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ODYSSEY



ORACLE

# SPECIAL EDITION: A CELEBRATION OF VOTING

*"Women must have their opinions  
counted at the ballot box."*

—Susan B. Anthony

*"The vote is precious. It is almost sacred.  
It's the most powerful non-violent tool  
we have in a democratic society, and  
we've got to use it!"*

—John Lewis



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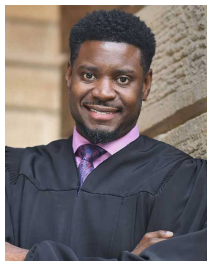
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# UW ODYSSEY PROJECT: WHY VOTE?

*The UW Odyssey Project ([www.odyssey.wisc.edu](http://www.odyssey.wisc.edu)) empowers adults to overcome adversity and achieve dreams through higher education. Each year since 2003, Odyssey has admitted 30 adults into a two-semester UW course to earn six credits in the humanities while discovering their voices.*

*The Odyssey Project encourages civic engagement and sponsors a “Why Vote?” contest every other year. For 2020, current and past students were invited to submit short essays, poems, songs, and artwork designed to persuade others to vote. Youth in the Odyssey Junior program could also apply.*

*Below are some excerpts, some of which will be showcased on October 3rd for Odyssey’s nonpartisan “Celebration of Voting” online event. Partners for “A Celebration of Voting” include the League of Women Voters, the Urban League of Greater Madison, the Madison Public Library, American Players Theatre (APT), and the Cap Times. Speakers will be Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, Judge Everett Mitchell, Dr. Ruben Anthony, Jr., and Rep. Shelia Stubbs, and the event will also feature famous passages on voting read by APT actors Gavin Lawrence and Sarah Day and Odyssey’s theatre professor Baron Kelly. To register for the free event and to see student videos and songs celebrating voting, visit the Odyssey website at [www.odyssey.wisc.edu](http://www.odyssey.wisc.edu).*



## ESSAYS



**Hedi Rudd**  
**Odyssey '12**

Why Vote? Every election is important to me, but this year’s Presidential election is not only important to me but also to the future of our country. In less than two months, my vote will tell America that I love you, I need you and I trust you. That may seem silly, but the reality is there is a lot at stake.

How I vote can change the future of our country or send us back to a time when America was not so great.

The current divide slashing its way through our country has to be faced, and our vote is our best tool to stop it. With one vote, I can say that Black Lives Matter, that Climate Change is real, that together and safer at home we can beat COVID-19 and most importantly that we reject dictatorships in favor of a flourishing democracy.

My vote will tell my children and grandchildren that I stood against corruption and racism and that I don’t ignore the past but learn from it. My vote will tell my friends that I care about their access to healthcare and immigration reform. It will tell my neighbors that I believe in their right to protest, their right to housing and their right to hold leaders accountable. It will tell the world that humanity and our planet are sacred.

Most importantly, it will say that my vote counts and so do each and every one of us.





**Ngina Ali**  
**Odyssey '17**

WHY VOTE? We can no longer ask, "Why Vote?" We must ask, "What will be left of America in four years if we don't vote?"

America is at cross-roads for the soul of the country. Do we want to live in a democracy or under an authoritarian regime? Do we want to live or die during a global health pandemic? Do we want work towards an economic system equal for all or suffer a global economic depression?



Every single US voter is liable for the results of the 2020 US Presidential election. Every citizen who can vote has the responsibility on their shoulders for the future of America. Now is not the time to abandon democracy but a time to fight for solutions. How? By voting! Vote for a leader who can steer the country out of the current economic, political and public health crisis we are in.

Democracy may not survive another four years with chaos and division spread by the current person in the White House. No one should feel passive or apathetic about the November 2020 election. Democracy is not perfect but is worth fighting for. Many fought for democracy and to vote because these rights are linked and not guaranteed. We see extensive voter suppression to stop people from voting, especially in minority neighborhoods.

Americans haven't always had the right to vote, and if they don't use it, they lose it! Now is not the time to ask, "Why Vote?" It is time to say, "YOU MUST VOTE!"



**Marisol Gonzalez**  
**Odyssey '17**

Why vote? I grew up always complaining about "why me?" Why do I have to help my mother with household chores? Why do I have to take care of my siblings? Why do I have to work at such a young age? Why me? Furthermore, why is my family poor?



Because I was complaining so much and asking God "why?" all the time, someone told me, "why not?" If I was born with all of my body parts, with a healthy body and a brain, with the ability to do that and much more... then why not me? It's not okay to complain about all the things that go wrong in our country and not do anything about it. It's not okay to keep quiet and not make your voice heard when you have the ability to speak. It's not okay to give up without trying. It's not okay to let others choose for you when you can choose for yourself. It's not okay that the wealth of the world belongs to the one percent. The one percent keeps growing richer, and we keep staying poor. It's not okay to not take responsibility and to not vote!

It's not okay to only dream of the perfect country when you can make that dream come true. By doing that, you are building the country that you want to be part of. As Gandhi said, "You can be the change that you want to see in this world." Use your right to vote!!





**Angela McAlister**  
**Odyssey '07**

Why Should You Vote? I want to look at why shouldn't you vote! You shouldn't vote if you don't want decision-making power in your communities, in funding for education of your children, in having a say in raising the minimum wage, and in the quality of your life in general. You shouldn't vote if you don't want your voice to be heard. You shouldn't vote if you don't have to be informed about how your tax dollars are being spent.

All elections have consequences! Voting gives you the power to decide on the quality of life you want for yourself and our future generations. Our ancestors fought and died for the right to vote! The establishment of voting has a long and troubled history of over 200 years ago; some just as far back as 1964. Don't let this opportunity, your RIGHT, be ignored. So when you consider not voting, think about more of why you should. As Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."



**Run Barlow**  
**Odyssey '12**

In church, my pastor read this scripture: "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me"(1 Corinthians 13:11). As a child, I didn't understand the importance of adult responsibilities like voting. I didn't know I would one day fight for father's rights or prison reform. I didn't expect to help elect the officials that would deliberate if they should fund my son's after school programs or cut them.

my son's after school programs or cut them.

As a black man, I feel privileged to vote because I wasn't born with this right; I inherited it from the sacrifices of my ancestors. I'm blessed knowing someone has already fought for rights I didn't know I would need. When you choose not to vote you miss the bigger picture. You ignore the fact that thousands of men, women, and the incarcerated have fought for centuries for a chance for an equal say. We hear every voice by voting.



**Milli Lau**  
**Odyssey'14**

On May 30, 2020, when I watched the TV news about the "Black lives matter" protest on State Street, the images of the protest in Hong Kong appeared in my mind. I saw police shoot a young protester without warning. I saw a team of riot-control police descend on the university to arrest those students who were participating in the protest and destroy the campus facilities. These young people are risking their lives and future to fight for universal suffrage and the rights of free speech, assembly, and association. They are fighting a battle they will never win. They live in a one-party state, a dictatorship.

However, we in the USA have an election. Despite the many attempts to suppress the votes of people of color, we still have a chance—a chance to achieve racial justice and to choose a leader who can truly represent us. Do you want to stop the killing? Do you want to stop the harassment and hateful, incendiary vitriol those in power spew towards people of color? Voting can change the status quo. Pick up your weapon, your ballot. Go vote. Fight for our rights. Protect our children's future. We will win this battle by sending out our ballots.





**Jelissa Edwards**  
**Odyssey '16**

“Why would should I vote? It’s hard to choose who is the lesser of the two evils.” It’s time to wake up, my brothers and sisters! Our country is dying, our children are dying, and precious vulnerable mothers are crying tears from the losses of their unprotected children. Young men and women are being killed because of the hate and racism running over in America. We are jobless and without protection from a disease that refuses to take into consideration our weakness and division as a nation.

In this election, we are not only voting for President but also for the mayors, senators, and aldermen who stand on the side of right. Educate yourselves. We must demand equal and universal protection from unlawful law enforcement, the pandemic, shaky politicians, and a broken economy. Take your passion to the polls. VOTE!!!



**Karina Herrejon**  
**Odyssey '16**

Our vote: a ripple all across this country. There was a time when women had no vote; their prime agenda was lost in a sea of issues. Land wasn’t something women had the right to own. They would have to depend on a man to have something of their own. After the women’s suffrage movement, women could vote, which meant that their voices would be heard and they could

take action of their own.

By taking action into our hands, we ensure change. Today in 2020 we have AOC in Congress, a woman of color who is scrutinized for the way she looks and criticized for her red lipstick. Although there are many who joke and ridicule her for her appearance, they can’t take away her power to make changes in our country because she’s a congresswoman. Our vote made her a congresswoman.



**Ta’Tiana Clacks**  
**Odyssey '18**

We all have the right to vote! Don’t say it means nothing when our nation is suffering! My gorgeous mother would play as we both sang the words to the late, great Whitney Houston’s “Greatest Love of All”:

I believe the children are our future

Teach them well and let them lead the way

Show them all the beauty they possess inside

Give them a sense of pride to make it easier

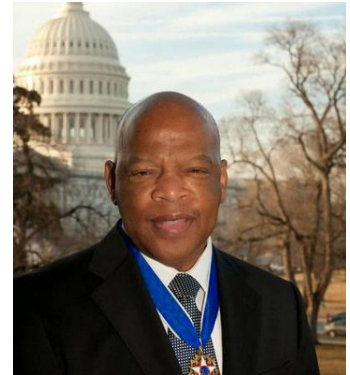
We all have the right to vote! Nike stood up next to Colin Kaepernick, who took politics and demanded RESPECT, to let them know GOOD AMERICANS ARE NOT HAVING IT! We all have the right vote!



**Muhammad Abdullah**  
**Odyssey '19**

Why Vote? Why Not! I never met my father, a sharecropper from Mississippi, but I do know that he likely never voted. My maternal great-grandfather and grandmother, also sharecroppers, never exercised the right to vote. My Mama didn't vote until she was in her 60s, but she never missed voting afterwards. I voted for the first time when I was 30 years old, when I was hired as Branch Coordinator for the Milwaukee Chapter of the NAACP. I have voted ever since and consider it a duty and an obligation on behalf of my relatives and all African Americans and women who were denied the right. I vote on behalf of those Americans of all nationalities, religions, creeds, etc. who protested, marched, were water-hosed, jailed and died so all could exercise the Constitutional, First Amendment civil right and freedom of expression.

I sincerely believe every single vote matters. Remember the final words of Congressman John Lewis: "Everyone must vote November 2020. It's the most important election ever."



**Henry Irisson**  
**Odyssey '21**

You have a secret power: Voting! Elections are just around the corner, and this may be one of the most important elections in the history of the U.S.A. These are not times to remain silent. This power to have your voice heard, to choose who represents and governs you—this powerful tool was gifted to you by the struggles of your ancestors. For women, for instance, it took a 100-year struggle. The African American community could not truly exercise their right to vote until the 1960s, yet the US gained its independence in 1776. Think of their suffering, the battles they fought to gain the right to vote, and how many of them died without getting the chance to exercise their right to vote.

Those who refrain from voting do not have the moral authority to complain about their government. By choosing to vote, we choose our future. The power is in your hands; do not take it for granted. Get out and vote, via mail or at the polls. Mask up and vote!



**Michelle Whitman**  
**Odyssey '13**

This is to those who have given up on a democracy that appears to have given up on you. I was once told that if you don't believe in yourself, no one else will. We seem to have become a country that has done just that. We stand so divided at a time when we need one another the most, when change is needed more than ever before, when your voice needs to be heard loud and clear, a time when turning in a vote is more powerful than someone who picks up a gun, when it can make a difference in someone living or dying, going from homelessness or hunger to a roof over their head or food on their table.

Voting shows just how powerful we as a people can be. Don't ask WHY VOTE? Ask the big three: 1. How do I vote? 2. When do I vote? 3. Where do I vote? Let's make us count. It's not WHY VOTE but that it's WISE TO VOTE.



**Avé Thorpe**  
**Odyssey '17**

On January 1st, 2020, so many of us made resolutions to help us have an amazing year. We prayed, we thought positively, and we put our best foot forward; yet there was no way to prepare for what was to come. We lost loved ones, celebrities, jobs, and our ability to socialize freely due to a worldwide pandemic; and in the midst of it all, had the burden of a present-day civil rights movement/war brewing. So many of us have had our hope and our freedom taken away and now, with an election coming, we are faced with the decision of who to vote for. We need to cry out loud in unison so that our pain will finally be understood.

The right to vote is something that African Americans died for. Voting is about coming together to provoke a wave of change. Tuesday, November 3rd, 2020 is a day when we can come together collectively to combine our power and have our voices heard. With everything that has been taken away from us this year, our voices and votes cannot be taken away. We have come so far in this world because of those who fought for our rights to work, vote, and live; let not the death of our ancestors be in vain.



**Sarah Galinski**  
**Odyssey '21**

VOTE because you want a solution to the many problems that we have here in the United States. Your voice is a piece to the puzzle of a collective brilliancy. Today we focus on SOLUTIONS, and I'm asking you today to trust the process. There is a sense of pride when casting that ballot. I won't deny there is also a sense of reluctance. Will my VOTE count? Will my VOICE matter?

I'm here to just send some POSITIVE ENERGY your way and let you know that YES, your VOICE matters. YES, your VOTE will be counted here in the 2020 election. So get out and VOTE! If you need assistance, call a neighbor or family/friend. Hell, I'll even put \$20 towards an Uber or Lyft for you. I'm here as one of the Mighty MINI. We are few in numbers but MIGHTY once brought together as a collective brilliant team!



**Shiquita Woods**  
**Odyssey '21**

Every vote matters. That's why it is very important to vote. It is a powerful and useful tool for change all around the U.S. No matter what you believe in or who you support, it is important to exercise your rights as an American. It is also important because the people who are most likely to be affected by the changes are usually poor or minorities, groups the least likely to vote.

Voting is a right that generations of people have fought and struggled to win. Many people in other countries are still fighting for it. Everyone has a voice and wants to be heard one way or another. Voting is definitely your voice!!!







**Natura Warford**  
**Odyssey '19**

Why vote? Look at the world we live in today! People have been killed, beaten, and jailed while trying to help people who should have had the right to vote finally get their right. Some people say we don't have any good choices in 2020, but if that's the case, choose the "least worst" one.

We need change right this second! Black men are being murdered at a rate higher than before the Civil Rights movement by people who are sworn to serve and protect. Black women are also being killed. Please vote! Our future truly depends on it. The man in office who is in charge of our country is filled with hate, rage, selfishness and an ego big enough to blow up two countries! If we don't use our voices, what is the point of even having a voice? 2020: it's time for change. Please go out and vote.



**Loché Mothoa**  
**Odyssey '20**

"Voting is not important," you say. Our parents and their parents and their parents' parents fought hard for the right to vote, for the right to have their voices heard. Don't let their fight be in vain. Your vote counts; your vote matters now more than ever.

There's very little we have control over, like this pandemic. Most Americans are struggling and feel that the people in power are doing very little to help the working class people. This is EXACTLY why YOUR vote matters. Your vote can make a difference; a small drop still makes a ripple. Let YOUR voice be heard. YOUR vote can be the change we need.



**Erica Garcia**  
**Odyssey '07**

If we don't vote this November to try to make a change, what kind of an example are we making for our children? Do we want our children questioning us about whether or not their lives matter? I know I don't. As a mother to two wonderful, smart children, I want my children to live in a better country that will see them as human beings and not bull's-eye marks for practice shooting for the police and white America. I want my children to be able to walk into a store without someone coming up to them yelling at them to go back to their country and to speak English. I don't want my children to live in fear that tomorrow they might not make it home from school or from a friend's house.

I don't want to see any children of color go through what we as parents and other adults go through daily. So, we as adults have a responsibility to do the right thing this November: vote. Vote to make a change even if it doesn't seem like it'll be a big change. Don't ever think your vote won't matter because your vote might actually be the one that we needed to make a difference in this country. So please remember to plan ahead and go out there and vote this November.



**Sarina Benford**  
**Odyssey '21**

I find myself remembering my sophomore year of high school and moving to Madison from small town Columbus. I was so thrilled to be attending East and be part of such a cultured city. My English teacher, Mr. Gibson, was having kids go outside of class to canvas for voting in the area. It was something that taught me the importance of my voice. I was only 16 and unable to vote at the time, so I wanted voters to go out and do it for the kids who couldn't.

As a black woman in 2020, I look back at how my grandma and her generation fought for me to have this right. People of color often weren't allowed to vote until the Voting Acts Right of 1965, only 55 years ago. You vote for your children and their futures, for your future, for your community, for the incarcerated people unable to vote, for the immigrants, for the environment, for the economy.



**Derek Dodd**  
**Odyssey '15**

Why do we vote? We vote because of the hurt. pain, rejection, torture, and beatings that happened to people of color who came before us. We vote because of Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech.

We vote because of the march on the bridge in Selma, the countless marches where racist behavior was bestowed upon people of color—water hoses, dogs, bricks, bats, whatever was around to cause pain.

We vote because of Shirley Chisholm, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Frederick Douglass, Emmett Till, and Willie Lynch hangings. We vote to show and appreciate the lives people of color endured.



**Tawania Alston**  
**Odyssey '21**

Sometimes it seems with elections like there is no good selection, and that may make you not want to vote. But there is ALWAYS a reason to vote. Both Blacks and women FOUGHT for the right to have that very vote. They went through suffrage movements and protests just to have a voice. Sure, it seems like both candidates are not what you are looking for in a president, or you have no clue who the candidates even are. Well, look up who's running, read about them, and make an educated pick based on facts they present.

It may seem easier to not vote because "one vote doesn't matter," but really ALL votes matter. If everyone had that mindset, no one would vote and nothing would get done. Our votes are our voice. If we don't use them, they're silent and useless. You might be the change you look to make because that ONE vote might be all it takes.



**Kathy Plummer**  
**Odyssey '06**

I have a problem when I hear my brothers and sister of color say, “I don’t have time to figure out who’s running and it doesn’t make a difference anyway because all politicians are the same and the system is rigged. Voting doesn’t really matter, and one person’s vote doesn’t count, so why bother?” First of all, Black people weren’t allowed to vote for many years. It was the persistence of our ancestors that paved the way for our voting rights. If our ancestors had that same attitude about voting, I can’t imagine where we would be today. I’m grateful they stood up for our voting rights.

If we don’t exercise our right to vote, it becomes easier for the government to ratify amendments causing voter suppression. For example, if you’re a felon, on parole, or probation, you’re not voting. It was 2012, President Obama’s re-election for his second term in office, and I was so disappointed that I wasn’t able to vote because I was on probation. Make time to make a change for the generations to come. Do your research, stop complaining, and stand up to the rigged system. Let your voice be heard when you cast your ballot this election: exercise your right to vote.



**René Robinson**  
**Odyssey '08**

“The land of the free and the home of the brave” belongs to all of us; not just “some” of us. We were taught Columbus discovered America even though he never set foot on North America. The ancestors of living Native Americans arrived at least 15,000 years ago. People from Africa were captured and brought here because Europeans were lazy, and slaves were not seen as people but as commodities. Chinese immigrants received minimal pay to help build the transcontinental railroad but were then barred from immigrating to the United States. And in 1954, the Justice Department launched Operation Wetback, under which over a million Mexicans were deported.

This is “OUR” country. The “ United States of America “ belongs to everyone; not just certain individuals. Because of our ancestors, who contributed to “OUR” country’s establishment and growth, it is our right to vote. When we don’ t vote, it continues to give the “some” permission to control and run “OUR” country in an exclusive rather than inclusive manner. Change comes through voting, and voting exudes power. We must embrace each other and our differences, eliminate factions and stand as one party fighting for justice and equality for all.





# POEMS



**CharBraxton**  
**Odyssey '06**

## **The Right to Vote!**



The chants of hatred vibrated in my ear  
 One Step Closer to Vote  
 The negative roars of "Black trash –you have no rights here!"  
 One Step Closer to Vote  
 My flesh was trembling with fear  
 One Step Closer to Vote  
 I felt spit hit my face and I wiped it away with tears  
 One Step Closer to Vote  
 The courage of Black women suffragists who fought for the 19th Amendment guaranteeing American  
     women the right to vote  
 One Step Closer to Vote  
 Name, incorrect address, and the history of using literacy tests to deny the rights of Blacks to vote  
 My hands are trembling as I fill out my voting ballot  
 I am surrounded by piercing eyes of disbelief  
 The marches, the picketing, the entire movement  
 The pain, hatred, and lynching of blacks who went before me  
 Racism and Injustices bottled up in Black History  
 I walk out with pride and joy  
 I am black, I am a woman, I just voted!





**Marisol Gonzalez**  
**Odyssey '17**

**Your Right to Vote is Powerful**



I am the child of the undocumented immigrant in a cage, in extremely inhumane conditions.  
 I am a black man incarcerated because in this country being a person of color is a crime.  
 I am the dead body in a mass shooting, my only mistake was attending a school that day.  
 I am the underpaid worker that builds your home, takes care of your children, harvests your food, cleans your house, fixes your car, takes care of your elderly, the essential worker necessary but not wanted.  
 I am the black man shot dead in police hands the same way our ancestors died in the hands of the white men.  
 I am the brown immigrant harassed by ICE in a country made by immigrants.  
 You are my voice, the key of my cage, the freedom I dream of in jail...  
 You are the one with a powerful tool called the right to vote.  
 You are the one who can make history.  
 Use your right to vote. Your vote is powerful.



**Kayasia Blake**  
**Odyssey '19**

**Who I Vote For**



My ancestors envisioned my life before they knew I'd exist,  
 The sorrow in their song and hope in their hearts carried a lifetime's worth of dreams for me.  
 They knew that one day their pain would become freedom.  
 My voice carries through the world for the millions before me,  
 Cut down, lost, and forgotten.  
 We still sing the same tune,  
 Only now more people will LISTEN.  
 My vote is my power,  
 There is no such thing as a small contribution when it comes to my future.  
 It's impossible to live only for me.  
 My vote is not only mine.  
 I am proud to lift the voices  
 Of those who sacrificed their own for me.



**Milli Lau**  
**Odyssey '14**

Voting, our weapon, our right;  
Making our voice heard;  
Choosing our leader;  
Continuing our battle, racial justice will triumph;  
Keeping silent, we lose;  
Taking action, we win.



**Jelissa Edwards**  
**Odyssey '16**

We need to vote to bring hope to the hopeless;  
and those that are in power who seem to have lost focus,  
on the focal point that should be us.  
When the unlawful becomes law and the norm is racism, recidivism, classism,  
our vote is asking them... *What are you doing?*

Who are you really working for, or representing,  
when a traffic stop turns into a lethal life sentence,  
and the judge refuses to hand down a sentence  
because of the victim's color, creed, or nationality?

It's a harsh reality. My sons aren't safe,  
not even in the confines of their own neighborhood.  
Their skin, in their eyes, labels children of color  
as hoods instead of angels of the Most High.  
We have to vote for change or, as a mother,  
I may be forced to watch them both die before me.

Help our children. Fight for change. Vote!



**Sarina Benford**  
**Odyssey '21**

Oh, November, November, the third of November.  
Seasons change and you feel that sudden chill coming.  
Pumpkin patches, apple cider with the word of who's running.

Not another four years of, man, I wish he would quit.  
The uncertainty of unity. The shifting of gears from hope into... nope.

C'mon country, come forward proud and strong.  
Show what we bring, where we belong.  
Shouts of equality, not brutality, will ring.  
You can't hold back my voice.  
Rosa, Malcom, and Martin gave me the right to have that choice.





**Erica Gentry**  
**Odyssey '19**

Back in 2003, I had two felonies  
That prevented me from voting.  
Did I really care? Nope, and sure didn't push  
Cause the end result was voting for George W. Bush.  
Fast forward to 2009 and I was feeling fine  
Because of something I overheard, a guy named Barack  
Was trying to reach the top and I was going to help him get in.

So I went to register to vote and was ready to gloat until I got  
A long envelope in the mail. It said, "Excuse me Ms. Robinson, I'm not  
Trying to stop ya but you're not eligible for this occasion right now.  
What you need to do is use this red, white, and blue form,  
Send it in to vote and get in on the norm."

So 2020 is here and there is a decision to make for this year,  
Getting cleared, registered, and casting that first vote will be life changing.  
So I JUST HAVE to vote,  
Or come November elections if Trump is still here  
There's definitely going to be a lot of head banging!



**Denise Hardnett**  
**Odyssey '05**

When you vote, you become the change you want to see.  
Just like the ones before us who fought and died for our rights to vote.  
If you don't vote, someone else will who has different views from you. Let your voice be  
heard by voting.  
Vote equals Change.

No vote means no action to change for the better  
In Education  
Or access to Healthcare  
Your community  
In your neighborhood  
About Immigration  
Equal opportunities  
In jobs, Social Security, and taxes.  
Vote equals Change.  
So please go out and vote at the polls or mail it in.  
When you vote, you become the Change you want to see.



**Jovite Rayaisse**  
**Odyssey '13**

I vote because I am a citizen and it is my right to vote.  
I vote because I want a change, the best for my country.  
I vote because my voice counts.  
I vote because I want to set a good example for my children so they can vote in the future and know the importance of voting.

But if I do not vote, I cannot complain after the election,  
and I may feel guilty for not voting.



**Michelle Whitman**  
**Odyssey '13**

Why must we obey laws or risk going to jail?  
Be given a choice for a defense lawyer or pay bail?  
So often we feel we have no choice,  
yet given the opportunity we silence our voice.  
We put forth no effort to change what is wrong,

Yet we expect the government to move us along.

Why vote? because it is your voice.

Why vote? because it is a well-earned choice.

Why vote? because there are things you'd like done,

Like halting innocent killings of people with guns,

Vote for education, freedom of speech.

The opportunity to reach.

To have a say in your own healthcare

The rights to be always made aware

You ask the question Why Vote?

and I ask Why not?



**Lolita Phillips**  
**Odyssey '13**

IT'S TIME! IT'S TIME TO VOTE! IT'S TIME TO STAND FOR OUR NEXT GENERATION!  
IT'S TIME! IT'S TIME TO STOP COMPLAINING ABOUT WHATS WRONG AND DO WHAT'S RIGHT!  
IT'S TIME! IT'S TIME TO GO TAKE SOMEONE BY THE HAND AND TAKE THEM WITH YOU TO VOTE!

IT'S TIME! IT'S TIME TO ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED HELP VOTING!

IT'S TIME! IT'S TIME TO KNOW THAT THE WORST THING THAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW IS TO DO NOTHING!

IT IS TIME....IT IS TIME...IT IS TIME...AND THE TIME IS NOW!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



**Teresa Tellez-Giron**  
**Odyssey '04**

**I** Have a Dream: Vote

**V**iewing my life, I decided that I wanted to exist

**O**ther people used to tell me “women have no rights”

**T**hey only motivated me to be the person I am now

**E**xternal negative forces only have a positive impact in my life

**I** know who I am and why I am here

**H**ow can I explain this again?

**A** woman has the same right a man has

**V**oting is my dream, and nobody can take it away from me

**E**xternal negative forces only have a positive impact in my life

**A** woman should be able to vote

**D**reaming is for everyone, and Voting is my dream

**R**osa Parks had a dream, I have a dream

**E**xternal negative forces only have a positive impact on my life

**A** woman has the right to vote and I am going to vote

**M**en and women of color have a dream “that one day we all vote and have the same rights”

**VOTE!**



**Brianna Johnson**  
**Odyssey '21**

I am the pothole on the street

I am the school kid that doesn't have a dollar to eat

I am the teacher struggling to get good books to read

I am the case worker looking to meet your needs

I am the officer trying to restore law and order

I am the garbage man picking up all your trash with odor

I am the elderly woman with heart disease who can't afford care.

I am the single mother working minimum wage to support my pair

I am the extra tax on your bill wherever you go

We are the future, we have a choice!

As I am you and you are me, find your voice.





# ODYSSEY JUNIOR DIVISION



## Truth Clacks

(parent: Ta'tiana Clacks, Odyssey '18)

My baby brother didn't get the light of day,  
Mortality took his life away.  
George Floyd didn't get to fight,  
Police brutality took his life.  
Breonna Taylor didn't get to stay,  
But anyway, as Huey P. would say,  
I have the people behind me.  
The people are my strength.  
Why are we looking for the right way  
To make our money, when as MLK would say,  
Don't let your dream fade away.  
Just like basketball, when it comes off the rim  
You have to grab the ball and dunk it right back in.  
I have to do this right for my family.  
I have to be the man that my mom told me that I can be.  
We came from kings and queens, no rags and lows,  
But now these days everyone talks about Gucci bags and clothes.  
But it ain't going with you. Go vote to live your life  
and be strong as Jacob Blake, who gave us hope  
to never give up even when your hands are up.





**Samuel Ewing**  
(parent: Sarah Galinski, Odyssey '21)

### Why Vote?

VOTING is important because I want to have a say so in the speed limit in my neighborhood. Do people speed in your neighborhood? Well, on my block there are no speed bumps, nor are there speed limit signs. My cat, Isabelle, got hit by a car.

I'm only 14 years old, but in three years I will be 18, and I WILL VOTE! This is one of many reasons you should vote. Children's safety as well as their pets' safety is very important. What may seem like a very SMALL personal issue to you may be a HUGE, very important issue to others.

So VOTE. I hope my SMALL personal issue opens your mind and heart to VOTE, and not just for the president of the United States but for aldermen and judges and senators—the people who are set in place and high seats by OUR VOTES (your VOICE).



**Jayda Woods**  
(Parent: Shiquita Woods, Odyssey '21)

We shall vote.

We shall **V**ouch for change among us,  
in doing so we become united.

We shall **O**btain a voice to choose a welcome leader,  
in doing so we speak on behalf of our communities

We shall **T**ake advantage of this given right to try to fight for our country,  
in doing so we'll see the outcome of justice

We shall **E**levate ourselves into making sure everyone is equal and treated fairly.

We shall vote.

# ART



**Stanley Sallay**  
**Odyssey '07**



The focal point of my illustration is a man running as if he's in a rush--"I don't have time to figure out who's running and vote." The road that he's running on is broken and leads to nowhere. He's rushing to get to something that may no longer exist anyway, depending on who wins the election.

A little girl looks on, helpless, because voting is something that she can't do herself. He's setting a bad example for future generations to follow. She's standing on an island as if he's deserting her to fend for herself.

Two women friends embrace with completely opposing views (MAGA and BLM on their sleeves) but are able to get along for the betterment of us as a whole instead of who's right and who's wrong. They think of how the nation can benefit as one and not just themselves as individuals.

The skeleton reaches out with one hand and holds a stop watch with the other, conveying the inevitable end we all reach despite how much we rush in the moment. So, it's best to prioritize the things that we choose to invest our time in wisely.

There are protestor silhouettes because unrest often trickles down from being unhappy with the government--unhappiness that can be altered depending on who we choose to be in the White House. One sign reads "vote" and another reads "your future is here." Both are a response to the man running away from them. The pair of dice near his feet is showing how he's choosing to leave his future to chance.

On the right, there's a Madison skyline and an upside-down peace sign.

Trump rides on a Republican elephant, pointing and laughing at the man for the decision he made to run away from voting. I didn't vote four years ago because I thought there was no way Trump would win. Since then, I've wondered how many votes didn't happen because of people who thought the same. A Democratic donkey is sitting there alone because too many people think it really doesn't matter and all politicians are the same. Their minds are as shallow as the water they stand in. The trees reflect the delusion that choosing not to vote means that you'll be exempt from the consequences and "out of the woods."









Faleshuh Walker  
Odyssey '21







Sherri Bester  
Odyssey '08

