to pump the gas, it's too cold to brush off the snow,
it's too cold to even take unnecessary trips! **(Moriah Parker)**

I've got the February blues,
I mean, have you seen the news?
Helicopter crashes, murders, TRUMP.
This has all got me stumped.
This all has our country in a rut
And it's going to drive everyone nuts! **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

Speaking English da-da-da-da
Is hard for me da-da-da-da
Is a real struggle da-da-da-da
Is like climbing a tree da-da-da-da
Is hard to face it da-da-da-da
Has me in a rut da-da-da-da
Working hard to change it da-da-da-da
And when I do it da-da-da-da
I am going to strut da-da-da-da
I got the February blues. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

I've got the February blues Da-na-na-na
It's Black History Month Da-na-na-na
Black people's suffering was long Da-na-na-na
Life was hard, cruel, and sad Da-na-na-na
Back when we were slaves Da-na-na-na
But now we rejoice, oh yes, we're free Da-na-na-na
Oh yes, we're free. **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**



MY WOMAN OF COURAGE

BY JEROME SANDERS



Born December 10, 1968, Mary Elizabeth Walker is the embodiment of courage. I was raised for the first seven years of my life with just my mom, Mary Elizabeth (mostly known as Liz, for short), my older sister, Jennah (two years older than me), and my older brother, Jamal (one year older than me). Looking back, I see those early days were fun and pretty sad. However, my mom gave us the deepest love I ever felt. She always made it happen for us, and she delivered tough love when we needed to learn a lesson.

I give credit to any single mom because I saw firsthand how lonely it is and how much it takes to give love, affection, and time to children who desperately need it due to an absent father and an absent mother due to having to cover all bases for both Mom and Dad. My mom watched me cry because my dad didn't show up to visit me, and she grabbed my small body and hugged me so tightly as I cried; she promised me she'd never stop loving me, and not once has she stopped. I went from having her cheer me on in the bleachers at high school basketball games to sitting

on courtroom seats and visiting chairs in prison. I promised her I would not allow my story to end there; we will write better chapters and make this one of a kind. Glad to say, just three years after the prison chairs, we were sitting on very plush chairs as honored guests.

When I tell you my mom always made it happen, she did, and as a kid we never questioned how. We simply were happy to no longer feel like the "poor kids." I recall having the biggest fixation on strawberry milkshakes from White Castle. My mom was like most moms in Chicago at that time, where we received food stamps monthly. During the last week before the stamps would come, it always seemed we'd run out of food. On this day, nothing was out of the ordinary: no food, and we were hungry. My mom had a magic power. We could ask for a quarter or a dollar and she would always say, "I don't have no money, so stop asking." However, whenever she told us to go find something to eat in the fridge or cupboard and we absolutely couldn't find anything, she'd pop up with our favorite White Castle food, shakes included. 😊



To you, maybe you didn't hear of my mom fighting off a bear or a lion, but she's fought off a cancer scare, lung failure, and losing her mom. I thought this would certainly stop my mom in her tracks, but thankfully she persisted and now lives happily with her husband of eighteen years.

I could not be prouder to announce my mother, Mary Elizabeth Walker, as the woman of courage who has inspired me daily.

BECOMING METAPHORS

I am a bright light.
 I started as a speck of light.
 As I grew, my light also grew.
 As I got wise, my light shone.
 As I went through hardship,
 My light shone brighter.
 As I progress and teach others,
 My light forever will shine bright.

(Margarita Barajas)

I am a cuckoo bird.
 I am a cuckoo bird on a cuckoo clock.
 Every day I start the day crazy.
 Every hour I move, dance, or sing.
 I go round and round.
 I am one of a kind.
 I am loved by a lot of people.
 I am a cuckoo bird in a cuckoo world.

(Margarita Barajas)



I am a full-course meal.
 I feel your heart to the top
 Saturated with joy, laughter,
 Happiness, and tenderness,
 Setting your mind at peace
 And your body stress released,
 Satisfied, ready, and wanting,
 Anticipating the next encounter.

(Ron Burford)

I am a force.
 I am a force to be reckoned with.
 I am not to be played with.
 I am full of power, full of wit.
 I am not a toy, nor a girl,
 And damn sure not a boy.
 So go on somewhere else with
 The games before I change.
 I am very nice and sweet, but
 My other side you do not want to meet.
 I am a force, a force to be reckoned with.

(Laisha Cooke)

I am water.
 I water the lives of my family.
 As a dad, my kids need my guidance,
 As they need water to grow.
 As my provisions support them,
 They need to quench their thirst.
 My water is needed to clean their bodies.
 To keep my value to them,
 I must stay pure.
 Water is needed in every family.

(Rasaki Emmanuel)

I am a butterfly.
 A caterpillar in the beginning,
 Making my way into beauty.
 In time my image changes but
 My soul still remains the same.

(Ashley Lee)



I am a tree.
 I need the light and the dark
 For without the dark
 I do not change.
 If I do not change
 I do not grow.
 If I do not grow
 I die.
 Balance

I am a tree.
 I need the rain and the sun,
 But the rain may bring a storm.
 The storm may be destructive.
 I must hold on, spread my roots.
 If I am patient and strong
 The storm will pass.
 I will still be standing after it's gone.
 I use the water from the storm to grow
 Because without the rain
 I do not grow.
 If I do not grow,
 I die.
 Resilience

I am a tree.
 I give shelter and safety in my arms
 To living creatures of all shapes and sizes.
 In return they help to spread my seeds
 So that I may grow again.
 Without these creatures
 I could not grow again.
 If I don't grow again
 I wouldn't just die
 I would be gone.
 Love **(Krista Mellott)**



I am a washer.
 I clean up like a mop does a floor.
 I brighten my days like bleach does whites.
(Arkeia Cameron)

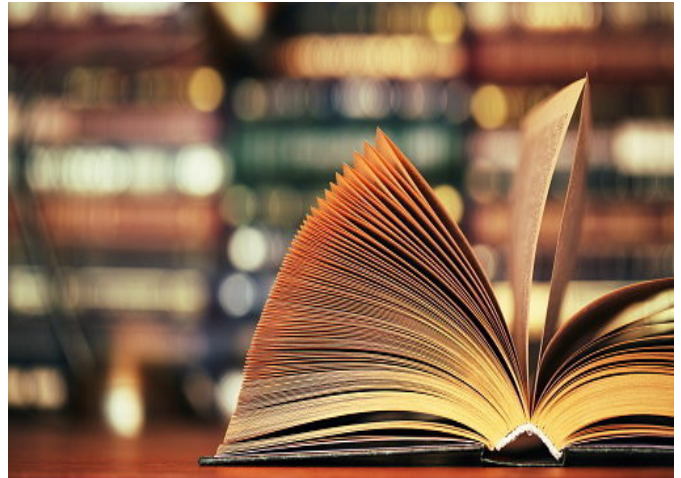
I am a toolbox
 Time passes and everything changes.
 Sometimes a task requires a tool that I have not yet
 conceived.
 Sometimes I am nothing but a wrecked toolbox with
 inadequate tools.
 Lost dreams, lost years.
 I look at the stars, those who unselfishly said to me,
 "Re-educate your mind."
 I am a toolbox.
 I'm putting myself back together,
 Piece by piece.
 I will not cease.
 I will build hopes and dreams and self-belief!
 I am a toolbox.
(Eliazar Martínez-Munguia)

I am a math equation
 A hard worker and father connected to equal a role
 model.
 With misperception and miscalculation, it's very
 easy to get me wrong.
 Many people have tried to figure me out, but have
 come up with an incorrect answer.
 If you take the time to study me long and hard,
 you will find that I'm just a man who's trying to
 succeed in life,
 While making sure that my loved ones can depend
 on me for stability and support.

(Timothy Mosley)

I am a wolf.
 To understand me, you must first understand my
 heart; this takes time.
 I've endured many false stereotypes,
 misconceptions, and misunderstandings.
 I have a high sense of loyalty, strength, and
 purpose.
 I am fearless and brave.
 You wonder where I find the energy to keep going.
 I thrive on challenge; that gives me the stamina to
 keep going.
 I have impeccable character, and "honor" is my
 middle name.
 You'll always know where you stand with me.
 I am strong-willed
 I never quit
 I never give up
 I am a wolf.

(Loché Mothoa)



I am a book.
 Sometimes people tend to judge me by my cover
 until they open me up to see
 I'm full of adventure—
 sometimes drama—
 but mostly love, fun, and joy!

(Natia Saffold)



I am a balloon
 Filled with everyone's secrets.
 The more they whisper
 The bigger I get.
 Expanding, stretching,
 Uncomfortably full.
 I can't fit any more
 Or I'm sure to explode.

(Nina Salisbury)

I am a pair of white curtains
 That hang in a once lively and loving living room.
 I'm protecting many from pesky sunrays
 And peeping Toms.
 I've witnessed first steps, first words, and first
 birthdays.
 Some sorrows, too.
 But then the storm came.
 And I'm just here, still here,
 With brown water stains,
 Showing exactly how high the water once stood.
 I'm surrounded by moldy, black-spotted wallpaper
 And fluttering moths
 In darkness.
 I know I'll be torn down one day.
 Until then, I wait.

(Nina Salisbury)



I am a backpack.
 I am filled with knowledge.
 I am heavy on my shoulder.
 I am painful.
 I am here to help.
 I am deeper than you think.
 I am opened.
 I am closed.
 I am a backpack.

(Marcello Segovia)

I am an elevator
 Sometimes I'm headed up
 Without the slightest realization
 That I'm-a have to come down.
 And some days I'm in the lobby
 My cables feel too weak
 To make it up to the top.
 The thing about being an elevator,
 You're never on the same floor
 But people are always trying to go to the pool.

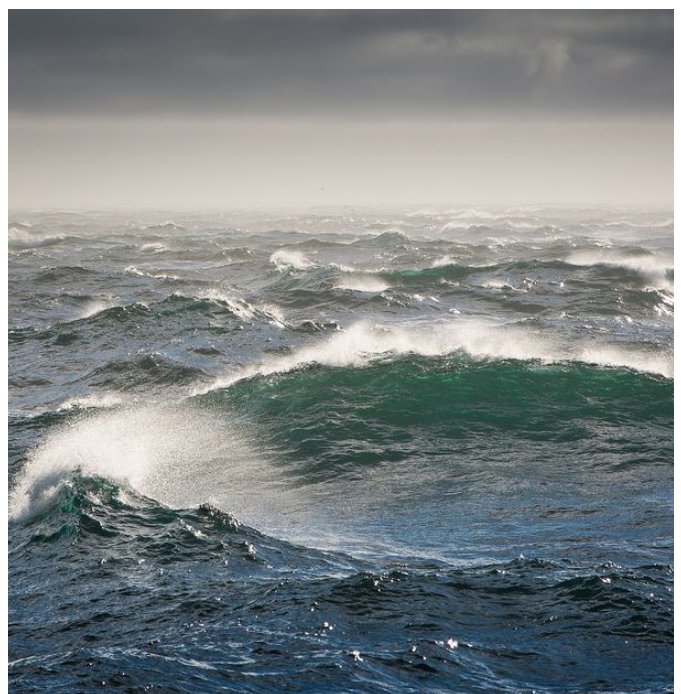
(Riley Sessions)

I am a house
 That protects those who
 Live there, I suffer and
 Enjoy their stories.
 I am a house with firm
 Foundations to withstand
 The inclement weather,
 Thanks to those who built me. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

I am a sea, deep and vast.
 My conscience runs deep, yet sometimes dark.
 I'm rough on my surfaces but calm and gentle
 below the surface.

At times, I can be fun and other times cruel.
 But that's me; you don't get what you see.

(O'Shane Wilmoth)



RESPONDING TO A RAISIN IN THE SUN

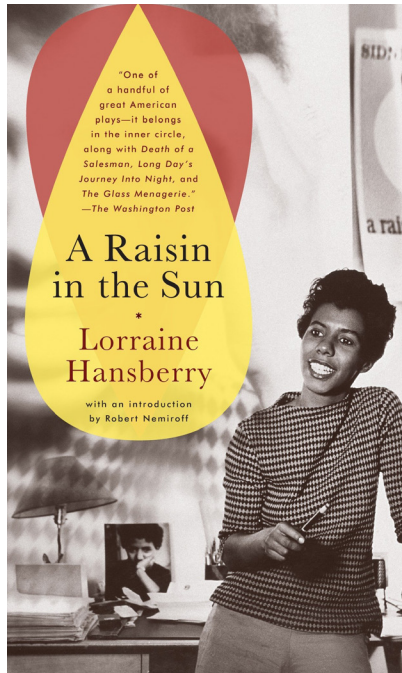
One thing I am like is Mama, in hope and dreams. Lena Younger wants her family to not have to struggle, and she wants to live in a house that can house all the family. So for me, what I can take from this is to never let anyone stop me from doing what I think is best for my family. Don't put so much trust in others with my money, my kids' money and/or life. I have to make sure to keep family helping each other. **(Margarita Barajas)**

This story is similar to some of what happened in my life growing up: living in a small place with bugs, very few places to sleep, adults staying up late talking or partying, and that one ambitious family member dreaming and wanting the high life. This story leaves me with hope for a greater future regardless of the difficulties of life. **(Ron Burford)**

What I took away from this play is to follow your dreams but take your brain with you. Don't be so eager to do something just because it sounds good and you may have the money to do it. Family first. Always look out for and protect the people closest to you. It's not just about you. Keep your dignity, especially when it comes to money. Keep your hopes and dreams alive, and don't discourage others from having dreams. Those are just a few things I took from this play. **(Laisha Cooke)**

I took away from the play that money doesn't buy happiness, money is the root of all evils, family is very important, and you should always stick together. **(Ashley Lee)**

I tend to be like Walter sometimes: impulsive and selfish. Because of this, I made bad decisions. One of the things I want to take from this play and into my own life is to be more open to the advice from my loved ones because my loved ones always,



no matter what, want the best for me, just like Mama wanted the best for her family. **(Eliazar Martínez-Munguia)**

We all go through ups and downs, and we all have many bumps in the road before we actually get the big picture to be happy. Life isn't perfect, but that does not mean we need to give up or backtrack. **(Natia Saffold)**

Now that I have finished reading this famous play, I take away the connection that I also fight for myself and my family every day. I am the first to stand up to anyone who thinks they are superior to me or my family. This is like Mama in the beginning and Walter at the end. **(Marcello Segovia)**

What I take away more than anything is the struggle of life in general and the expectations people place on themselves, whether it's Bennie struggling to chase her dreams, Mama trying to lead her family in the right direction, or Walter just trying to be something substantial and of importance. Also, though, I take away how important sticking together with your family is. The support and love you can draw from your family is so important. **(Riley Sessions)**

What I can take away from this play into my own life is that we can learn from our mistakes and start over. Also, we don't have to wait for someone else to give us the resources; we have to look for them. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

What I got from this play is that no matter how much my family and I argue and disagree, at the end of it, we are all still family with a bond. As the saying goes, "Blood is thicker than water." **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**

RESPONDING TO "HAMILTON" LYRICS

"I prob'ly shouldn't brag, but dang, I amaze and astonish. The problem is I got a lot of brains but no polish. I gotta holler just to be heard. With every word, I drop knowledge! I'm a diamond in the rough, a shiny piece of coal tryin' to reach my goal."

How do I break through the stereotypes I have acquired: a drug addict, a felon, a menace to society? It's even more challenging when there is truth behind the stereotypes to justify their grip. What they don't see are the lessons I have gained through these experiences. They have labeled me as a negative influence, but they don't see the positive influence these experiences instilled in me, the courage, the motivation, the knowledge, and my desire to help. How do I speak my knowledge when my words cannot be heard or trusted? I am a diamond in the rough. I was forged under the pressure of life and turned into something special, but I am perceived as a worthless pebble.

(Krista Mellott)

This passage really stood out to me because I think a lot of people struggle with the feeling that they have something to offer but no way to share their gifts. When he says, "I got a lot of brains but no polish," that line really hit me. I often feel like I have a lot to contribute to conversations but have trouble putting words together. I lack a bit of polish, I guess you could say. I know he was talking about not being heard by his peers, but that's how I thought about it in regards to my own life.

(Riley Sessions)

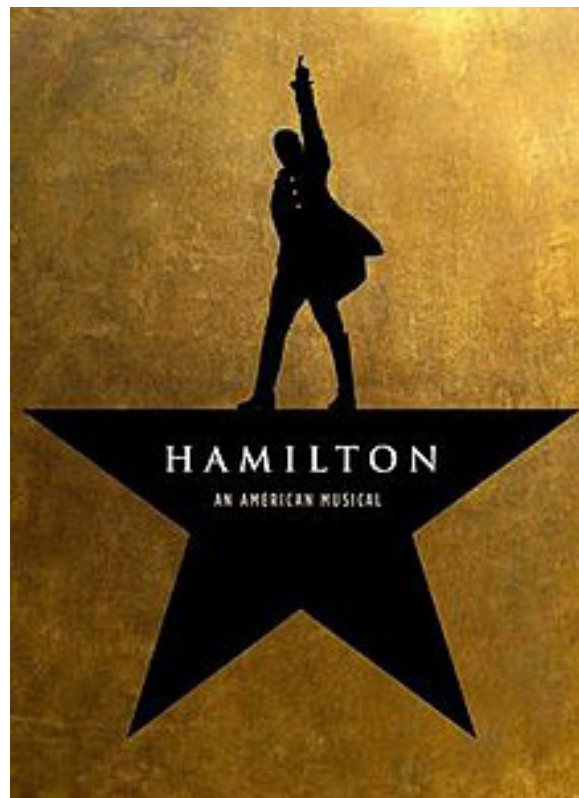
I chose this quote to apply to my life because I love to craft, decorate, and event plan, and eventually I'd like to become a nurse. I am amazed at how far I've gotten in life. I have all the brains but no polish, meaning I have all that it takes to become an RN or an event planner, but I don't have the resources to help me plan my future. Sometimes I procrastinate on getting things done. I feel like I'm a diamond in the rough because I have what it takes to be successful. I'm just a shy person, and being shy won't get me far. I need to use all my resources to become a better nurse or an event planner. **(Ashley Lee)**

This passage explains me to a 'T.' I'm very humble and don't like to brag, but some of the things I've accomplished amaze me. I am so smart, but I don't really put my full potential to use. To me, it seems like no one really hears me, or they pretend not to hear me unless I get loud. I try to enlighten people so that they don't make the same mistakes that I've made in life. I feel like I have all this potential and ambition, but I'm just trying to find my way

out of the mistakes and troubles I've made in my life so that I can shine like the diamond I truly am.

(Timothy Mosley)

This passage speaks to the societal constructs that pit people at odds with others because of their socio-economic status. The line expresses how black people are educated beings but not seen as such, how they have to work twice as hard to be half as good as their counterparts, Caucasians. Blacks are already beautiful but are just going through the process of becoming finished products. **(Ron Burford)**



This passage relates to me in my own life because I've been through so much at an early age, yet I'm still surviving. I'm not letting anything hold me back. I've had a rocky life, from my mother dying when I was five years old to having a child at fifteen, to my big brother being shot and paralyzed at 18, to ending a ten-year relationship after my second son was born, to my father being killed in a car accident that same day, to most recently my sister being found dead in an abandoned building.

I've been through this with no counseling, no professional help, just me and my will to stay sane, my love for myself and my children. I can't afford to fold or break. They need me. Writing definitely helps. Being in this class and having to write my thoughts and experiences down helps a lot. I used to write all the time. I used to have a diary. I don't anymore, but writing helps a lot. **(Laisha Cooke)**

"Raise a glass to freedom, something they can never take away."

This line can mean so many things. It all comes down to which freedom is the one that you're talking about for you. For me, my freedom is the freedom of knowledge. I raise my glass to knowledge. In my life, for me to gain knowledge was always a struggle and a fight—not a fight with people, but a fight within myself; a fight I had every day in almost every class. I would fight my brain and try to put in new knowledge. Until this day, my brain still fights me back and does not want any more knowledge. The more I learn and also learn to pass on, the better I will be. **(Margarita Barajas)**

Freedom is like a crystalline river, running down freely through meadows and hills giving life to everything on its path. In this crystalline river of freedom, human beings rejoice of their passing existence in this world. To raise a glass to freedom is to celebrate the true meaning of life. What is the true meaning of life if there is no freedom?

Freedom must be equitable and collective because freedom is more than just doing whatever makes me happy in my own selfish bubble of indifference and numbness to other people's needs. How can I drink the glass of freedom without my brother, my sister? Come, let us gather together! Come, let us raise a glass of sobriety to honor freedom.

(Eliazar Martínez-Mungía)

We pave our way to freedom by ourselves. The only person who can make us a prisoner is ourselves. Never let anyone make you feel trapped or in a box. We can break that box and draw our path to freedom. I like this because I do what I want with my life. I plan my future; no one owns or controls me, my thoughts, my actions, or my life. Freedom is in the palm of our own hands.

(Natia Saffold)

"Raise a glass to freedom, something they can never take away," is something I can relate to because no matter how bad things are, being "free" is something that can't be taken from me. As long as I don't get in trouble with the law, I'll always have my freedom, and that's something to raise your glass to. **(Jaison Thomas)**

Education is the key. If you acquire education, that is something that will always be there to help you in all aspects of your life, and it is something that no one, not even death itself, can take away from you. **(Carmen Tinajero)**



"I wrote my way out of hell...I picked up a pen, I wrote my own deliverance... I'll write my way out, overwhelm them with honesty."

Ever since I can remember, I had a love for writing. I couldn't write words or formulate sentences, but I could write my name and all the letters of the alphabet. But I was proud of that, and I had to express myself all over the walls of the house, including the garage doors, until I got my first journal. I was in the fifth grade. The journal had scented pages and came with a lock.

I love writing. It was, and still is, my escape. It is my way of expressing myself; it's my imaginary friend I vent to and it's my therapist. It's really therapeutic.

I'm definitely guilty of passing notes around in class. I'm glad I did, and I'm glad I kept those notes because my friend passed away when we were supposed to start eighth grade. Now I will always have a piece of her.

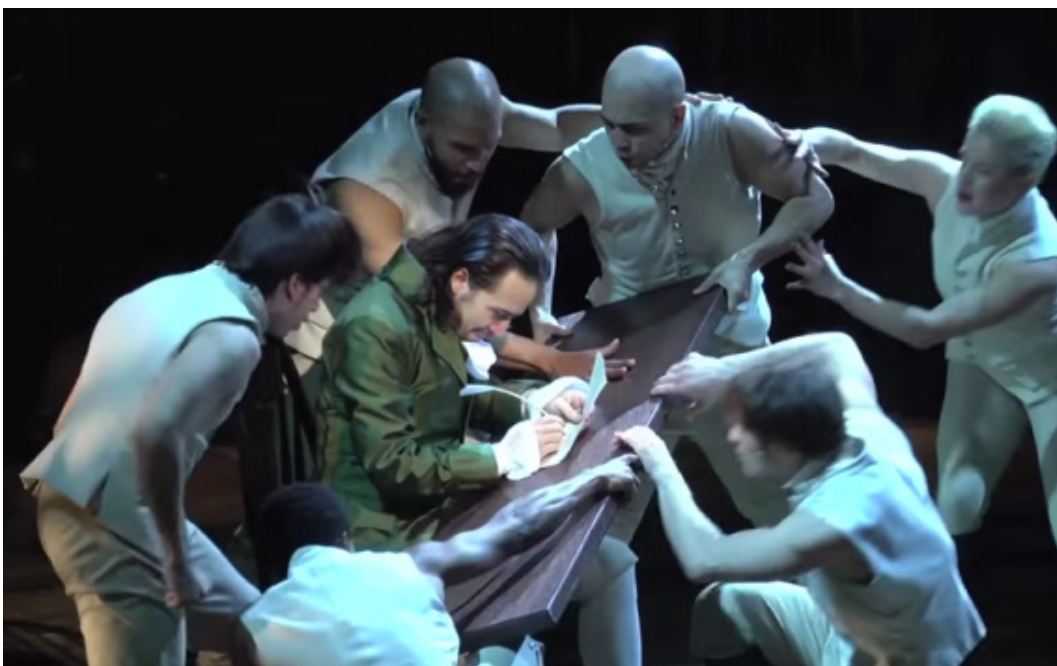
I still have all my journals, and sometimes I like to read them. Boy, oh boy, was I heartbroken in 2013. I'm planning on keeping my journals and sharing them with my kids so that they can see even Mommy was young and dumb once upon a time. **(Loché Mothoa)**

In high school, I used to spend hours searching for quotes on the internet that correlated with my feelings and writing them down in a notebook. As I got older, I graduated to highlighting segments in various poetry books. I felt less lonely knowing that at least one person, at one time, had felt similar pain. I often go back to the pages I highlighted to see how far I've come and use them as a reminder that I don't want to go back to that place. Even though they weren't my own thoughts, I still used others as a way out of my misery. **(Nina Salisbury)**

How do I use words to write myself out of adversity? Writing is like a way to get through some difficult situations, and also it is a means to process life, especially for those who lack the nerve to talk about the problems. So I guess writing about oneself to oneself is like self-counseling. **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**

"I wrote my way out of hell." This expresses my past life. I brought the walls of hurt not only on myself but on my family as well. As I remember, at age 16 I sought the wrong people to follow, which cost me the next 16 years of my life. The first couple years I lived through closed eyes. One day I woke up and started writing myself to receive mail, and I also read many books. This gave me a chance to see my worth in life and in the lives of others. I

truly understood the importance of the tools to apply myself as a man. Then I was empowered to apply these skills to my life, and with this my values in life grew. I was becoming free to be a better me. I realized I could see how to be honest with myself, knowing that now I am free. **(Rasaki Emmanuel)**



THE COLOR PURPLE REVIEWS

Thanks to the Overture Center for donating 25 tickets for UW Odyssey Project students to attend the Broadway production of "The Color Purple" on February 22, 2020!

First, I want to thank all involved for the opportunity! To see a musical that I've been familiar with since I was 10 years old was amazing! The cast really did bring the words of Alice Walker alive.

After seeing the movie a million times, I really didn't know what to expect as far the production went. I was pleasantly surprised and so moved by the music and the acting. The woman who played Celie had the most beautiful voice I've ever heard. I cried listening to her sing because she made me feel her pain. To love and lose so many times before learning to love herself was moving. Celie's story reminded me of my own path to self-love and forgiveness.

In the movie, they don't explore too much on the change in Mister. I was glad I got the chance to see his character change himself and his perspective. The music translated love, heartbreak, laughter, and change all in one. Also, not to be forgotten is the character of Miss Sophia. She made no apologies for being a strong woman and living the life that she wanted to live. She was hilarious and knowledgeable about life and lessons. I liked that she made Harpo accountable for decisions and ultimately helped him grow into a better man.

Seeing this play reignited my love for performance art. I am forever grateful.
(Kayasia Blake '19)





Thank you to Odyssey and the Overture Center for the great opportunity to see *The Color Purple* musical. The show was powerful! The songs, singing, and acting were creative and awesome. The show highlights the most powerful scenes in the movie with a twist. Thanks again. I loved it!
(Denise Hardnett '05)

I had a happy time. I enjoyed the echoes wailing from the womb of those old Southern tales. I laughed and giggled a lot, and I had a happy time. Thank you, Overture Center, for donating the tickets, and thank you, UW Odyssey Project, for including me. **(Yolanda Cunningham '12)**

The Color Purple Musical Revival was everything, absolutely amazing. I loved the music, the singing, the arranging in voices, tones, and notes (music to my ears). They drew me in with the music because it spoke to me. I especially enjoyed the singing of Celie and Shug Avery. It left me mesmerized, breathless, and in tears because who wouldn't want to be loved and feel love? I also loved the very first song they sang about joy because it had a churchy feel and so much soul. Harpo and Sophia were especially funny.

HELL NO! There was not one part where I was like "they could do this different. " HELL NO HELL NO HELL NO! I do wonder about the

chairs and why they used them as much as they did. I really did not understand except they were props being used.

The last part of the play deeply touched me because I felt Celie's pain with love. She sang that song so amazingly: "somebody gonna love you." She realized it is within her (after Shug Avery left her) and that she is beautiful no matter what she looks like. She is winning, and she sang that song "I'm here." She had almost lost her faith. When Celie (Mariah Lyttle) sang, I cried every time, especially with "I'm here." It became very personal. I know it was a musical, but there was also reality in the words of those songs. I shed so many tears because she sings so beautifully, and she makes you feel the words to the songs so deeply.

HELL NO! I ain't ugly, HELL NO, I ain't a punching bag, HELL NO HELL NO HELL NO, I am like the *The Color Purple*.

This was a beautiful, simply beautiful, musical. The last song they sang, *The Color Purple*, had me stiff in my seat, with tears rolling down my face. Amazing musical! Thank you, a million times, again. My mother was so happy beyond words.
(Lakeitha Doss '07)



The Color Purple was an amazing play, and it was very uplifting!!! I have three favorite things about the play. Number one is that all the cast members' singing was absolutely breathtaking and beautiful. The second thing is that it was an all-black cast, and I don't think that I have ever seen a play like that before. They were all really great actors. My last but certainly not least favorite thing was that my favorite character in the play was the main character, Celie. She had some terrible things happen to her in her life, but instead of being sad and depressed about it, she rose above it all and always tried to make the moment lighter by telling a joke or laughing. I thought that that was pretty amazing of her.
(Sidney Moore, Odyssey Junior '18)

The Color Purple, The Musical, was inspiring and incredible! For me, the story lines, the characters, and the music, brought the play to life. For me, the musical was about resilience, love, faith, empowerment, and forgiveness.

From the beginning of the musical, I felt as if I was back in the 1920s and 1930s, watching Celie and Nettie laughing and singing, even though their lives were hard and they were treated like they didn't matter much, especially Celie. Celie was often told she was ugly and unworthy, to the point that she came to believe it herself. In the musical, I saw how Celie was abused by her stepfather and had two children by him, and how her children were taken from her. I watched as she was given away in marriage and was abused physically mentally and emotionally by her husband for years. I watched while Celie pleaded as her sister Nettie was forced to leave, and there was nothing she could do. It broke her heart, but she still had faith and believed life would be better.



Celie continued to find happiness in her life and displayed faith and forgiveness to her family. I watched Celie transform through difficult situations and tragedies until one day she had an epiphany. She realized that she mattered and deserved to be treated better and to be loved.

Right before our very eyes, Celie chooses to make her life be her life. She grew into it beautifully, which made those scenes truly uplifting and inspiring. She went even further and forgave family members that hurt her the most, but she reminded them that she would not tolerate the treatment she'd endured in the past.

For me, this musical was about a woman's journey through life, where she learned to believe in and love herself and became empowered. By just becoming herself, she changed the dynamics and trajectory of her life and her family's life forever upwards. **(Bruce Moore '18)**





I was really excited to find out that I would be getting two tickets to see a production of *The Color Purple* at the Overture Center. Tickets had been donated from the Overture Center to the Odyssey Program, and Professor Emily emailed the students past and current to offer the tickets. My daughter Aiah'neanna and I were glad to be chosen for tickets to attend! I decided that it would be a great way to celebrate Black History month for us. As a family, we were able to sit and watch the movie earlier in January, Aiah'neanna for the first time. I explained that as a child I was an avid fan of Alice Walker and had read all her books and poems as soon as they came into the library. So as an adult when I heard that a movie was being made of one

of my favorite books, I had to see it. I fell in love with the characters all over again!

When I heard about the opportunity to see it at the Overture Center, of course I was just as excited about it. I really appreciate being able to experience it with my daughter. She told me, "Calm down, Mom, you're too excited!" The vocal performance was excellent and so was the music! We both enjoyed our experience. We had box seating, right over the orchestra! This was great accommodation for my physical impairment [due to multiple sclerosis]. I could use my walker and sit in the chair comfortably. I really want to say thank you for the wonderful blessing of the tickets. **(Eunice Conley '13, with daughter Aiah'neanna, Odyssey Junior '15)**

The Color Purple was like a roller coaster for me; my emotions were up and down throughout the entire play. At one moment I was laughing, and then minutes later I was crying. But I was always completely mesmerized by the singing ability of the entire cast, especially Celie. Celie's voice range was off the chart, and she kept it a secret until the second half of the show. I was like "Daaaaamn, did Miss Celie just hit that note?" Overall, it was an amazing play that I would definitely like to see again. A big thanks to the Overture Center for your sponsorship and efforts for diversity and inclusion. **(René Robinson '08)**





First, I would like to thank Odyssey again for this opportunity and thank the Overture Center. It was a great experience. Although I was about 40 minutes late, I still got to see a good chunk of the play.

The Color Purple is one of my all-time favorite movies, so I was excited to see it on a different platform. I wanted to compare the musical to the movie, as I have not read the book yet. There were some differences, of course, but it was just as good.

I loved listening to the amazing voices and acting. The play was very captivating and eye opening for some. I feel the songs they picked fit perfectly for each set. I feel I would've enjoyed them a lot better if I didn't have someone sitting next to me singing the entire time. Some people have no class (LOL).

The performance was adult-friendly, funny, and relatable to many women. The cast was perfect and just right for the roles they played. I also found it amazing how they never slipped on any of their lines and how fresh their voices were. My favorite part was Harpo Jr. and Sofia's duet scene.

I do feel that the stage could have had better props and background drops. I feel for those who have only watched the movie. There were parts we were looking for in the play that didn't happen, as well

as things that were not in the movie that happened in the play. If I could change anything about the play, it would be the stage setting because I felt it was really lacking.

I would go see this play again (on time, of course). I would recommend it to anyone and to those who like classic movies or novels done in a different format and environment. This play is a must-see, and you won't be disappointed (**Queeneice Creamer '19**)

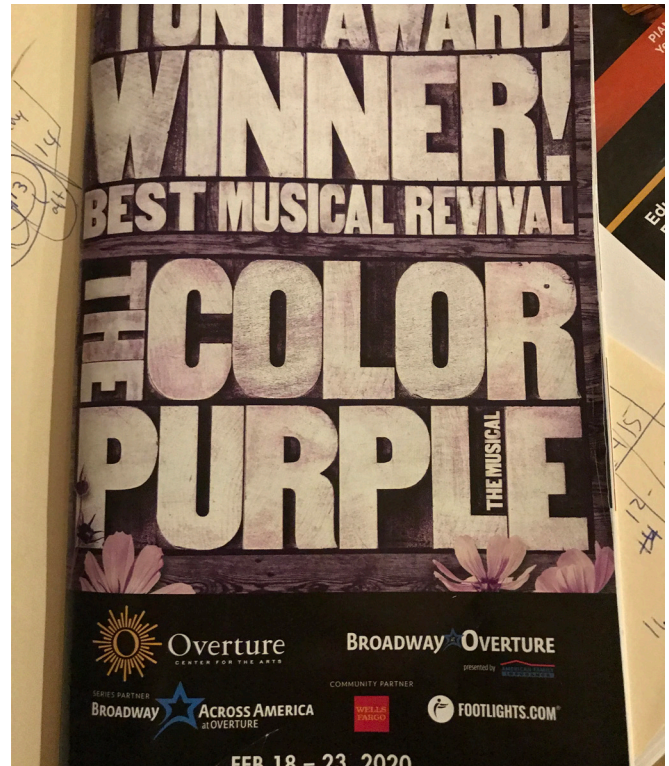
The Color Purple performance for me was not only very heartfelt but also was an amazing musical. The musical had me crying, laughing, and in awe of their beautiful voices. That was my very first time seeing a musical play like this. I also enjoyed that they tried to go by the book instead of the movie. I found it very intriguing in the play how Celie didn't know how to read and how women were treated badly, but still the play recognized that black women could own things and even be independent. I really enjoyed the event. (**Emily Robinson Beckham '07**)





Thank you to the generous donors from the Overture Center and to the Odyssey Program. My heart was filled with joy when we got the email that we were selected and could come pick up our tickets. *The Color Purple* presentation was absolutely amazing. The empowering movement delivered by the cast was outstanding. From the start, I was delighted as gospel, blues, soul, and hymns led the story line. The performance was moving. Viewing this Broadway performance of *The Color Purple* live captured my soulful, joyous side of hope and strength.

Thank you for making this Black History month a little extra special for my daughter and me. We were grateful to have the opportunity to see such an astonishing Broadway production. *The Color Purple* was epic. Unlike any other Broadway performance that I've seen, it didn't take a lot of stage props to deliver the message. Clearly, the story line was well received. There was never a dull moment. The director did an amazing job creating a clear picture using the audience's imagination to take us back to a time when women of color were mistreated and less empowered. The ladies showed strength and learned how to overcome their oppressors and empower themselves. The director used minimal props and was able to capture the same effects with less. The focal piece was the story line, the strong voices, and the dances. This was a spectacular play to have attended. **(Lawana Diagne '17 and Amari, Odyssey Junior)**





The four characters that have always stood out for me in the book, the movie, and now the play are Celie, Sofia, Nettie, and Shug Avery. This play exceeded my expectations and had me full like a good home-cooked Sunday soul food dinner. Although it took Celie awhile to find her voice, I loved the fact that no matter what her circumstances and situations were, she had three strong-willed African American women standing behind, in front, and beside her, whether it was in spirit or in person. You could feel their pain, hopes, and dreams come alive as they sang each song. I could feel vibrations like bells from the inside out.

The Color Purple musical was simply amazing. I felt honored to be provided the opportunity to attend in person this world class Broadway musical. I attended the musical with my husband as a birthday date. As I was sitting watching the musical, I went through so many different emotions. I felt a sense of sisterhood when the talented women actresses were singing; it was almost as if they were singing songs of most black women's experiences. I felt the resilience and triumph of Celie. The play had the ability to make me feel as if I was in multiple places at the same time. Watching the play, I was taken on an Odyssey to my childhood and to church, among other places. The first time I watched *The Color Purple* Movie on TV was when I was a young girl still in Nairobi, Kenya, prior to my family and I immigrating to the United States as refugees. Watching the play live in person as an adult, I was overwhelmed with a lot of emotions as I remembered my childhood and my friends and relatives, some of who have passed away. Thank you, UW Odyssey Project and the Overture Center, for continuing to provide these opportunities for us and allowing me to cultivate my passion for the ARTS. (Josephine Lorya '08)

I could probably write a short story, but I won't, LOL. This play truly defines the name. The color purple stands out so strong and has a strong meaning in the African American culture. It means royalty, strength, and beauty. If anyone would walk past a field full of purple flowers and not stop and take in all its beauty, they would have to be brainless. (Catina McAlister '11)



HAZEN CHOICES



Tulip Vase
Ann Agee

Broken Hearts

Nine people with broken hearts

Trust monsters who look like you and me

'Til you trust them. The heart-eating monsters come
Out. Heart still intact but broken on the inside.

(Margie Barajas)

Cast Glass Proof of Awareness
Loretta Hui-Shan Yang

Water Flower

Beautiful, rare, fully blossoming flower.

It looks like it came from the bottom

Of a clear lake. Very delicate.

Beautiful, rare, fully blooming flower. **(Margie Barajas)**



Vergüenza ("Shame")
Kukuli Velarde

Hide

Men and women are waking up and out of
A daze or trance. People realizing they have no
Clothes. They want to scream but can't.

They won't let the kids see; hide, hide, hide. **(Margie Barajas)**

Then The Skull Will Be an Angel's Face
Jim Dine

Remember My Cross

They have tried to pervert my cross,
 The symbol for life and rebirth, forgiveness ever complete,
 Not what's carved into a sign of reap, deceit, and defeat.
 My cross bore sin, from each lash that was taken, again and again.
 Signifying my love poured out so graciously
 with tenderness, with care and with mercy,
 for you, all ye the sick, the lying, the lame, and the lost.
 Oh my children, my children, remember my cross.
 My gift to draw closer to you; will you have it?
 My love, poured out for all races, for the nations, and even the rich.
 You've been given this depiction of the three-fold cord,
 displaying a corpse as reap, a picture of Pinocchio in the center as deceit,
 and the holy priest in the end as defeat.
 But my child, oh my child,
 How they have tried to pervert my cross.
 I too am the three-fold cord, the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit,
 Unmatched in all and in merit!
 And my dearest, oh my dear,
 my perfect love, cast out all fear.
 So take on no offense, and yes, I'm aware you likely will resist,
 but I draw closer still, yet only if you will.
 Therefore in every cause, take a little pause,
 lift a praise to the ancient of days
 And remember my cross. **(Ron Burford)**



Now-ing From the Journey to the West
Chi Peng

This picture speaks to me in many ways. Sometimes you have to look over your past to see the storms you overcame. Yet many times in our life's past, it not only has storms, but it also bears great burdens at the same time, ready to crush the peace from our hearts, like losing your home or someone you love dearly. Our flags are dripping in blood, so we can't throw it in because of the pain our life is handling. These things usually cause us to move from any comfort that we used to have in life. As we live in this world, our journey will help us cross many roads. One day, you can look back at the many struggles, but you can have victory. **(Rasaki Emmanuel)**



Spirit Wall
Unknown

Positive, protect, peace is what I see when I see this amazing art. The dragons represent good fortune. The spirit wall serves to prevent evil spirits who travel in a straight line. The lotus on the spirit wall represents rebirth and enlightenment. The green, yellow, turquoise, black, and cream are earthly colors which represent nature. **(Ashley Lee)**



Suzanne Statuette
Rene Lalique

To be free
 To be independent
 To be a woman
 Beautiful and angelic
 Iridescent and effervescent
 In the light
 Comfortably baring it all
 Balancing in confidence
 Gracefulness and all. **(Tina Martinez)**



Whorl
Gillian Jagger

This piece reminds me of loose skin, whether it's after giving birth or after losing a significant amount of weight. Loose skin is every woman's biggest fear and insecurity; it used to be mine, too. Yet now I see the beauty in it; it's a reminder of what was, but also what amazing things our bodies can do.

In the same way, I see stretch marks as art. I now see loose skin as an art form too. I would have a piece like this in my home as a reminder that everything can be art. **(Loché Mothoa)**



Scene of the Crime
Lisa Gralnick

What is the cost of being pretty? Why is being a "girly-girl" so important? Who taught us that pink meant girl and blue meant boy? What is the cost of being pretty? Why are women labelled materialistic, and how did we become this way? The jewels we love. The shiny things we crave. Is it to catch the attention of men or to make other women envious? We put our jewels on for special occasions and in our caskets. When does being pretty stop? **(Moriah Parker)**



Preparatory Drawing for Space
Dennis Nechvatal American

You came here to be free, to breathe. You can smell the fresh air and you can feel the breeze. The grass and leaves look so nice and fluffy, like you can just snuggle with them or wear them as a blanket. **(Natia Saffold)**



Seated Buddha

The way art brings back memories is relentless.
Like the tide coming in on the beach
It never fails.
It can fill your nose with smells
You know aren't there
With sights you haven't seen in so long
The Thai Buddha brings back my grandmother
For just a minute, she's here with me
Praying in front of her god.
(Riley Sessions)



Untitled
 Mark Rothko

At first glance, I questioned why this piece would be in a museum. It looked basic and like not a lot of thought had been put into it. After further speculation, my mind began to change drastically. The edges of the forest green and crimson red rectangles began to blur, as if you were falling into it. I can't decide if it was the artist's color choice, his brush techniques, or both that give this illusion, but it worked. It has to be one of the simpler pieces here, but I like how it reminded me that sometimes things are worth giving a second chance. **(Nina Salisbury)**



Danu, 2006
 El Anatsui

For me, it looks like a magic carpet full of colors and composed of many pieces. Each one can tell you its own story. In this magic carpet, you can climb and travel through the world. You can always bring with you a little piece of every new place you know. **(Carmen Tinajero)**





Shiva and Parvati (Uma-Maheshvara)
Earl Morse

Shiva and Parvati dancing to the beat.
Parvati's hand caught Shiva, who fell to her feet.
They both stomped on dragons underneath;
Hand in hand they danced endlessly.
(O'Shane Wilmoth)

The plow has been a rudimentary tool that is used to work the land so that human beings can reap the fruits of the earth. The skull above the plow represents the return of the human body to its organic state. . . . We are in such a vast universe that we so often forget the true meaning of life. Yes, life can be tough and does make us vulnerable to the unpredictable. Life and death: what a long journey and yet so short. In my Mexican culture, we honor our deceased loved ones every September 1st. We believe that even though their physical bodies aren't present, their souls return to visit us, which is a very joyful festivity. This makes me realize that I should be grateful for the opportunity to be alive. I should stop for a moment to smell the flowers and look at the colorful nature around me. My wonderful time spent at the Chazen Museum with everyone made me appreciate my existence even more.
(Eliazar Martinez-Munguia)

