

YEAR 18, ISSUE 2

SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

# ODYSSEY



# ORACLE

## INTRODUCING THE CLASS OF 2021!



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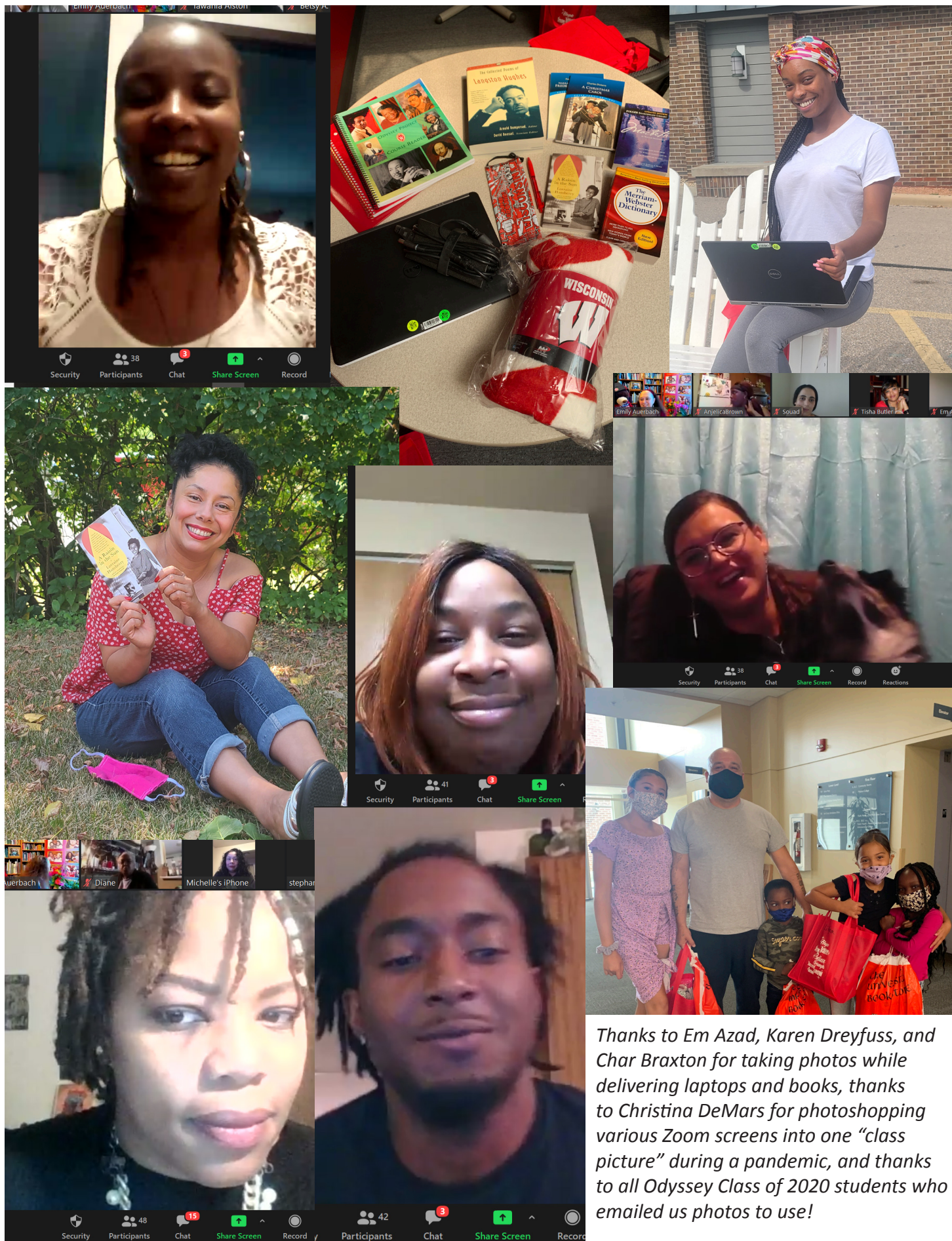
Emily Auerbach, Co-Director/Founder; Oracle Editor  
Kevin Mullen, Co-Director  
Emily Azad, Program Manager  
Christina DeMars, Coordinator  
Beth McMahon, Oracle Designer

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](http://www.odyssey.wisc.edu)





*Thanks to Em Azad, Karen Dreyfuss, and Char Braxton for taking photos while delivering laptops and books, thanks to Christina DeMars for photoshopping various Zoom screens into one “class picture” during a pandemic, and thanks to all Odyssey Class of 2020 students who emailed us photos to use!*



# FEELINGS ON JOINING ODYSSEY

*On a survey and in class, students in the Class of 2021 described how they felt when they learned they had been accepted into the UW Odyssey Project. If we had an “adjective used most often” contest, the two winners would be “excited” and “nervous.”*

I was excited! **(Betsy Alfaro)**

Ecstatic! I’ve been trying to get back into school but just didn’t know where to start. Finding this program and applying and actually getting accepted made me feel like I did something right. I know this program is the one for me! **(Tawania Alston)**

It felt great, and it served as a reminder it’s not too late to start a new adventure. It also came with fear because it’s a new adventure. With this new adventure comes the chance of failure. **(Calvin Balentine)**



I was so excited to hear that I was accepted into the program after applying. I have been wanting to expand my schooling and focus on a degree that can help my career. I am extremely passionate in creating goals for myself and my family. Showing my children that their mother can do something no matter the age makes me proud. Telling my oldest son, who is entering fourth grade, that I was going back to school in September with him was an awesome feeling. **(Sarina Benford)**

I wish at the bottom of my heart to be up to the task. **(Souad Bidar)**

I was happy and nervous at the same time since it was going to be all online this semester. **(Anjelica Brown)**

I felt so accomplished when I got the call that I was accepted into the class. I’ve been wanting to go back to school, but financially I could not afford it. When I found out this was free, I saw it was a great opportunity to start working on what I want so bad. **(Tisha Butler)**

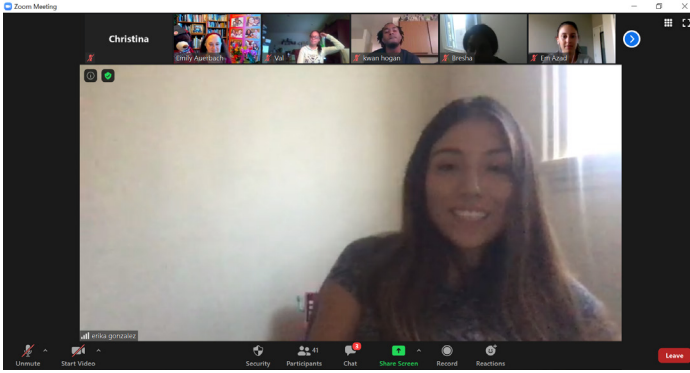
I felt a sense of happiness. I was beyond excited because at that time I was so anxious to start succeeding in life. **(Cashae Davis)**

When Londyn and I got accepted into the UW Odyssey Program, I felt like another door opened into Londyn’s future to help us get where we needed to be. I also felt like it’s going to take me back to a place I miss, and I’m ready now more than ever. **(Paris Foster)**

At first, I was shocked I was selected. Then a thought came to my head saying that maybe I can gain something from this, even if it’s just to read new books. I am excited. **(Fernando Galindo)**

Upon learning I had been accepted into this class, I was excited. Opening that acceptance email and letter, I felt ten feet tall. I felt I was toppling over defeat and delayed steps of furthering my education. Taking MOTIVATIONAL steps towards my goals was now within grasp upon acceptance into the UW Odyssey. I am excited for this adventure. **(Sarah Galinski)**





Ever since I was little, my family would always explain why college was important but never really touched on how expensive it would be or how I would pay for it. I guess they didn't know either, so when I graduated from high school the thought of having to come up with all that money on my own unmotivated me to attend. When I found out I was accepted to the Odyssey program, I was overfilled with joy, excitement, and jitters. I felt like a huge weight of stress was lifted from my back. Having my financial obstacle removed meant I could solely focus on my education with nothing holding me back. **(Erika Gonzalez)**

I was very excited and very thankful that you all were giving me a chance to shine. I thought to myself I'm going to give this class 110%. Thank you again! **(Valeria Gordon)**

I was so excited when I found out I was accepted into the class. My first concern was whether the class online was going to fit my learning style. I also was really concerned about childcare and was going to back out, but I decided to stay in the class as long as I can. **(LaBresha Green)**



I was excited! I was glad to get the chance to get my foot in the door of getting back into school! I know I'm going to have some work to do, but I'm ready for the challenge. **(Kwan Hogan)**



I'm really excited. I haven't taken a class since 2013, and I'm looking forward to meeting everybody and doing the homework and readings. I applied to Odyssey last year, and I felt like another door had closed on me; however, I was called and invited to reapply for this year. That made me very happy. I'm honestly almost certain that I will go ahead and finish my bachelor's degree once and for all after this program. **(Henry Oropeza Irisson)**

I felt a great relief actually. In the midst of so much going on in the world right now, this was relief and hope all wrapped into one for me.... mixed with a large amount of gratitude. I'm nervous but more excited than anything else. I think my nerves are more about the technology aspect of this and doing homework online, but I'm sure I'll make my way through it. I'm grateful to meet you all! **(Jessica Jacobs)**

I was so excited. I heard very great things about the program. I definitely wanted to be a part of it. **(Brianna Johnson)**

I feel very honored and blessed to be a part of your class and am so ready to take on a new journey with the Class of 2021. I look forward to seeing what you guys have in store for us. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make a change and better my future, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to let my kids take the journey with me. I am a mother of four—twin boys that are eleven, a seven-year-old daughter, and a two-year-old son. I decided to go back to school and face my fears. I want to be able to motivate them. If I can show them that I can beat all odds, going back to school ten years later, we can do it as a team. I look forward to getting into school and meeting everybody. **(Yvonne Johnson)**



I felt like it was divine order and a sign telling me to get back at it. I was definitely at a stop due to past frustrations and lack of help with school and life. I have attended college in the past but have not finished because of life and kids. **(Feather Lloyd)**



I felt hopeful for the future, energized by the possibilities, and excited to meet new people and form new ideas. Like everybody else, I felt nervous and excited. I was looking at the Course Reader today. I'm excited to look at poems, thinkers, and artists that I probably wouldn't be disposed to normally. It

seems exciting, and also to meet people I wouldn't normally meet. **(Farren McDonald)**

I was beyond excited! I have heard so much about this class and wanted to get in. I have three children (a 28-year-old daughter, a 24-year-old daughter, and a 21-year-old son) and six grandsons. When I first found out that I got accepted into the Odyssey Project, I felt excited, I felt grateful, but above all I felt hopeful knowing that this is the start of a new beginning. **(Michelle McKoy)**



I feel so happy that I was accepted, and I'm so excited for this class. Maybe for some of us it is a chance to learn English and improve our level. For me, it is also a good opportunity for other futures, ambitions, and horizons. I have four amazing children (two daughters and two sons). I feel blessed to be here despite everything that's going on in the world. I'm so excited to meet everyone and go on this journey. **(Stephaney Obi)**

I felt a combustion of emotions at once. I was extremely happy but also nervous, as I have not attended school in a decade. I'm a mother of two lovely daughters. I haven't been to school in over ten years, so I'm ready to jump back in and face my fears head on so I can get to the next level in life! **(Asia Pearson)**



Very excited. Because of my background, I thought it was impossible to enter into such a unique program. I'm a special needs teacher at Emerson. I have a five-year-old, to be six in two weeks, so I'm pretty excited about that. Sorry if you can't hear above her scream! **(Burnett Reed)**

I was very excited when I learned I'd been accepted into the class. I am excited and just nervous as well, being able to juggle all this—having a new baby, two boys in middle school, and one going to kindergarten, so I've got a lot going on.

**(Delisha Smith)**





I felt excited, also nervous. I felt more excited for what's to come and the opportunities that will be presented to me with joining the class. I feel like I took a really huge step in furthering my future and bettering my chances of becoming a dentist. **(Krystal Smith)**

I started dancing! . . . I was excited, in other words. **(Thedora Smith)**



I was very excited, and I am looking forward to doing it with people who made it as well. Thank you so much for the opportunity. I hope everything goes great. **(Dana Stokes)**

I was excited to learn that I had been accepted. I had applied late the year before but received a letter inviting me to apply again for the upcoming year. Once I interviewed, I wanted to be a part of this program even more. I am terrified as well,

which is awkward because I'm not even a shy person, but I'm not really a video person. I'll take a million pictures, but this online class is hard to get used to. I'm looking forward to meeting everyone, having fun, talking a lot—that's kind of my favorite thing to do. So once I get past the jitters of everybody looking at me, I'll be fine. **(Faleshuh Walker)**

Overly excited. I'm a little terrified because I have a son in kindergarten and I work. He's doing e-learning and someone has to sit with him all day, so I don't know what I'm going to do at this point. I'm going to juggle it and make a schedule. **(Sunni Walker)**

I was unsure and very nervous because in other college level courses, despite my efforts, I did not do well. With literature, I feel inadequate with spelling, composing, and writing. Over the years, I have felt more self-conscious and vulnerable with sharing a lot of things in regards to myself. I'm terrified and excited at the same time, and I'm looking forward to seeing what the program brings. **(Diane Walton)**

When I found out I got accepted to this class, I became very excited about the things I will be learning. I think this class will have a great impact on my life as far as being in school goes and getting the right help that I need to continue my education. I am excited about the Odyssey program, but it's like a double feeling because I'm nervous and excited at the same time. This is actually my first year of starting college. **(Keyanna Wilson)**

I felt really great about it. The fact that you guys have given us tools needed while in this pandemic is great and needed. I love the fact of the Junior program. I feel like it will give my daughter a lot of insight towards her future as well. My daughter is 17 and getting ready to graduate high school in 2021, so for my daughter and me to graduate at the same time is a big thing. Thanks to all of you guys, and God Bless!!! **(Shiquita Woods)**



# THREE SENTENCES ABOUT US

*Students were asked to write three sentences about themselves (some did more). Emily gave as an example these three sentences about herself:*



1. I have three adult children and three granddaughters (ages 4, 8, and 12), and I love them to pieces.
2. My husband is 18 inches taller than I am, so we look ridiculous on any dance floor.
3. My giant teddy bear's T-shirt says "Let's Make America Think Again."



1. I am a mother to a baby girl 14 months old and an auntie to ten beautiful children (three girls, seven boys) that I love and would do anything for.
2. I was born and raised right here in Madison, WI.
3. My favorite color is pink! (**Tawania Alston**)

1. I have three children: my oldest (Calvin Jr.) is sixteen, Kaden is thirteen, and my baby girl (Kyah) will be ten in November.
2. I have six siblings—three brothers and three sisters.
3. I have over 20 tattoos. (**Calvin Balentine**)



1. I am a mother of two girls, ages four and one.
2. I am currently enrolled into the Medical Assistant program at MATC.
3. I love playing soccer. (**Betsy Alfaro**)





1. I have two sons and a stepson.
2. I love to camp and bike with my family.
3. I love crafting and creating things. Last year for Halloween I was Ms. Frizzle and made a school bus to go over my stroller, with my baby as the lizard "Liz." **(Sarina Benford)**

1. My name is Souad, and I'm from Morocco, North Africa. I have lived in the US for four years.
2. I like traveling, reading and cooking.
3. I am a mom of one adorable little three-year-old girl named Rita Omya, and we call her Mima. **(Souad Bidar)**

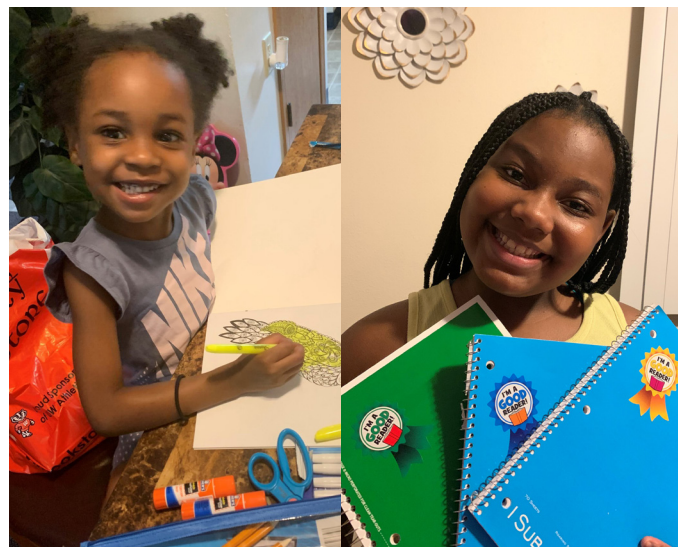


1. I have a 2.5-year-old son.
2. I'm a stepmother to a 6.5-year-old boy and 4.5-year-old daughter.
3. I have my own in-home daycare. **(Anjelica Brown)**

1. I have two teenaged kids.
2. I was born and raised in Chicago, IL.
3. I live in the cheese state, but I hate cheese. **(Tisha Butler)**



1. I have two beautiful girls, ages five and ten.
2. I was born and raised in Madison.
3. My favorite color is purple, the color of royalty and ambition. **(Cashae Davis)**





1. I'm very determined that when I start something I must finish.
2. Just like food, I love trying new things, especially if it's going to get Londyn and me ahead in life.
3. I love helping people, and that's one of the main reasons I joined the Tenant Resource



Center almost two years ago. I started off as a paid intern and then became a board member/treasurer. I'm very driven and a hard worker who sets goals and always accomplishes them all.  
**(Paris Foster)**

1. I'm a father of five.
2. I'm Mexican American.
3. I love books. **(Fernando Galindo)**



1. I am a mother of four marvelous children.
2. Working out has now become a norm for me.
3. I love to travel the world with my FOUR PIECE SPICY crew. **(Sarah Galinski)**



1. I have a wonderful, sassy three-year-old daughter who keeps me on my toes all day.
2. I have a pet cat named Pablo Escobar and a cockapoo dog named Shaggy.
3. I am proud Hispanic woman who loves to share my culture.  
**(Erika Gonzalez)**



1. I've been a Certified Nursing Assistant for 20 years.
2. I want to learn to play golf
3. I want to learn to play the piano.  
**(Valeria Gordon)**





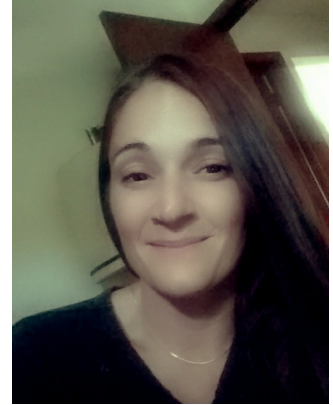
1. I have three children who are my life and headache.
2. I have just become a certified daycare so I can help people like me.
3. I love talking about credit. **(LaBresha Green)**

1. I have one sibling who is older than me by six years, and we are just alike.
2. My dream place to travel is Jamaica or Spain because I think those places are so beautiful!
3. I have a cat named Bash who is obsessed with me! **(Kwan Hogan)**



1. I love salsa dancing, bicycle rides, and community.
2. Lately, I have been buying cookbooks.
3. The older I get, the more particular I get about what I eat, so I have been learning new dishes, and it's working out well. **(Henry Oropeza Irisson)**

1. I am a fighter...literally.
2. My favorite fictional book is called Cry to Heaven.
3. I love to cook. **(Jessica Jacobs)**



1. I have three children: ages six, three, and one.
2. In my spare time, I love to write scripts for a TV show I want to have one day.
3. I also like making different food in the kitchen and making new creative food to eat. **(Brianna Johnson)**

1. I have four kids, ages two, seven, and twin 11-year-olds with special needs including one on the spectrum. My three boys and one girl are my life
2. I am a Mama Shark. According to my two-year-old, I look funny every time I say "Pick up your toys" and make my shark face.
3. My favorite shirt says "Black Lives Matter" in ASL (American Sign Language). **(Yvonne Johnson)**





1. Both my parents grew up in Madison, and neither has a college degree. My favorite uncle, Raymundo Saudia, attended and worked at UW. My grandmother also received a double major degree in Psychology/Sociology from UW. I always wanted the degree because I thought people wouldn't take me seriously without it.
2. I am beyond open, honest, and a genuine person.
3. I've got three beautiful kids, and I am homeschooling as well. **(Feather Lloyd)**

1. I have three adult children, ages 28, 24, and 21.
2. I have six grandsons: ages ten, six, four, three, and two-year-old twins.
3. I have a grand dog, Max, who I share custody of with my son. **(Michelle McKoy)**



1. I have four adorable children (ages nine, eight, six, and four) that I love and cherish beyond measure.
2. My favorite color is brown.
3. My role model is Oprah Winfrey, and one of my biggest attributes is my willingness to evolve. **(Stephaney Obi)**

1. I like to play and record music. I hope to start a band in Madison, as I grew up loving American rock n roll. Wherever I go in the country, I like to play the songs I associate with there, like a musical map.



2. My family is back in Ireland, and I miss them a lot.
3. I'm trying to learn mask making as I loved the masks I saw in the Chicago Art Institute. **(Farren McDonald)**

1. I have two daughters that use most of my time.
2. Sometimes I laugh until my stomach aches; it's uncontrollable.
3. I find peace and solace in isolation. **(Asia Pearson)**



1. I have a six-year-old daughter who I love to the moon and back.
2. I love working with special needs students for work and my free time.
3. I love pretty much all sports. Go Badgers! Go Green Bay! Go Bucks! Go Brewers! **(Burnett Reed)**

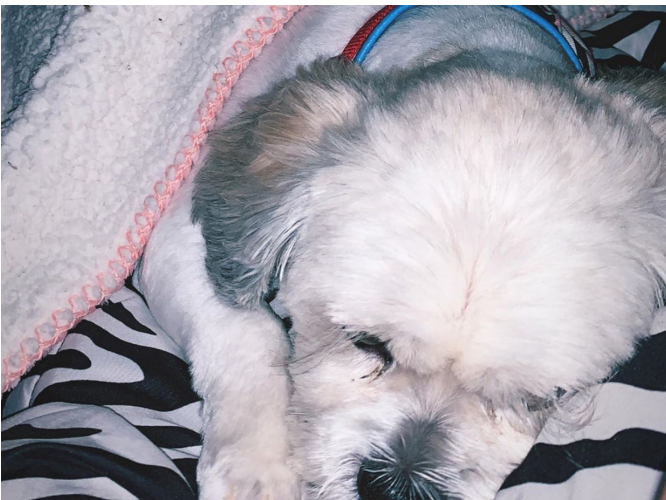






1. I have four children, all boys (ages twelve, eleven, five, and two-month old). All of their names start with an A, and they're my A team.
2. I am a caregiver soon to be a registered CNA once I take my test (already completed class). I've been working in the field for six years and am ready to take my career further.
3. Every move I make, every step I take, I think about how I'm raising four black boys in America. How can I keep them focused and safe? **(Delisha Smith)**

1. I'm the only child.
2. I have a dog named Kookie.
3. I want to become a dentist.  
**(Krystal Smith)**



1. I consider myself a nontraditional student through Madison Area Technical College.
2. I'm working on my writing skills currently and would love the extra support from the Odyssey program.
3. My graduation date is set for January, and I plan on finishing strong. **(Thedora Smith)**



1. I have six siblings including me. I have nine nephews but no girls yet!
2. I love plants, and my favorite color is green—go figure.
3. I always make the best out of what I have.  
**(Dana Stokes)**





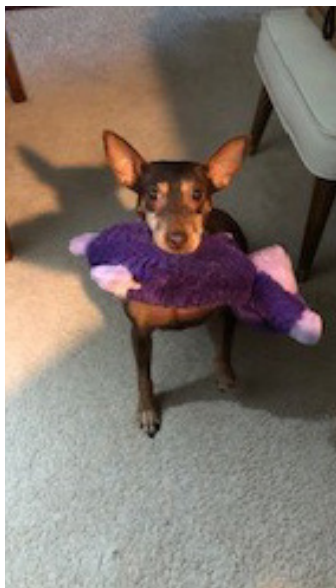
1. I am a mother of three: one girl and two boys.
2. I love to paint, bake, and write poetry.
3. I am afraid of anything with four legs!

**(Faleshuh Walker)**

1. My name is Sunni.
2. I have a five-year-old son.
3. I am currently a Medical Assistant with future plans of being a RN. **(Sunni Walker)**



1. My daily companion is my cute little min-pin (dog) named Cleo.
  2. Now that my uncle has moved back to Madison, he, my mom and I have become closer as a family.
  3. I am a very friendly yet very self-conscious person who prefers privacy until I get to know you enough to let you in.
- (Diane Walton)**



1. I have one daughter, who means the world to me.
2. I enjoy learning different things, but sometimes I take on too much at a time.
3. I don't have a favorite color because I like all type of different colors. **(Keyanna Wilson)**

1. I have one daughter age 17, and I love her dearly.
  2. My daughter is taller than me so I look like I could be her sister instead of her mother.
  3. I love being around positive vibes and am excited to be a part of the class of 2021.
- (Shiquita Woods)**





# ARE WE WRITERS?

*Students were asked to write a sentence or two starting with “Yes, I am a writer because . . .” or “No, I am not a writer because . . .” Ironically, many who wrote about NOT being a writer demonstrated they are indeed writers!*

No, I am not a writer because it’s hard for me to put my ideas down on paper. **(Betsy Alfaro)**



Yes, I am a writer because growing up I loved writing poetry and little children’s books. I used to think I’d be an author, and when I got into middle and high school, I would often enjoy writing projects/essays. I just feel like I have a way with words and could write just about anything. **(Tawania Alston)**

Yes, I am a writer because I have a passion for words. I believe communication is everything. I’ve been writing to express myself my whole life, especially when I felt I could not verbally do so. **(Calvin Balentine)**

I view myself as a rusty writer because I have always enjoyed English in school and writing. I have to make sure my typing and writing is decent enough for my work in Sales. I email a lot of the contacts and businesses and need to maintain a professional feel through emails/ writing. I love correcting errors in social media posts and am “that friend.” LOL **(Sarina Benford)**



Yes, I’m a writer because I started to write one story, but it’s in French. I hope one day I will be able to speak and write in English as well as in French. **(Souad Bidar)**

I honestly haven’t written many things, but I know this isn’t a struggle for me. **(Anjelica Brown)**



No, I am not a writer because I think too much. I also do not have confidence as a writer. **(Tisha Butler)**

Yes, I am a writer because I write almost every day. I like to write my thoughts and feelings out. This is the way I express myself. **(Cashae Davis)**

Yes, in some ways I do consider myself a writer. I used to write a lot in high school, from short stories to poems. I love writing, and I just lost touch with that side. I miss getting lost in my stories or poems. I really wanted to be a writer at a time in my life. **(Paris Foster)**

No, I’m not a writer. I don’t write at all for any reason but through texting. But I truly want to learn to be. **(Fernando Galindo)**

Yes, I am a writer because I make it my duty to write a letter to my parents weekly. I view myself as a writer because I have a passion for word art... I’m very careful of the words I give to others. Yes, I am a writer because I love to write. **(Sarah Galinski)**





No, I am not a writer. **(Valeria Gordon)**

No, I am not a writer because I have always had a hard time with putting my thoughts into writing without stressing myself out. I am not a writer because I

struggle with grammar and putting my thoughts into writing. **(Erika Gonzalez)**

I think I'm in the middle of yes and no. I haven't written anything in a long time. **(LaBresha Green)**

I would say yes to being a writer. I've always liked writing since I was younger, but I just need help with structure and my form when writing. **(Kwan Hogan)**



I used to write a lot, but I don't know what happened. I may just have lost it somewhere, somehow. I don't have good grammar, as English is not my first language. I do like writing from time to time, but not as much as in the past. **(Henry Oropeza Irisson)**

I have been writing since I was 13 years old, more or less in a poetic style. It helps me emotionally and mentally. **(Jessica Jacobs)**



No, I'm not a writer because I have never shared my work so I really don't know. **(Brianna Johnson)**

I am not a writer. It's not that I don't like to do it, but it's just been a long time since I wrote poems or had a diary. I feel like I will become a writer soon enough. **(Yvonne Johnson)**

Yes, I used to write a lot. I have been a retired writer because, like Blake, my creativity was discouraged by authority figures. So being too critical or even afraid has stopped me from writing as I used to. **(Feather Lloyd)**



I think of myself as a writer. It's something I do almost every day. I strive to get better at the craft. I use it to understand and explore my own feelings on issues, and I hope to one day soon see more of my writing in print. **(Farren McDonald)**

Yes, I am a writer, but I have to be in the right mood. I don't write as much as I used to when I was younger, though. **(Michelle McKoy)**

No, I am not because I get tired of writing easily and am not really good with punctuation. **(Stephaney Obi)**



Yes, I am a writer because I enjoy using my imagination. I also live to write music and poems.

**(Asia Pearson)**



Yes, I'm a writer. I love to talk, so I love to reflect words into sentences and poems and other unique forms of writing. I love penmanship. I love to see different styles of text. **(Burnett Reed)**

Yes, I am a writer because my words reach those who need to hear them. I chose this answer because I got a chance to witness my words impact several people's lives.

**(Faleshuh Walker)**



No, I am not a writer because it's just not who I am. Of course, I can write, but I'd rather get a shot. LOL **(Sunni Walker)**

No, I am not a writer because writing has always been one of my weakest subjects. I would love to be a writer because I want to be able to communicate properly without being misunderstood. **(Delisha Smith)**

Yes, I consider myself to be a huge writer. I enjoy writing in my journal about random thoughts and life events. **(Krystal Smith)**

I am a writer in my world, but that is only when writing in African American Vernacular. I feel free to express my thoughts and ideas in words without the pressure of correction or judgment. Speaking a second language, Proper or Standard English, is believed to come easy because America is my place of birth, but I still struggle with the definition of intelligence by default. **(Thedora Smith)**



Yes, I am a writer because I journal a lot. I write music sometimes. . . I also write books with my children, which we published already on Shutterfly.

**(Dana Stokes)**



No, I am not a writer because my thoughts seem to trip over each other. I can't keep up with them enough to write them down thoroughly before I lose my complete thought. **(Diane Walton)**

No, I'm not a writer because I don't write as much as I should and I sometimes get writer's block. **(Keyanna Wilson)**

Well, my writing skills are pretty good; too bad I can't say the same for Mathematics. My daughter is the opposite of myself. This should be smooth sailing for me. **(Shiquita Woods)**



# CREATIVE CORNER



This photo shows me toe tapping with a shadow. I am one of six children. My eldest brother was murdered four years ago from gun violence. I truly believe my brother is ALWAYS with me and my closest ancestor. My Best Friend is now my childhood imaginary friend again...Shadow Man...aka Invisible Man. **(Sarah Galinski)**





# ALUMNI CORNER

## I LOVE ODYSSEY

BY JUANITA WILSON '07



*Juanita (1936-2019) inspired her granddaughter Isis to graduate from Odyssey, too.*

I love Odyssey because before Odyssey I always felt like an outsider when I was among a group of people. I now feel that I can contribute to the conversation and feel that I am no longer a slow learner. I feel that I can accomplish whatever I set out to do. I am happy most of the time now.

I am going to be a lifelong learner.

I feel that I am not alone anymore if I need help with a problem. I feel that I am loved by my teachers and classmates. I feel that life is beautiful this year and the rest of my life because of Odyssey. I feel that there will always be help available to me. I feel blessed.

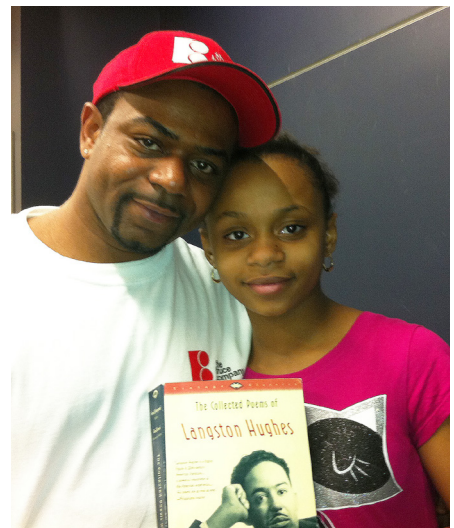
## I LOVE MY WEBSTER'S

BY TOSUMBA WELCH '13

**I love my Webster's** with a great passion and sense of dependency. Webster's has never stood me up, let me down, or led me astray—never! It tells me secrets that sometimes no one else can even imagine. One time I was walking through a path of words and there were blank spots on the path. Out of nowhere, Webster's replaced those blank spots with words, and I was able to continue my walk.



Webster's sat me down one night and gave me an idea that landed me second place in an essay contest answering the question "Why Vote?" I have never known Webster's to be anything but perfect. Webster's has given me 230,000 reasons to be in love with it. I love my Webster's.



*Tosumba's daughter Denaria attended Odyssey Junior.*