

ODYSSEY ORACLE

ODYSSEY IN A PANDEMIC



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MOSAIC METAPHORS

Mosaic: a picture or pattern produced by arranging together small colored pieces of hard material such as stone, tile, or glass

I am a mosaic.

I'm made up of pieces named love, kindness, and compassion.

I have bits of pieces that come from anger, hate, and sadness.

I'm also made from spontaneous pieces, spiritual and free-to-be-me pieces.

I'm very fragile. Even though I may look stern, I'm easy to break. **(Natia Saffold)**



Mosaic me
I'm a masterpiece
Who can master peace

All over here, all over there
My life is in alignment . . .

I'm a master piece
Who can master peace.

For me, the bits and pieces of time I share with Odyssey
make a huge impact on my life. **(Arkeia Cameron)**

I am a mosaic

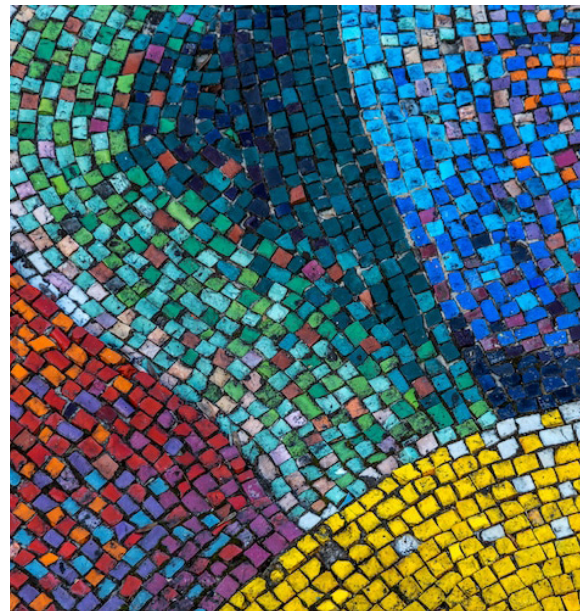
Like stained glass, filled with vibrant
colors, stories, and multiple small pieces which
keep me whole.

I am a mosaic. Ya' know,
some parts of me are new and some old,
some made of silver and some made of gold.

I am a mosaic . . . I know
some parts of me can encourage,
inform, humor, or uplift,
some parts can cause pain so bad
you would think it made your heart rip.

Some parts of me are rich, and I manifest that -ish.

I am a mosaic, and Corona Virus is a bitch! **(Jerome Sanders)**



I am a mosaic.
 I am bits and pieces of stained glass
 That I tried to manipulate like clay.
 Eventually I gave up trying to hold those pieces together.
 I finally let go and allowed those pieces to fall apart.
 I arranged my shattered pieces of stained glass.
 I realized that even broken things can be recycled into
 Something different, something better.
 I am no longer who I was.
 I am no longer my past
 For I am now a beautiful mosaic.

(Loché Mothoa)

I am a mosaic
 So many puzzle pieces
 I am made of
 Putting myself back
 Together with the
 Natural elements
 I am made from
 But in no order
 I flow like water.

(Tina Marie Martínez)

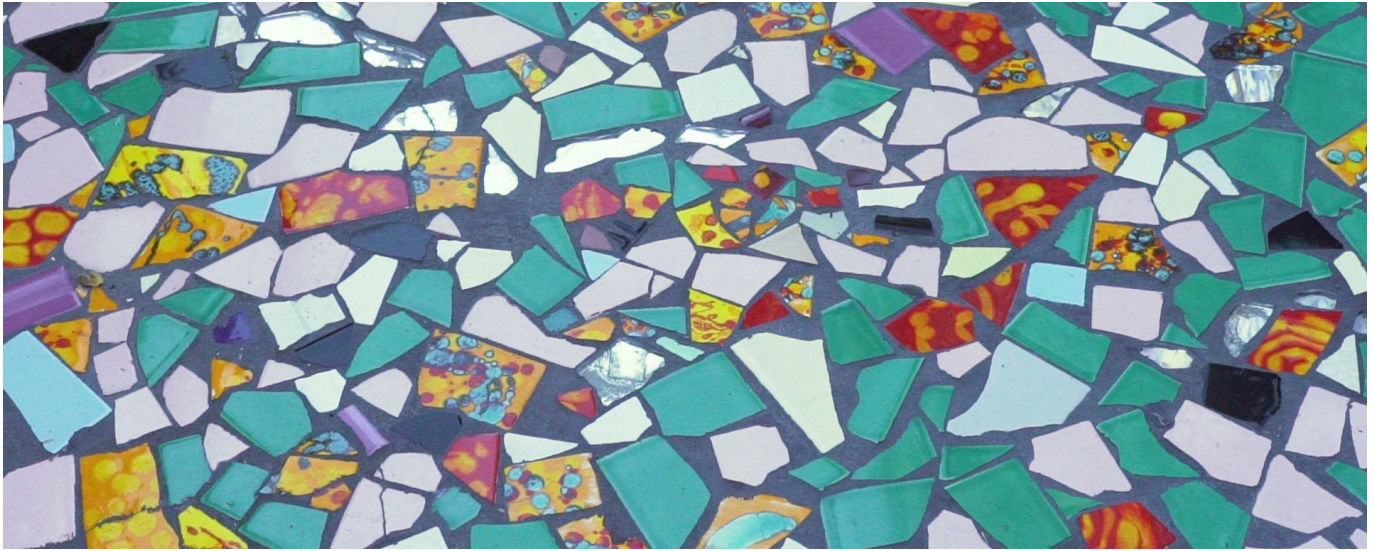


I am a mosaic.
 I have dreams, gifts, and goals to make a better person.
 I am a mosaic.
 There is bitterness, hurt, and a lot of anger in me,
 yet my gift to forgive and my tool to smile overshadow my anger.
 My thoughtfulness of others is the base of me.
 Because of who I am, I only give people the best of me. **(Rasaki Emmanuel)**

Mosaic . . . is that what my life is made of?
 Different struggles, worries, and goals,
 formed into different types of shapes
 to put together as a puzzle.

I'm human, strong, a fighter,
 once a little girl. Molded and
 shaped and built into the woman
 I present myself as being today.

I'm a mosaic.
 Different pieces and shapes
 put together and framed as a
 beautiful art work. **(Tiffany Dixon)**



My life is a mosaic.

1, 2, 3 fast forward to twenty-nine years of life.

Through the ups and downs, good and bad, happy or sad,

I am a mosaic piece myself.

J-Y-N-E-E-V-A is not only my name, but my journey.

I am a mosaic. **(Jyneeva Hunt)**

My life is a mosaic, chopped and screwed, mixed and mastered by destiny.

Though each piece individually could be perceived as fragile and futile,

Put together they form a beautiful vessel for light to pass through. **(Corey Dean)**

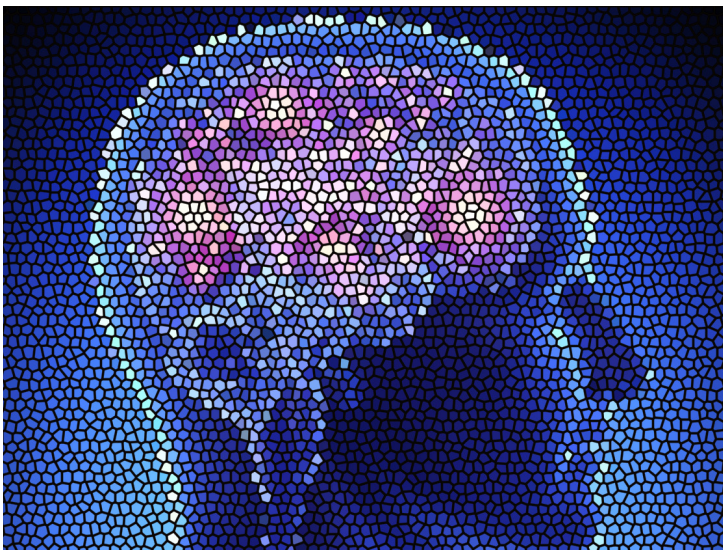
My life is a mosaic

Full of different people and cultures

It all makes up a part of who I am

All held together by one frame

Then hung on the wall for all to see **(Riley Sessions)**



The Mosaic of My Mind

My mind is a mosaic

When I read poetry

I don't read it aloud

I stay to myself

My mind is a mosaic

When I understand poetry

There is a calmness

I see myself

My mind is a mosaic

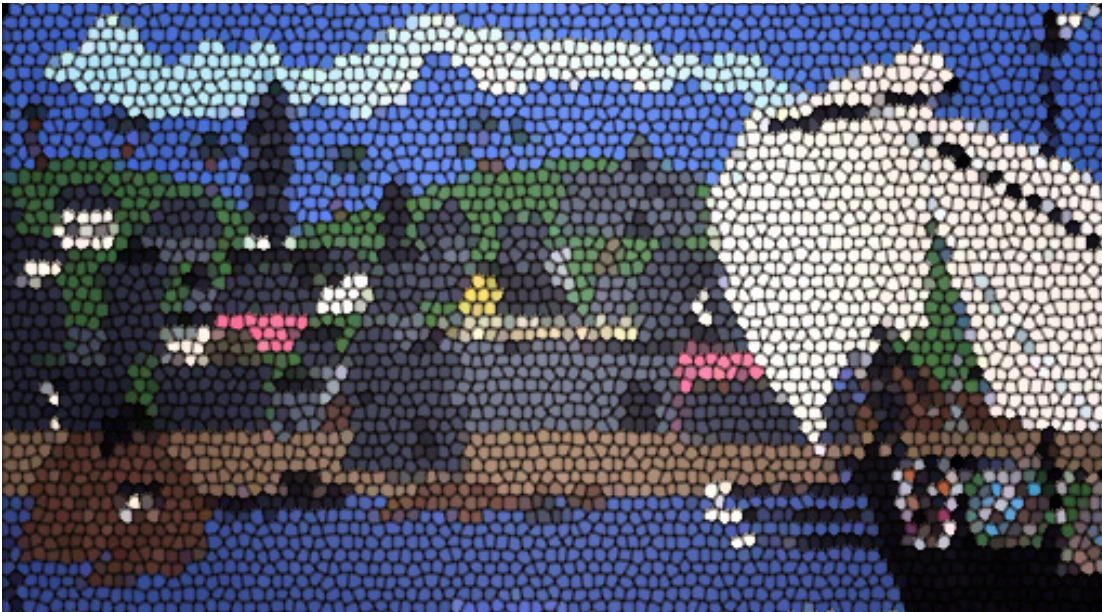
When writing poetry

My words are waves

Launched against

Unknowing **(Marcello Segovia)**

My mind is a mosaic made up of what haves and should haves.
 A beautiful blend of past, current, and future anxieties.
 All carefully placed side by side to one another
 By the chemical imbalances that make up my brain.
 I would compare them to a stained glass window,
 But that implies church
 And God.
 When it's really more like hell. **(Nina Salisbury)**



Odyssey is a mosaic
 Unifying diversity to come together
 To uplift one another
 To become better.
 Together we are all unique, not basic.
 I can't wait to continue on this new Odyssey
 That we have created. **(Aerial Bailey)**

Odyssey is a mosaic, and it all started with Emily.
 Without Emily A., none of these pieces would be here or there to start a mosaic.
 Ms. Emily started Odyssey, and now Odyssey becomes her.
 Odyssey becomes us, brings us all together.
 With just one piece, Ms. Emily, Odyssey, us. **(Margarita Barajas)**

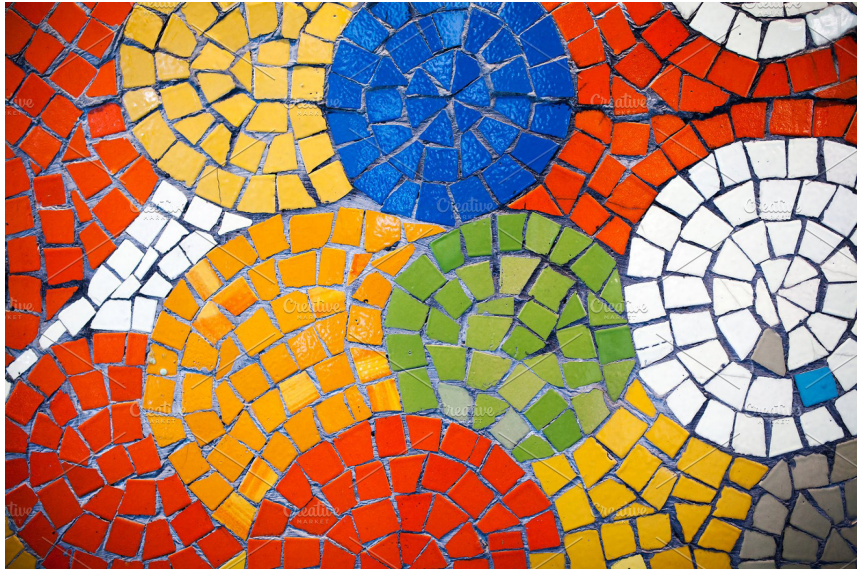
Odyssey is a beautiful, colorful, magical mosaic. Each student is a different color, a different piece that once was lost. Now, each piece can be wonderfully placed on the art board of graduation and can be presented magnificently, once more, on the canvas of the world. **(Ron Burford)**

Odyssey is a mosaic because together we all make one colorful, beautiful, and interesting work of art. We all have to come together to make Odyssey beautiful. If one piece is missing, it's still beautiful and still art, but it is not quite complete. **(Laisha Cooke)**

Odyssey is a mosaic of people and ideas,
 Bits and pieces of a past I herald but once knew nothing about.
 Odyssey is a mosaic that lights open a door of success for me. **(Kossiwavu Elo)**

Odyssey class is a mosaic.
 We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic.
 Different people
 Different beliefs
 Different hopes
 Different dreams
 But together we are one
 beautiful mosaic. **(Ashley Lee)**

Odyssey is a mosaic.
 All the small things
 Coming together
 To form a
 Bigger picture.
 I keep adding more
 To the mixture.



Odyssey is a mosaic.
 Each person has a unique talent
 Displayed with such an explosion
 That we all can see the precious diamond shining already. **(Eliazar Martínez-Munguia)**

Odyssey is a mosaic made up of broken diamonds,
 weathered by the stones of life, brought together
 from all over the world into one classroom.
 When the class is together, we see each other's rough edges sparkle
 and we soon realize that no diamond is without flaws
 and that we are still beautiful and worthy. **(Krista Mellott)**

Odyssey is a mosaic.
 Different beliefs and minds come together as one.
 Races and ethnicities come together for the sole purpose of learning,
 Which makes one big, beautiful, colorful picture of great minds. **(Timothy Mosley)**

Odyssey is a mosaic.
 We all piece together our experiences,
 backgrounds, knowledge, and personality
 to make Wednesday enjoyable and fun.
 Together, we make a perfect glass fixture. **(Moriah Parker)**

Odyssey mosaic.
All different cultures
Come together as one.
Different interpretations,
Different backgrounds,
Different languages,
All enjoying the same experience,
But all getting something different from it. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

Odyssey is a mosaic because it brings people from different backgrounds together to form a family-like environment. Each person brings a different piece to the group to make it a whole. Every person brings different characteristics, making the group “colorful.” Each person is a vital piece to make the picture whole. **(Jaison Thomas)**

Odyssey is a mosaic because it has the ability to form wings
in the lives of people like me who had their wings hidden.
Odyssey pieces you together into a beautiful butterfly who can fly very high. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

My Odyssey class is a mosaic.
It is made up of so many different people
Of different backgrounds, races, religions, and colors
With so many beautiful features. **(O’Shane Wilmoth)**



LETTERS TO THE CLASS OF 2021

Dear Class of 2021,



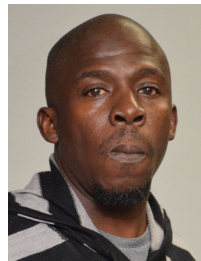
Hey, y'all. First things first, if you're shy or quiet or just want to hide in the back of the class, oh, you are in the wrong class. Ms. Emily will not let you hide, and there is no back of the class, as you can see. LOL! But please don't worry. I asked in our first writing assignment, how can a class turn into a family? Ms. Emily said, "Oh, just wait and see." Boy, do I see now. We are a family now. Just know, once you're in Odyssey, you're in for life. There will be times when you want to give up, but please don't. Just keep pushing through even if you don't have your work done. Still come to class no matter what. Ms. Emily, Kevin, Coach, and everyone are very understanding and they do work with you. Don't give up. You will be very proud of yourself at the end. **(Margie Barajas)**



Class of 2021, stay encouraged. There will be "days like this." Have you ever heard the song by the Shirelles called "Mama Said"? I tell you it gets tough and rough; hell, I think life can use a little lotion sometimes. Laugh with me because some days you will want to cry, but when you cry wipe away the tears and keep pushing. Let nothing get in the way of your goals. Be inspired by those who surround you. Everyone serves a purpose in your life. I'm learning as I grow older to allow people to catch on to who I am in my life. That way they know what I like and don't and how to treat me just in a way I where I appreciate them enough to reciprocate the same vibes. **(Arkeia Cameron)**



You know the vibes. You might be scared, you might be nervous, or you might be unsure, but one thing is known: you, and only you, can conjure the strength to complete this quest. You're in it for the long haul. Though you might have mixed feelings, this whole class is a banger! You will learn new ways to look at yourself through this class! You will learn where you come from through this class! You will become yourself in this class! Odyssey is nothing to fear 'cause I ain't ever been scared of something that's purest intention is to help me. You got it! **(Corey Dean)**



I am so excited for you guys. Please open your eyes and ears to receive a gift to bless your heart. This is the fight that will change you and will help you come out on top in many ways. These tools won't let your past hold you back, but will rather move you past doubt. I am rooting for you as we are now family. I am here as others to remind you that we, too, have sat where you're sitting now. Come, join Odyssey's community, and your smile will be so bright! **(Rasaki Emmanuel)**





I know you all are probably nervous and scared that you may not stay the course because I felt the same way. Well, don't be afraid. This class is literally going to change your life. Odyssey is going to open your mind in a way you have never imagined. I mean

this in a phenomenal way. Just wait and see, and remember to also have fun and don't give up.

(Jyneeva Hunt)



Welcome and congrats. You're a college student now. This is a huge accomplishment. Don't freak out. College is not as scary as it seems. I am here to tell you not to stress at all. Being in the Odyssey Program, I did face some mild hardships. However, the Odyssey

staff did not let me stay down for long. Emily is a helping hand. She made sure I made it to class, and Kevin made sure I came to tutoring almost every week. If you need help, reach out. There are so many resources. The staff helps you and even your children. Odyssey made sure we ate every Wednesday. I loved being a part of this journey. Best of luck, Odyssey Class of 2021! **(Ashley Lee)**



Hello, sisters and brothers. Welcome to the Odyssey family. Let me just tell you how excited I am for you to be here sitting on your chair, reading the Oracle. In this classroom you will experience a unique warmth that goes beyond what you have

ever experienced in other academic institutions. Emily and her staff are amazing; don't miss this great opportunity and take a handful of what's already yours! If you find yourself struggling with homework, no worries, come to tutoring Monday and Tuesday nights. I highly recommend the tutoring class: it is the hand that will bring you to the surface if you are stuck or behind on any assignment. Without any further ado, enjoy every moment and everything Odyssey has for you!

(Eliazar Martínez-Munguia)



I would like you to know that this is one of the best places to be right now. One of the biggest things is that you should not underestimate your classmates, Ms. Emily, Kevin, and all the others you will meet and get help from through your journey in this

program. You need to be open-minded; you need to ask for help. These are the most open-minded, non-judgmental people you could meet, and that's the way they will make you feel. I hope that you open up and give this program a chance. If you do, I promise the results will be life-changing, and you won't have any regrets. The only regret is to not take 100% full advantage of this program.

(Ashton McDonald)





Welcome to Odyssey! You have just entered the safest place on earth! This is a place where you won't feel embarrassment, judgment, or shame. All those feelings are replaced with encouragement and confidence, and you find yourself believing

in yourself again. I want you to step out of your comfort zone and speak up in class so you can absorb all this positivity. Read as much as you can out loud to the class. Allow yourself to become Odyssey. Don't be afraid of tutoring like I was. I quickly discovered how tutoring made homework easier, and I finished it in much less time than if I had tried to tackle the homework by myself. The tutors are incredible people as well who participate in some cool things like the Moth.

Odyssey is amazing. The syllabus is inspiring and motivating, and Emily and Kevin are incredibly supportive and understanding. Just come to class. It is going to change your life. **(Krista Mellott)**



Hello, you guys. If you are reading this, you are truly blessed. The Odyssey program is a great place to be if you are serious about going somewhere in life, or if you are just trying to turn your life around. The people in this program really care about

you, and they are willing to do whatever it takes in order to help you succeed as long as it's reasonable.

During my time in the Odyssey program I really enjoyed myself. I learned so many things that I really didn't pay attention to in class as a teenager. It's just so nice to be able to have people that put their all into helping you learn and follow your dreams.

It was so unfortunate that my class was the class who had to go through COVID-19 while attending the program. That didn't stop Emily, Kevin, and the rest of the great staff from still reaching out to us and making sure that

we were still learning. They also made sure that we had all the resources we needed in order to get through those tough times. Out of my thirty-one years of living, I've never seen such a great program as The Odyssey Program. I just want to thank everyone that made this great program what it is today. I also want to let you guys know that anything is possible if you've made it this far. So, get focused, stay motivated, and enjoy your time as an Odyssey student because it was one of the greatest experiences I've had in my life. These people aren't just professors and classmates; they become more like family as you all continue your journey together. I wish you all the best of luck, and I hope your experience will be as enjoyable as mine was. **(Timothy Mosley)**



A year ago, I was reading similar letters as you are, and here I am writing it. It is natural to be nervous; I was too. I had to give myself a pep talk the entire day to calm my nerves. It didn't help that I arrived late, so imagine how awkward I felt. All of that

will disappear, and you'll feel at home. You'll make friends and probably end up sitting next to the same person for the rest of the year. You'll probably have to step out of your comfort zone many times, but in the end, it will all be worth it. **(Loché Mothoa)**





Odyssey was an amazing place: the people, the food, the environment, the love, the laughs. You could feel the spirit of happiness, the spirit of excitement to learn.

You won't be disappointed here. Emily will never let you down. She's here to build you up. **(Natia Saffold)**



First and foremost, I know this is nerve-racking, but I promise you, this is all worth it. The relationships that you make are lifelong.

The support system is unbelievable. Lastly, YOU CANNOT GIVE UP! **(Shiloh Simonsen)**



Get ready because there is going to be a great change in you. You will improve in all aspects of your life, you will open your mind, and you will realize that a change of mind, combined with action on your part, will take you to where you want to go.

But you have to try hard because nothing comes by magic. If you do that, you will feel wonderful.

For now, I can tell you that you were already greatly blessed by being accepted to start this magnificent Odyssey; you will discover the rest. **(Carmen Tinajero)**



The Odyssey Program is a journey and a life changer. This is a place where you meet and greet people of different races, backgrounds, and cultures, people who you will come to know, in a place where you can break free of your shell and reinvent yourself, a place



where you start as strangers and become part of a great family.

The Odyssey Program has great staff members, people who are willing to go the extra mile to make you as comfortable as possible. The awesome woman you will come to know as your second mom is Emily Auerbach. The man who will ensure you have all you need to complete your homework is "Big Daddy" Kevin Mullen.

I can't forget the staff members at Odyssey Junior who ensure there is always a place your child can go to have fun while learning so you can learn with peace of mind, knowing your kids are in good hands, I feel so guilty about the Odyssey Junior staff having all those kids. You guys are awesome. Keep strong, and know I love you guys.

Just remember once you start the Odyssey Program, you're a member of this great family. No matter how difficult it might seem going through life, just remember that there is a calm after every storm. **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**

**For the Class of 2021: The Latest Gifts**

Hey you, you there, you, I'm talking to you.
The one whose paper is a little tattered,
or glass is a little cracked, chipped, or even shattered.
But yet, you press on.
And despite the way you might feel,
if you came here to sit tight, be quiet, or just chill,
I'm sorry to say, but this ride, my friend, just ain't that!
Today you are the gift that keeps on giving,
the pleasant treat that's ever worth revealing.
Take full advantage of this re-gifting and re-wrapping, be inspired too,
because what you might discover just might surprise you.
The Odyssey is much like the morning dew, or like when God molded the human flesh,
Allow this experience to shift, shape, and mold you, too.
You, the latest gifts packaged with Rubies, Diamonds, Gold, and Pearls,
to be wonderfully discovered and presented to the world.
It is known that the pressures of life can grow devastatingly hot,
or maybe the snares of fear and depression can convince that all is for naught.
I know this stench well, both ruthless while unseen,
My class and myself lived through the pandemic of COVID-19.
You are a part of a crew that chose to sail with you,
so lean into the people who know what you're going through,
when those dastardly horrific waves look to overtake you. **(Ron Burford)**



REFLECTIONS ON READING



I believe reading is essential. I struggle with reading as far as doing it and having the patience. I'm a great reader even though I didn't start to read until I was in the second grade. I'm happy to say that my daughter has caught up before entering second grade. She can be better, and I can do better as far as helping her and myself goes. Odyssey makes you read whether you like to or not. That's mainly what the course is about, and that's why I jumped on board—to give me that push to read and write. I wanted to explore the other greater side of me. I believe reading contributes to success. . . .
(Arkeia Cameron)

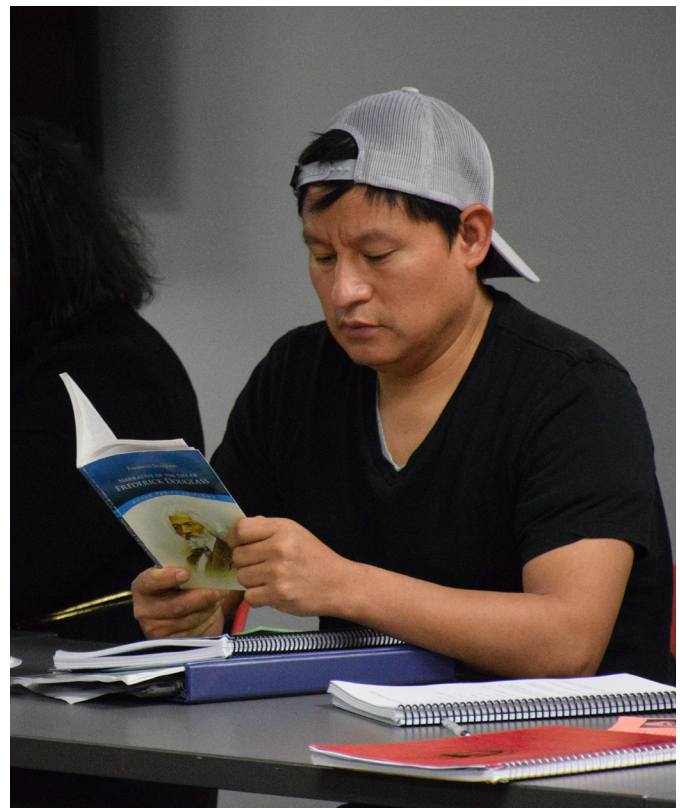
Honestly, I believe reading is very, very important. Growing up in Chicago, I found school was different, and in my family life, nobody really sat down with me to be fluent in reading. This is why I have trouble today. I stumble on so many words that I should know as an adult. When I was growing up, my mom was busy and really didn't have much time because she was always at work.

Then moving to Wisconsin honestly changed my life because there are so many resources here that will help you. Now, being in Odyssey, I read way more and try to understand what I am reading. I am also reading more at home with Kingston so he does not have to face the same struggle I've been through growing up. **(Ashley Lee)**

I believe reading is the foundation for all aspects of education, from early childhood all the way to our adulthood. Learning to enjoy reading makes it easier to learn in general.

For me, it has been very time-consuming to read in English for the last seven months in Odyssey because not only do I have to look up the definitions of words but also to read and reread over and over in order for me to understand what the writer is saying. On top of that is the struggle to read out loud in English. I feel uncomfortable every time I stumble on words.

For me, being in Odyssey has been a challenging task—pushing myself to get better even when I get behind. But now I have the habit of reading. I have a craving for letters and words, so to speak, so my plan is to continue feeding my hunger. Someday I will be able to fluently read and understand in English. **(Eliazar Martinez-Munguia)**



Reading has changed my life. It started when I was in jail, and I often spent time reading different fictional novels that helped me escape the world I was living in. I began to notice that each character who I read about had something about their story/personality that could be applied to the understanding of people. The more that I can understand one's story, the more often I am able to have compassion and empathy for their situations rather than judgment.

Odyssey has opened me up to many different books that I normally wouldn't choose. I have discovered so many other authors and types of literature that I didn't think I would understand before. I feel like they have pushed me out of my comfort zone and given me the tools that I need to challenge myself with more difficult texts and how to analyze them to a point where I can understand them. I do believe that the American dream begins with literacy and education. **(Krista Mellott)**

As long as I can remember, I've always had a love for reading. I received a certificate in the first grade for "literature." But that love for reading gradually disappeared. Now, being part of the Odyssey Project, I can feel that love I once had for reading creeping back in.

I really hope that my children (that I may have one day) will have a love for reading. Reading opens up a whole new world. **(Loché Mothoa)**

I now read to understand and actually like that I'm reading. I don't read just to pass a test or to write a paper any longer. I read and get inspiration for the writings. **(Moriah Parker)**

I feel as though reading is very important. I'm pretty sure we all have heard of the saying that reading is fundamental. When you read, you feel focused; you feel like you're able to read anything and to better understand whatever you read. A lot of people can teach and tell you what they know, but nine times out of ten they're telling it from their point of view. It's better for you to read it and teach yourself. There's a lot of stuff in fine print that could be super important. **(Natia Saffold)**

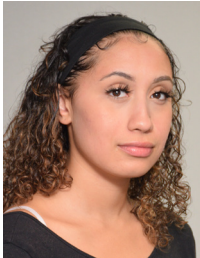


I always enjoyed reading when I was younger. It was a way of me leaving the real world and all its problems behind to go to a fantasy realm. I could just lose myself and be whoever or whatever I wanted to be. But nowadays I hardly have the time of day to myself because I am a parent, work two jobs, and other stuff that makes it hard to get myself back into reading. But I do encourage my sons to read as much as possible and whenever. I let them know reading will open up a whole new door geared towards their imagination and also give them some insights as to what type of career they may want to pursue when they get older. Being literate can lead to a whole new world filled with their dreams coming through. **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**



IMAGINING CHARITABLE FOUNDATIONS

Odyssey students were asked to imagine a foundation in their name if they became successful entrepreneurs with millions to donate to charitable causes.



The Aerial Bailey Foundation

If I had a foundation, I would use it for a couple different things.

I would want my foundation to be a safe space for troubled youths/teens, a place they can get help with their homework,

talk to somebody about a problem they may be experiencing, and a place that allows them to have structured fun.

I would also love to have a mentorship program for kids whose dad isn't present or mom isn't always available so they have a positive role model to look up to and guide them on the right path. People don't understand how important a positive influence is in a child's life, especially a male, if the father is absent. Little boys—especially black boys—need that. They need a male to look up to so they know how to act as an upstanding young man and how to treat others.

In addition, I would like to start a program for people who are struggling with finding housing. In Madison, housing is so expensive and hard to get if you have a criminal record or bad credit/rental history. I want the housing program to act as a second chance. There's no reason for people to be homeless, especially those with kids. Certain criteria would need to be met to qualify: they would have to show they're actively trying by keeping a job for a certain period of time and show proof that they're trying to be a contributing, positive influence in the community (enrolling in school, volunteer work, actively working, etc.). I think in the housing program, I would charge a super low rent to begin with and have it increase monthly. This would give people a chance to get

on their feet and live comfortably, but it would also make them have to be responsible to keep up with the higher payments. First month's rent would be like \$200-350, then increase it by \$50-\$100 monthly until I reached the amount of standard rent.

Lastly, I want the foundation to have a program in it that teaches one how to build credit, how to maintain it, and proper money management/risk protection. In the African American community, this information is lacked hugely! It's not taught enough or taken seriously enough until it's too late. Then people have to play catch up after they've ruined their credit due to ignorance. I want my foundation to make a difference in people's lives and for them to leave better than they came.



The Arkeia Cameron Foundation

The Arkeia Cameron Foundation would be founded on love and strength through many trying times. Since elementary school, I've worked with people with developmental disabilities. Soon

after high school, I dreamed of having a gym or building specifically dedicated to individuals who need more help than the average individuals. Here at the Kia Foundation we donate supplies to private facilities as well as work closely with low-income families to keep up with activities of daily living. We provide swings, chairs, and pretty much anything a facility or family needs to keep one comforted through life. In a world full of discrimination against color, sexuality, and disabilities, the main goal of our foundation is to allow people to live comfortably without struggles.



The Ashley Lee Families of America (FOA) Foundation

My foundation would help all families from different backgrounds, races, ethnicities, etc. to make sure each child in the household has resources.

The foundation would provide books, sports, scholarships, food—really, anything you can think of. This foundation would make families strong and help speak up when things are not going so well. There would be a lot of workshops and seminars to help communities come together. The reason I say this is because there are a lot of broken families. Some families do not like asking for help, but if we all come together as one, kids/children would have better lives and have more room for success.



The Loché Mothoa “I Can” Foundation.

My foundation would support abused women and children, single moms, and multiracial families of underprivileged backgrounds.

It’s always been a passion of mine. So many times, all you hear is “I Can’t.” The “I Can” Foundation will provide resources so that “I Can’t” can become an “I Can.” It will vary from providing shelter, help with housing, or basic needs. A little goes a long way.



The Moriah Parker Foundation

The Parker Foundation would fund after-school programs or summer camps to find what students are passionate about. So often, students are only subjected to math, English, reading, and tests.

The Parker Foundation hires artists and musicians to promote self-expression, social expression, and learning in hopes to help “at risk” students channel energy in positive places.



The Natia Saffold K.I.N. Foundation

I would start some kind of foundation for abandoned kids, homeless children, hungry children, abused kids, anything I could do to support these babies

and kids out here who are not getting the help they need to survive. I would probably call in the KIN Foundation, for Kids in Need.



The Carmen Tinajero Foundation

My foundation is going to be directed at improving the quality life of people living in rural communities. I will implement schools and give scholarships for students, especially for children,

so that no one is left without learning to read and write. Also, I will find sources of work for parents so they can have financial solvency and can send their children to school.



The O’Shane Wilmoth Foundation

I would open a homeless foundation where people can get a meal, a shower, and a place to lay their heads at night. I would have a job search center there and housing assistance for

persons trying to get a place to stay apart from the shelter. I would do this because where I’m coming from (Jamaica), a lot of unfortunate persons who became homeless are treated like dirt and abused in so many ways. It makes me sick to my stomach to see all that, and I would love to see a change. If I can start that change I sure will.

JEROME'S CREATIVE CORNER

Don't let Corona beat you in NO CAPACITY
 Not mentally
 Not physically
 Get up and get yourself together in the best way possible
 It ain't never too late
 Get up and get with it



I am the kid you didn't see.
 Walking hallways seemed like walking death row,
 Never knowing if today was a day I'd have to know
 Parts of a life I didn't have to grow.

I am the kid you didn't see.
 As you walked into the store,
 I asked for some change,
 The shame on my face
 Plain to see.

I am the kid you didn't see,
 When neighbors carried in groceries.
 I asked to help and got thanked tremendously.
 One day I grew so tall, now all can see.



This life of mine ain't never been no crystal stair,
 but I never met another man I wanted to be.
 I love the man I am and who I am growing daily to be.
 God bless anyone who was thought to be buried.
 They didn't know you were the seed.



I am a palm tree.
 I stand tall for all to see.

So many think to climb
 Yet I don't come with a ladder
 Though many have thought my back
 Would work just fine.

During storms you'd think it was my favorite song
 'Cause it's the only time my trunk bends and grows
 But my pride is to know I refuse to be broken.

PUSHING THROUGH A PANDEMIC



As a school class assignment, I have been asked how I am doing right now as I am living through the era of the world's history involving the pandemic called Covid-19. We as a people in the US have been asked, or rather, ordered by martial law, to socially

distance ourselves from other people, meaning the government has ordered a vast majority of businesses to close their doors. People are actually losing wages and can possibly become homeless. To make matters even worse, working parents who may still be allowed to work are forced to choose to stay home because schools, childcare centers, and social programming activities are all canceled. Man, it really is hard out here.

So, how am I doing? Truthfully, I can't even figure out how to transition during this writing assignment, let alone try and muster up some deeply vivid language to capture my reader. I may not struggle with the few things I just mentioned in the previous paragraph, but I am having some heavy emotional ones. I am more aware now than I ever was that anxiety and depression are real. I can sense racing thoughts and a confused clouded mind; I am often experiencing sleepiness and some nights I am not sleeping. I am not motivated to get anything done and will push things off to another day; I don't want to be seen by other people because it looks to me like I gained some more weight, and I can't go and get my hair cut to look nicer. When I hear that someone I know has done something great, I get this sense of sadness that washes over me even when I am genuinely wanting to be happy for them. Finally, worst of all, I hear and experience these sensations that come over me and tell me to just give up and die.

Now, you don't have to be afraid for me. I know this is hard to hear, but it's the truth. I am

trusting those of you who are in my circle with this information will not worry about me but will understand me. The courage it took to share this information was immense. I erased and retyped, stopped and stared at the screen. My mind was flooded with thoughts of everyone else's reactions or responses when they read this. Would their view of me change? Would I cause them another great fear with everything else that's happening in the world? Would people rattle me every day at all different times of the day with phone calls to check up on me? And I just can't answer these questions. What I can say is that I choose not to mask the truths about me anymore, to not live shamefully. I choose to live and not die.

I am blessed and I am thriving. I actually like having the time off, prioritizing rest, and having time to learn good health and hygiene. I'm figuring out what is important in life and learning to prioritize a life balance; I'm learning how to be okay with myself and not always have to be validated by other people. I finally get to just be, to just exist. I have spent so much time in the last thirteen straight years after my mother passed away working hard to try and figure out my life and to impress the people in this community. I've been unconsciously traumatized of being fired from my job if I wasn't good enough at it, working multiple jobs because I wasn't making enough money to pay my bills, trying to be a positive black male role model, and battling the social constructs of overall working twice as hard to prove I am half as good. And that's not even the half of it.

But, despite it all, I have to say it is nice to get off this ride for a while. I know there are major changes happening around the world right now, not only for people but for nature as well, thanks to the coronavirus. Since the pandemic took over the world, everything has stopped. For thousands of people, this was the last stop. **(Ron Burford)**



During this trying time, I've learned that I need to mature my mind more and make better choices. The choices you make in the past contribute to the future. As far as finances and just being prepared for a crisis go, there are just a few ways I slacked in my past life. Now that's affecting me and my two children. We are behind on bills and figuring out household and eating needs for whatever's next to come.

If things were to take a much worse turn, there are many Americans and people all over the world who aren't prepared. No matter if something's predictable or not, at a certain point in adulthood you should have matured enough to know preparedness for crisis in any form. I'm very thankful for good people: family, friends, and neighbors. I believe in good and that life will not always treat you how you prepare or love. Life can be unfair!

Anxiety has been a big role-player in my life, and when tragedy strikes, anxiety does big time. I try not to worry, but when you not only have yourself to worry about but also little people, then you sometimes begin to feel hopeless knowing you can't prevent anything from happening that is to be. **(Arkeia Cameron)**



Without any presumption, I feel fortunate to say that I have been okay during this time. Although I miss tutoring class and Odyssey class on Wednesday evenings, having two jobs and going to Odyssey at the same time has been wearing me out, physically speaking. I, myself, find this time very much needed to slow down my race. I have been able to connect with myself truly—reading, listening to music, and sleeping for 7-8 hours straight makes me feel like I am alive again. It might sound boring to some of you, but for me, it has been a relaxing time.

Please don't get me wrong—I'm not saying that all of this makes me happy. I wish the pandemic didn't ever, ever happen in the first place. It hurts me to see people suffering and dying from any illness already. At times like this I feel trapped, without a certain future.

The coronavirus successfully stopped my life and the whole world . . . I take this stop as an opportunity to let go of the past and live in the here and now. I choose faith instead of fear and hope instead of depression. I don't want to go through a dying experience in order for me to start living. I choose to drop the heavy load that I have been carrying—the load of self-doubt, the load of self-criticism, the load of self-blame, and any other negative load. Far from lifting myself up, I have been beating myself up for mistakes I did in the past. At this stop I choose to finish the Odyssey program strong because it is a one-time life experience worth living one hundred per cent.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the people who are helping. Doctors, nurses . . . thanks for saving people from the lethal pandemic. **(Eliazar Martinez-Munguia)**





I just want to say, kind of corroborating what Ron said, it's so hard to put yourself in a good mental space and be motivated. I'm usually a motivated person, and this is so hard. Shout out to everyone: it's hard to stay focused, and I'm so glad we all get to see each other; this helps. But this has affected my life in so many ways, obviously, with kids and everything. It's just been a struggle trying to find that motivation. I see gas station workers and appreciate them: thank you for coming into work. I find myself just appreciating people more.

(Tina Martinez in class)



This pandemic that is raging the world right now has put us into this bizarre new territory that I never expected to explore. When they started talking about it in China around the end of February, it was concerning, but my thoughts were elsewhere. My son

had crashed on his bike and fractured his skull. This event triggered what has become my quarantine time. My son and I were home while he was healing, and just when they cleared him to go back to school, the schools closed due to the virus.

Then the worrying began about what was happening, the schools closing, restaurants closing, my brother and his apocalypse theories (seriously), my sister and her fears of living with our parents and infecting them, do we have enough supplies, money etc. This was the week that we inventoried everything we had and made lists of the essentials. Then we experienced the grocery store in a way like never before: people panic-buying, signs to indicate how to get into the line to check out, the stores running out of hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes, and people hoarding toilet paper. It was insane!

Then, my sister had an exposure to the virus, and she needed to be quarantined from my parents. So naturally, I panicked and sent my dad to his camper up north. I spent two days disinfecting my mom's house, made both my parents call in to work, and I kidnapped my sister (not seriously, she came willingly) and brought her to my house where she could await her test results. Then our dog died; she was old, but she chose a bad time to go. Our levels of stress were high until my sister's test came back negative, for now.

With my family settling into the quarantine, I thought I would give home-schooling a try. This is not going as well as I had hoped; we have had like three classes in two weeks. I feel tired, irritable, unmotivated, and stressed. I had to stop watching the news, stop listening to Trump's ridiculous speeches, and stop scrolling Facebook because my anxiety would just skyrocket.

I tend to believe that life is full of balance, for life is death, for bad there is good. So, I am going to attempt to see the positives that have come out this situation. I started a garden. That's it; everything else sucks. **(Krista Mellott)**





The coronavirus has affected me greatly. Due to this virus, I have been laid off of work unexpectedly. I've been trying to contact the unemployment office but to no avail. This pandemic is affecting so many people at once that it's hard to even get the right resources. I have been calling around to find work, but everyone is saying they're not hiring now due to the coronavirus. Luckily, I've been able to reach the food share program, and they've giving me my stamps back.

My girlfriend runs her own daycare at home, but I'm not sure how long we can last off just that. I have to admit, she's doing her best in these hard times and I appreciate it all, but her daycare kids are running me crazy. I love kids, but being around crying, spoiled daycare kids all day can be difficult. I truly don't see how she does it, but she's a strong woman. I had plans on going to Chicago to visit my family before all this happened, but now I have to place those plans on hold for a while.

My kids have been out of school since forever it seems like. I usually get them every other weekend, but I've been trying to get them for a week straight now that I am not working. I have to try to homeschool them for the time being because their mother doesn't do so herself, and I don't want them to get too far behind.

People have been going crazy: people have been letting this pandemic affect their judgement a little too much. For instance, people have been buying up all the tissue and other essentials

such as food, not even thinking about the next person or family. This just goes to show you that it's a "dog eat dog world" out here. In the middle of a crisis, people still only care about themselves and their loved ones, and they forget everyone else and their families. It's sad to say, but that's just how the world we live in operates. I know people that are not even taking the stay home orders seriously. It's a shame how some people think everything is a joke until it happens to them or someone they love.

All in all, I just hope and pray that all of this ends soon so that we can go back to our normal lives. I give my deepest regards to those that have been infected with the virus. I hope they and their loved ones can find a way to keep fighting and not let this virus get the best of them. For everyone else out there, stay safe, and stay home as much as possible. I am praying that we all get through this as quickly as possible and stay as safe as we can.

(Timothy Mosley)





I remember when I was younger my mom would always tell me, “You better finish your chores; the outside won’t run away.” Look at us now. The outside is gone!

This pandemic is... this pandemic has me... I don’t even know at this point what or how I’m feeling about it. I was one of the “unlucky” few whose workplaces closed. My last work day was March 13th, so I’ve been at this longer. In the beginning, I was up every day as if I’d go to work. I would do one load of laundry every day and pack it away immediately. Yes, that’s a big deal because normally it takes me 3-5 business days to pack it away.

The second week, I was in a panic because now the country was going into an official lockdown. I was stressing about how I was going to pay my bills, and my migraines started kicking in again... Oh, hi there, friend, welcome back! I also started baking and cooking more than usual.

Ugh, I don’t know who is constantly leaving me dirty dishes. Oh, wait, it’s me. It could only be me, since I’m by myself. Week... actually, I have no idea which week I’m in right now, I have no idea what day it is, and I keep losing my phone while it’s hidden in plain sight. I have zero motivation for anything. I haven’t watched the news but I don’t watch news in general since I’ve noticed it’s always just negative things. I don’t see the point in being reminded of all the negativity.

Now, I’m in a state of numbness. I’ve accepted the fact that this is my life right now. I’m living in a movie. I started off fighting for survival, and now I’m just walking around like a zombie. And by zombie, I mean The Walking Dead zombies, not those ones in Dawn of the Dead because those zombies run full-speed. I’m writing this while waiting for my muffins in the oven; turns out, my oven stopped working for some unknown reason given the fact that I only baked yesterday, or



maybe it was a couple of days ago, or was it a week ago? I don’t recall. At this point, only God can help me!

I’ve been binge-watching Bones. There’s twelve seasons and I’m on season ten now. Clearly, I have time since I don’t really sleep anyways. Basically, I’m a self-proclaimed forensic anthropologist since I’ve been watching Bones for ten seasons.

I still remain grateful. I’m grateful that I’m alive and well despite everything that is going on. I’m grateful for the Odyssey Class of 2020, Emily, and everyone involved. I don’t think I would be this at ease facing a pandemic all by myself. I cannot wait to tell my kids about this pandemic the same way old people tell us how they had to cross mountains and rivers to get to school. I’ll tell them, “if I could graduate during a global pandemic, you have no excuse.” (**Loché Mothoa**)



I’ve been struggling with getting things done as well. Since I stopped working, it has been difficult to move and be productive. Being in the house hurts me being productive. Meeting with you all via internet keeps me moving forward. This does help. We’re all going towards the same goal. (**Moriah Parker in class**)



The way I was affected by Covid-19 is how it closed all of our children's schools. I depend on my son to go to school every day just so I can go to work. So, it was hard for me to juggle that and juggle going to work and showing up on time. At first, I wasn't even given

an opportunity to work from home, so my dad was helping me as much as he could.

My dad can only do so much, though, so I started seeking other options from my job. My job gave me the hardest time! I would try to seek clarity from management, and I would just get disrespected and just put off like my situation wasn't important at all. I was so irritated that I got to a point where I told my dad, "F**k it, I'm done, I want to quit!" I was over it. My dad taught me how to not give up and take control. I had to go over my manager's head to her manager's boss! Crazy, right? I finally got clarity, instantly! Now I can work from home because I expressed myself to someone about how this virus was affecting me.

Covid-19 taught me how to have a voice! Don't settle and don't take people's s**t, especially when they know they're wrong! Don't let this virus take you down. Learn from it, and make something good of it! **(Natia Saffold)**



How this pandemic is affecting me and my family...

For starters, I haven't held my sons since March 15th. By far, that's the hardest part to come to grips with. The entire NBA season being cancelled left me unemployed and without a means to provide in a new home I was just starting to feel comfortable in and making myself at home. I am able to Facetime



with my sons, which eases the pain I feel from not being able to be there with them during this crazy and chaotic moment in our lives and history of Earth.

To be completely honest, I pray endlessly for confidence and courage to act and move accordingly despite the crippling fear that comes with the unbelievable madness that is our everyday lives now.

I recall the level of excitement and pure joy I once felt to be a part of an amazing program such as Odyssey, knowing firsthand from friends of mine who are alums that I can transform my life by simply showing up each class, open and willing to learn and grow in ways I never thought possible.

This pandemic has forced all of my siblings and parents into unemployment, and our kids are left to try supplementing in-class instruction with either virtual classes or parents attempting to homeschool their kids.

I have never, in my entire life, allowed myself to let fear find a home in me, but I have to say I am honestly afraid for my family and the world we live in. **(Jerome Sanders)**



I don't know where to start because there are many ways this pandemic is affecting me and my family. One thing is that my mind doesn't want to stop thinking about all this, and that is getting me crazy.

The fact that we don't know what to expect or what is going to happen with our health is really scary. One thing that is really bad is to feel this panic to go outside to buy food.

Another way that this pandemic is affecting us is that my husband lost his job. On one hand, that keeps me calm because he is no longer exposing himself, but on the economic side I don't know what will happen. For now, I try not to think about it because I think the most important thing is our health.

As we all know, the virus is everywhere in the world. I am very concerned about my parents living in Mexico; they are alone because all of their children are here in Wisconsin. I ask God to take care of them and that I can see them again soon.

When I feel a little calmer, I think that this is like a break that life is giving us to think on how we have been living so far. We think about the things that we can do but do not do because we left them for tomorrow, when the truth is that we don't know if there is going to be a tomorrow. We have to take advantage of today. I think this is a great lesson that life is giving us, and we have to learn a lot from it. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

POEMS FOR THE TIMES

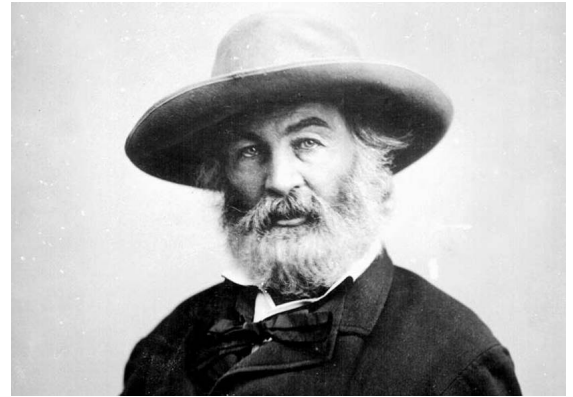
From Song of Myself by Walt Whitman

With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,
I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play marches
for conquer'd and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?
I also say it is good to fall, battles are lost in the same spirit
in which they are won.

I beat and pound for the dead,
I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for
them.

Vivas for those who have fail'd!
And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!
And to those themselves who sank in the sea!
And to all generals who lost engagements, and all overcome heroes!
And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes known!



"WILD GEESSE" BY MARY OLIVER

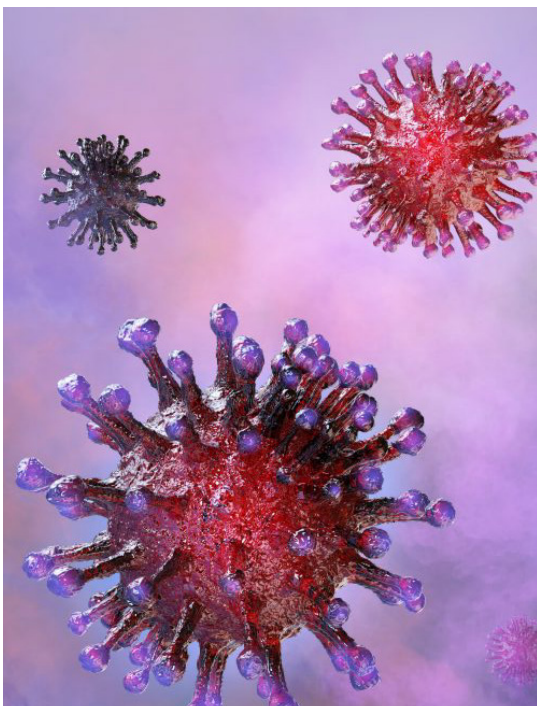
You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.



From “MARY OLIVER FOR CORONA TIMES” BY ADRIE KUSSEROW

(Thoughts after the poem WILD GEESE)

You do not have to become totally zen,
 You do not have to use this isolation to make your marriage better,
 your body slimmer, your children more creative.
 You do not have to “maximize its benefits”
 By using this time to work even more,
 write the bestselling Corona Diaries,
 Or preach the gospel of ZOOM.
 You only have to let the soft animal of your body unlearn
 everything capitalism has taught you,
 (That you are nothing if not productive,
 That consumption equals happiness,
 That the most important unit is the single self.
 That you are at your best when you resemble an efficient machine).
 Tell me about your fictions, the ones you’ve been sold,
 the ones you sheepishly sell others,
 and I will tell you mine.
 Meanwhile the world as we know it is crumbling.
 Meanwhile the virus is moving over the hills,
 suburbs, cities, farms and trailer parks.
 Meanwhile The News barks at you, harsh and addicting,
 Until the push of the remote leaves a dead quiet behind,
 a loneliness that hums as the heart anchors. . . .



Even if your life looks nothing like the Sabbath,
 Your stress boa-constricting your chest.
 Know that your antsy kids, your terror,
 your shifting moods . . . have every right to be here,
 And are no less sacred than a yoga class.
 Whoever you are, no matter how broken,
 the world still has a place for you, calls to you over and over
 announcing your place as legit, as forgiven,
 even if you fail and fail and fail again.
 remind yourself over and over,
 all the swells and storms that run through your long tired body
 all have their place here, now in this world.
 It is your birthright to be held
 deeply, warmly in the family of things,
 not one cell left in the cold.