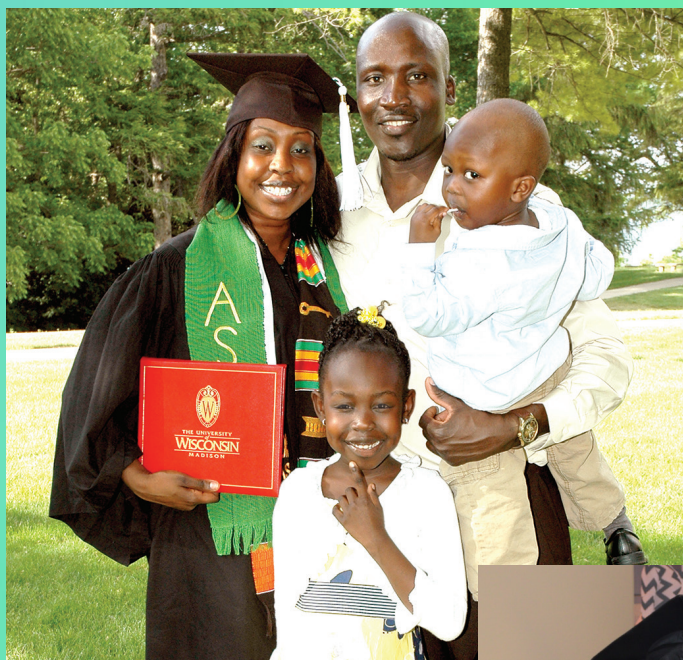


YEAR 18, ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER 2, 2020

ODYSSEY ORACLE

WELCOME, CLASS OF 2021!



Contents

Graduates	1
From the Class of 2020	6
Pushing through a Pandemic.....	11
Alumni Corner	18
Special Odyssey Moments.....	21

Emily Auerbach, Co-Director/Founder; Oracle Editor
Kevin Mullen, Co-Director
Emily Azad, Program Manager
Christina DeMars, Coordinator
Beth McMahon, Oracle Designer

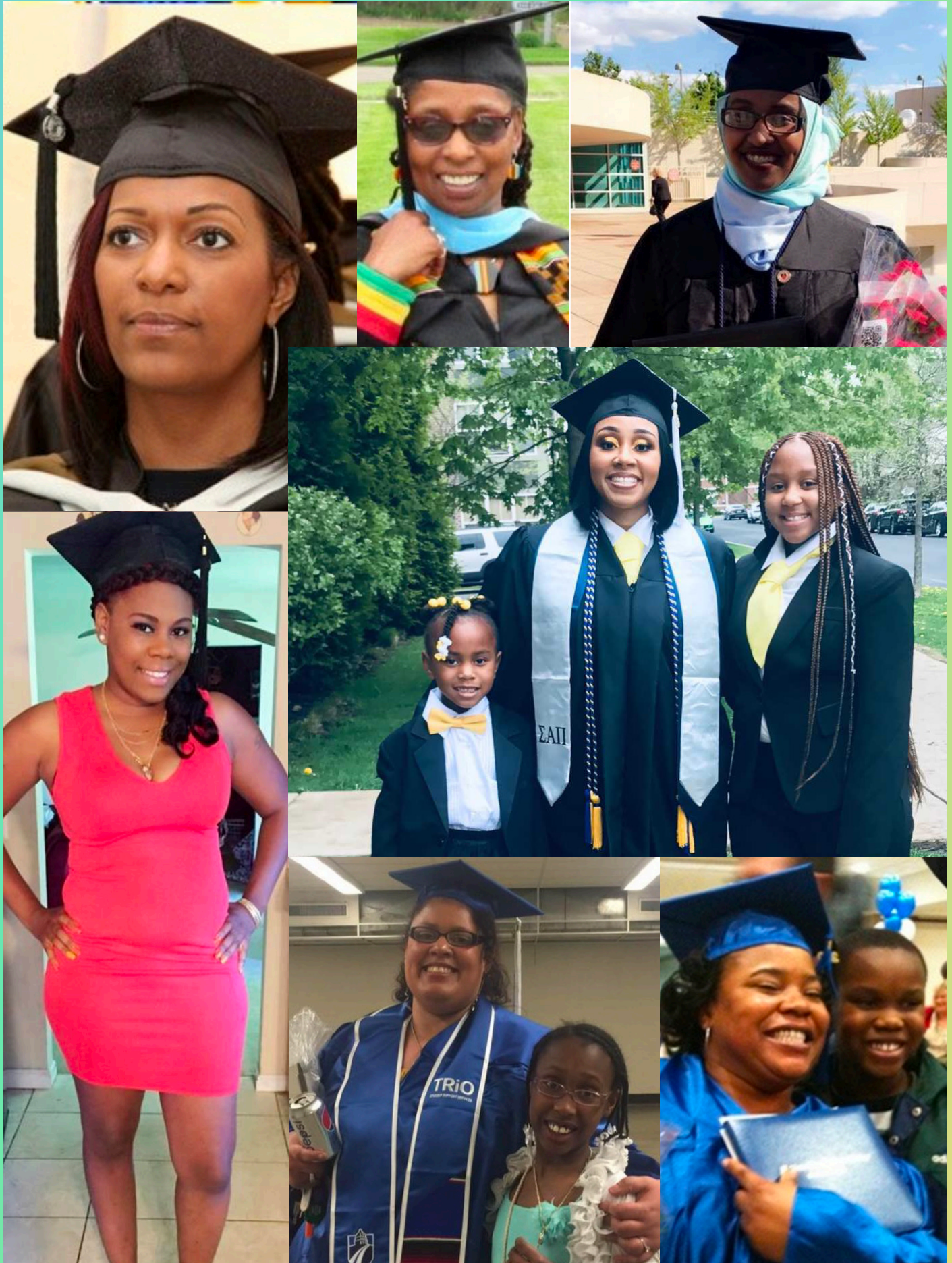
emily.auerbach@wisc.edu
kevin.mullen@wisc.edu
emily.azad@wisc.edu
christina.demars@wisc.edu

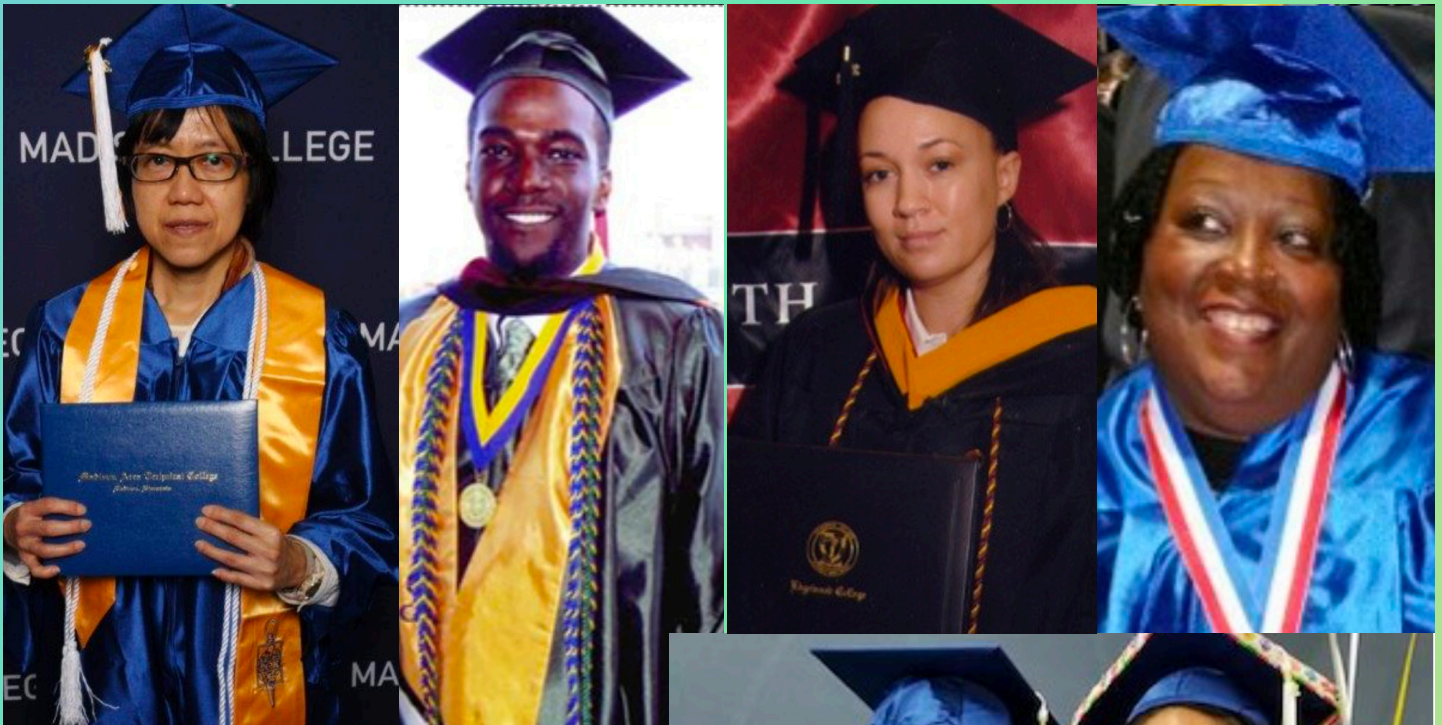
608-712-6321
608-572-6730
608-262-0763
608-262-3885

www.odyssey.wisc.edu









Pictured on pp. 1-5 are some of our many Odyssey graduates who have earned associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees from Madison College, UW-Madison, Edgewood, and other schools: Josephine Lorya '08; Mustafa Saed, Shaimaa Ahmed, and Umaina Saed '16; Brian Benford '07; Keena Atkinson '10; Shaquida Johnson '12; Marisela Tellez-Giron '16; Mary Wells '07; Luci Chikowero '14; Sherri Bester '08; Michael Lozano '11; Adrian Molitor '18; Tom Gardner '08; Lavern Brown '09; Dauntrea Vance, Odyssey Junior; Kala Taylor '16; Lolita Phillips '13; Sherreallyum Allen '05; James Horton '08 with mom Yasmin Horton '07; Kegan Carter '04; Michelle Brown '05; Molinda Henry '07; Zeynab Ahmed '14; Shirley Norman '04; Dominique Christian '09; Sharisse Hancock '13; Shanita Lawrence '09; Milli Lau '14; Cameron Daniels '07; Tineisha Scott '04; Edwina Robinson '11; Sahira Rocillo '14 and Mai Neng Thao '16; China Moon Crowell '13 and Yolanda Cunningham '12



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)**



PUSHING THROUGH A PANDEMIC

WRITTEN FOR A VIRTUAL CLASS, APRIL 2020



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 programing 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 there 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)**

ALUMNI CORNER

DON'T QUIT

BY JOE ROBINSON '04

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

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

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

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

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

When you feel as if you're not getting anything out of a particular subject, don't quit. When people tell you you are wasting your time, don't quit. When your car breaks down, and it's twenty below outside, and the only way to get here is on the city bus, don't quit. When your spouse is complaining that your five children are driving her crazy every Wednesday night, don't quit. When one of your classmates makes you feel stupid for voicing your opinion, don't quit. When your boyfriend or girlfriend accuses you of cheating on them because you had to turn your cell phone off during class, don't quit.

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

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



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



Joe Robinson with his family

WE ATE DOG FOOD

BY ALICE MCDANIEL '09

WRITTEN FOR KEVIN MULLEN'S
ODYSSEY ALUMNI COMPOSITION CLASS



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We ate dog food, but we were rich.

ODYSSEY POEM

BY ANTHONY JEFFERSON '17

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

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

Sentence by sentence, we
forge a new tale.



SPECIAL ODYSSEY MOMENTS



Odyssey Project receives award at Chancellor Becky Blank's house; Teresa Tellez-Giron '04 receives 2014 YWCA Woman of Distinction Award; Stanley Sallay '07 and Tosumba Welch '13 meet *Just Mercy* author Bryan Stevenson; Corey Saffold '06 elected to UW Board of Regents; Class of 2014 students featured on Capital City Hues cover.



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