

ODYSSEY ORACLE

EMBARKING ON AN ODYSSEY



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EMBARKING ON AN ODYSSEY

odyssey: a long wandering marked by many changes in fortune; from an ancient Greek poem by Homer about the warrior Odysseus' adventure-filled journey home from Troy.



By the dictionary's definition, this course will be a marvelous journey which I feel will be full of wonderful readings, writing assignments, and meaningful discussions. After a long pause in books and intellectual discussions, I am fully ready to embark on

this journey. May this adventure be filled with marvelous thoughts and epic learnings!

(Henry Irisson)



I think this course is called The Odyssey Project because it's for adults facing one of many personal barriers in life. It's about overcoming obstacles; it's exploring literature, philosophy, history, and art and discussing historical figures. It's gaining skills

in critical thinking, a sense of empowerment, and having a stronger voice. All of this can be a challenging, exciting journey or experience.

I believe that this journey of education with the UW Odyssey Program will help me better myself as a single mother of four African American boys today. It will help me achieve my lifetime goals while also paving a way for my children. It will give me the courage to continue my education as a caregiver, showing them to never give up. I think it can help me be able to use my powerful voice to foster relationships without being misunderstood--with patients, their family members, and others. One of my many goals is to provide support and care in a friendly and caring manner with my pride still intact.

(Delisha Smith)



I think the course is named Odyssey Project because each person taking this class will go through their own personal voyage that will change their life. The Odyssey Project is designed to show people they are capable of getting a college degree, to be an

active member in the community, or have a better life. Each book we will read will teach us history and open our eyes to things that have happened that we might not have known about. Each play or poem we read about might awaken some of us to become a writer or poet.

This class will help me get outside my comfort zone, will teach me how to write, how to voice my opinion in an educated way vs snapping at someone because I want change. I walk in this class wanting a better life and future for myself, and the Odyssey Project will give me that. The journey I go through taking this class will give me the tools to continue my education, get a better job, and hopefully one day a become a community leader who will bring everyone together.

(Michelle McKoy)





This course may be called the Odyssey Project because this class is filled with many people from all around the world coming together on one accord to find their own fortunes, but on a journey together.

I can see this class being an odyssey for me because there are many dreams and aspirations that I have in mind. This course is helping set my sail high for a real-life voyage of success in my future. **(Sarah Galinski)**

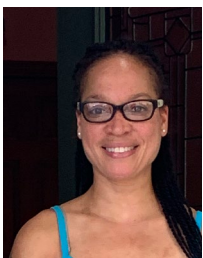
“This course is helping set my sail high for a real-life voyage of success in my future.”



I think this course is named The Odyssey Project because we are all individually on an odyssey, a journey to finish school. Odysseus was on a long journey after the fall of Troy. We may have the same sense of everything falling apart in our lives around us yet still

continuing a journey towards success at the end. Some face harder paths than others and may have their journeys last for years.

I think feeling lost in knowing what to do or how to do it when continuing education in itself is an odyssey. It says in part of the definition “from poverty to affluence,” and I can connect when hearing that. I think affluence can come in multiple forms, and knowledge can be the richest wealth to obtain. I look forward to living through my own odyssey, my long wandering and eventful education journey. **(Sarina Benford)**



I believe that Odyssey will help me through my obstacles and bring forth the immense amount of knowledge that I have yet to discover inside myself. **(Valeria Gordon)**



As I see it, the name works on three levels.

Firstly, and most obviously, it conjures up the idea of an epic personal quest—one that is fraught with peril but which in the end turns out to be transformative

and restorative.

Secondly, as Homer’s *The Odyssey* is one of the foundational texts of Western literature, the name can be interpreted as going back to the roots of knowledge, to form a new baseline for the student.

Lastly, as the word is foreign in origin, it indicates that we will be studying and taking inspiration from many diverse sources and will not be bound by race, culture, or class.

Like Odysseus, I have been desperately lost and close to ruin, and thanks to COVID, I also know what it’s like to be stranded thousands of miles from your home.

I’ve never read *The Odyssey* directly, but almost all of its elements are recognizable to me through its influence. For instance, references to *The Odyssey* appear in the Coen brothers’ ‘Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?’ and when fellow Irishman Leopold Bloom saunters around Dublin in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

While researching this answer I did come across something I found notable in our context. While Odysseus’s journey is undoubtedly heroic, it is not solitary; he receives an enormous amount of help along the way. In the end the hero prevails, but he doesn’t do it alone. **(Farren McDonald)**



I think it’s called Odyssey because everyone has a different background and struggles but can relate in a way to want to make change. We will take this journey together as one and make it epic. **(Yvonne Johnson)**



The Odyssey Project might be an odyssey for me because I am a full-time mom. Juggling schoolwork, mom duties, and a full-time job will be a long and hard adventure. **(Erika Gonzalez)**



I believe this course is called Odyssey because we are all at the point in our lives where we are either searching for the next thing in life or trying to get back on track with things we may have left in the past! I think that this class will bring about a change in everyone. Even if that change is unexpected, it will help us form our future and bring forth fortune. Fortune can be good grades, stronger knowledge, finding what you want to go to school for, or even just the confidence to take that leap and land strong!

"I think that this class will bring about a change in everyone."

For me, I'm hoping this class can get me excited about going back to school and can also keep my head on the path of success! On this journey I want to find my voice and not be scared to use the gifts that God has put in me to use for my future! **(Kwan Hogan)**



I noticed during the two previous meetings that most of the students among us have stopped their school or university studies for personal or professional reasons. But now we are here: we are Odyssey Project students and are back to school. We want to resume and continue from where we were obliged to drop out of school. Certainly, going back to school after a long time is hard. But we are here, and with



perseverance, motivation, and strong determination, we will get there—better late than never.

How might the class be an Odyssey for me? I never dropped out of school, had my master's degree, and had started doctoral studies in Paris. I needed to acquire some professional experience. But sometimes winds blow counter to what ships desire. I didn't know that my move

from one continent to another would force me to go back to studies.

With this piece of paper that I got from the University of Paris, I could have worked everywhere in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and especially the Arab Gulf countries, with a dream salary. Unfortunately for me, I cannot work with my French diploma here in the US.

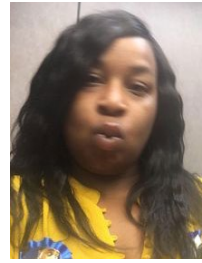
During my journey to improve my personal and professional knowledge, my car broke down. During my struggles, I met a wonderful person who was an Odyssey student. She always told me, "You didn't come this far to only come this far." Finally, I believe that every bad situation will have something positive come from it; even a broken clock shows the correct time twice a day. I think I found my something positive... the Odyssey Project. **(Souad Bidar)**



I think this course is called Odyssey because we are wandering into different literature and having adventures in the community through all our classmates, our backgrounds, our different experiences, and what we read and learn. This will be an odyssey because there is always an adventure in reading new things and learning different cultures. **(Brianna Johnson)**



It is called an Odyssey Project because this project will be on this journey with students for a long time. This class will be an odyssey to me because this is a stepping stone for me completing my purpose. **(Tisha Butler)**



I think this class is called the Odyssey Project because we're discussing different cultures, writing, poems, and reading. The Odyssey Project might be an odyssey for me because it's going to get me back to the old Paris, who used to like writing, reading, and refreshing my mind. **(Paris Foster)**



I think the class is called Odyssey Project because it's bringing everyone together to become successful. I think the word Project is associated with the class because it means we all have something that needs to be completed. I think the word

Odyssey is associated with the class because we are all going on a journey to be better in the future. **(Cashae Davis)**



It shows how you can go through many trials and tribulations and come across many different negative energies from people that are trying to get in the way of you being successful at what you're trying to accomplish.

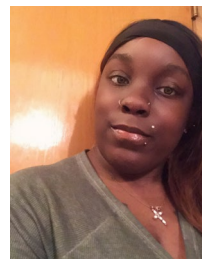
"We are all going on a journey to be better in the future."

Maybe this class is called the Odyssey Project because we may all be going on a long learning journey on which a lot of wonderful things will happen along the way. **(LaBresha Green)**



I think that the name odyssey was chosen to help people on the journey of self-realization, but also the learning and understanding of others culturally, artistically, and socially.

It can be an odyssey for me by helping my creative side come to the surface more. It can be a journey of self-realization which then in part helps me be a better person for others. Hopefully, it can help me be more confident in my ability to learn, write, and share with others without fear of failure and flaw. Also, I would like to be less critical of my writing. **(Jessica Jacobs)**

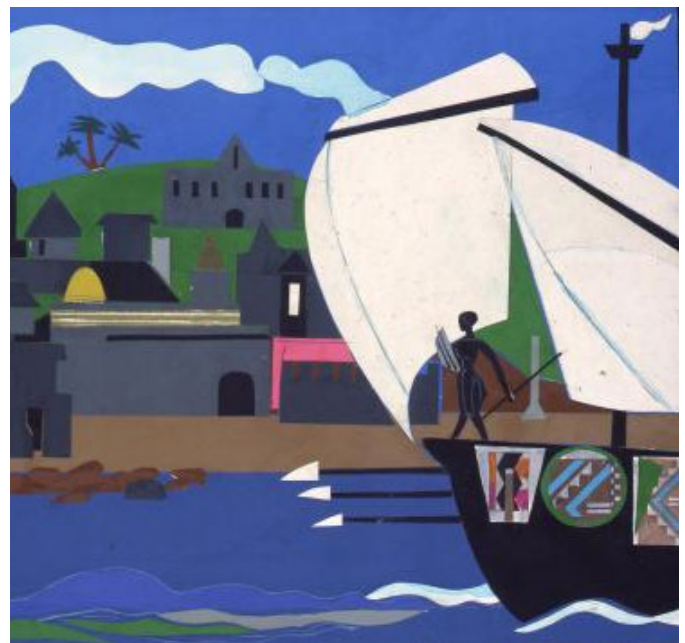


This will be a long journey together, but I will succeed on this journey with no roadblocks. **(Anjelica Brown)**



For me, I feel like Odyssey applies. At one point, I would have considered myself an intellectual; I was very interested in education and learning in general. I got away from taking time to learn, grow, and focus on me. I view this class

as the first step back to that mindset. **(Calvin Balentine)**





Life is an Odyssey. This course is just another stage or change in your life's fortune, a new part of life's journey. Choosing to participate in this Odyssey program will alter and make changes in your future and change your fortune.

For me, it is just another addition to my life's journey and a welcome addition to my own odyssey. **(Feather Lloyd)**



I think this class is called the Odyssey Project because basically our life is an adventure, and we do bump into hardships along the way. I have had many hardships in my life that I had to overcome. This program won't be 100% easy, but I

will overcome it. **(Sunni Walker)**



I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because it is a direct path to many fortunes and life-changing events through the power of education and academic success.

It's called Odyssey because it's a life-changing journey to the many fortunes of life through academic success and achievements. This project is going to be an odyssey for me by sculpting my future and changing my future from poverty to riches. **(Stephaney Obi)**



I think this course was named "The Odyssey Project" to reflect the

journey I have begun with many others. This will be an odyssey for me because after years of procrastinating to get back in

school, I have finally found a path that may lead me to success. **(Asia Pearson)**

"This project is going to be an odyssey for me by sculpting my future and changing my future from poverty to riches."



This class will be an odyssey because it is about writing. Going through the Oracles, chatting with previous students, and being in class thus far, I see that the Odyssey Project will be very helpful and beneficial in all aspects, and I'm thankful. ☺ **(Shiquita Woods)**



This odyssey will be a never-ending quest for my future and children's future. It takes you many places, and you can go many places after.

This program will let everyone know to never give up on the journey of learning. Just working towards a great future can make my dreams come alive. **(Dana Stokes)**

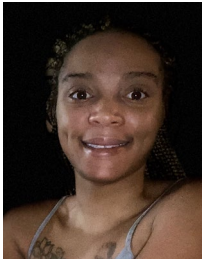


I think this program is called the Odyssey Project because it is a journey for most of us that we are scared or anxious to take that will result in many different outcomes and achievements at the end.

I'm sure this class will push me beyond what I either forgot I could do or teach me new things. It will certainly be an adventure of meeting new people and diving into new topics. I can't wait! **(Tawania Alston)**



The name Odyssey ties into the program because this is a different path, and it can bring good fortune. **(Burnett Reed)**



helping me discover more in myself. **(Keyanna Wilson)**

I think this course is called Odyssey due to the impact and change they help make on their students' lives. I think this class will be an odyssey for me by

"This class will be an odyssey for me by helping me discover more in myself."



school without learning how to write well. I want to learn to understand and write poetry. **(Thedora Smith)**

Odyssey is a long journey and a new beginning. I hope to receive from the class a chance to find my voice through reading and writing. I skipped over writing fundamentals in school, just ice skating my way through high



would be a long road ahead. This class will be an odyssey for me by taking me on a journey through worlds that I have not yet been on. I feel that I will discover many jewels on this odyssey.

(Faleshuh Walker)

I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because the person or people that first embarked on this educational journey could not anticipate what was to come but knew that it



those moments when expressing our ideas may be difficult. **(Betsy Alfaro)**

I think the class is called the Odyssey Project because it's a form of guidance or help on our journey through life. Some of us may not know how to express our ideas or feelings, so I feel that the Odyssey Project is a form of guidance to help us through



this journey. **(Krystal Smith)**

I feel like the word "odyssey" was chosen because the class/course itself is a journey for most of us that are in the program. To me, the class will be an odyssey because of the different events and experiences I will have during



This class is called Odyssey because I think it describes life in general. Life is about cycles, our ups and downs, life and death, but we are in continuous motion! Odyssey is life in a nutshell. **(Fernando Galindo)**



We can be and are sounding boards of each other's thoughts and voices. **(Diane Walton)**

NOTICING NATURE

When I'm upset or angry, my first thought has always been to clear my head at the lake. I don't know why, but seeing the subtle ripples in the water and the beautiful golden sunset reflecting onto the water makes me feel clear headed. I listen to music that helps release my emotions. Then right before I leave, I get out of my car and actually stand by the water, usually at Warner Park Beach with gritty sand beneath my feet and the wafting smell of seaweed. The sound of the waves somehow carries away my thoughts. My problems seem a little further away, and calmness sets in. For that ONE moment, I just feel a little lighter. **(Tawania Alston)**



I went on a beautiful hike at Devil's Lake. It was straight uphill, with lots of rocks, and you could see moss everywhere. The rustling of the leaves was nice and as crisp as the air was on this blue-sky morning. I can still see the dew on the leaves and the little grass that was there. The smell of old dirty wet leaves was in the air because it was late October. Squirrels chased each other through the leaves and buried their nuts, only to forget where they are at the time. It was a very pleasant time. **(Valeria Gordon)**

out to view the water. It was so blue and seemed like it stretched on forever. Walking along the beach, I listened to the crashing of the waves as they clashed against each other, and I felt the warm sand in between my toes. The sun scorched down onto my skin, making the coolness of the water even more refreshing as I dipped my feet in. I can still close my eyes and feel like I am there. **(Sarina Benford)**

I went to Puerto Rico in 2016, and that was the first time I had seen an ocean. Getting off the plane and smelling the warm air and feeling the humidity against my skin is something I will never forget. There were sounds similar to the ribbit of a frog in the distance, and I was told it was a local bird they have. It was very dark when I landed, so I was unable to see the water, but I could smell it.

When I woke the next morning, it was like a dream. The colors in the sky melted together in the most vivid sunrise. I opened my heavy patio door and walked





When the sun retracts into its lair behind the clouds, it leaves its glowing red and gold tails adorning the western side of the sky, forming a scene that has enchanted humanity forever; the sight of the sunset awakens many hearts. There are some people who contemplate the sunset and remember the immigrant or loved one, but the time of sunset sometimes arouses the feeling of pain and separation, just like the separation of light that the sun gives completely to the face of the earth. The darkness descends after the light, but it is a calmer darkness, with the beautiful moon and the bright stars. . . .

Sunset is not the end of life: it is the end of a day and the start of new hope. Do not be among those who let the sun go down forever, but rather among those who will receive the sun the next day wonderfully with a lively and renewed spirit.
(Souad Bidar)

I once had to do a solo in the northern Wisconsin woods. Me being a city boy, I was terrified. All that was on my mind was every horror movie I'd ever seen. But after the first night, I was surprised to be at peace--to hear the trees rock back and forth, to hear the woodpecker knocking. It was quietness, yet so loud.
(Fernando Galindo)

I had never been camping before, so when a friend asked if I wanted to go camping with them, I said, "Sure, why not? It will be fun." Well, it wasn't fun

at all. It was July, with nice warm weather outside, so I didn't bring a jacket with me, but once it was night time it was cold, very cold, and I was freezing. There were bugs everywhere, bugs flying everywhere, and I ended up getting bit by the bugs. The noise of the bugs everywhere made me scared since I don't like bugs. I did a lot of complaining and wishing I hadn't gone, and I said I wanted to go home so many times. My camping trip that I thought was going to be fun ended up not so fun at all, making me not want to go camping again. **(Anjelica Brown)**

I remember a black-sanded beach in El Salvador. Seeing the black sand for the first time was amazing. I never knew how beautiful it was going to be. I stayed in a small hotel right next the beach, went to sleep smelling fresh air, and woke up to feel the sand in between my toes. I got to see the sunset right over the ocean. Looking out into the never-ending water made me feel like life is never ending.
(Betsy Alfaro)

I was at JROTC Camp my sophomore year in high school and was stung by a bee. I know a bee sting is minor to a lot of people, but I am part of the minority that have an allergic reaction to the bee sting. It was a hot, humid day and my platoon was doing an obstacles course in a dusty field. It was during the time when I was climbing up the rope to get to the other side that I heard a sound in my ear. In my mind, all I was doing was praying that my mind was playing tricks on me. Unfortunately, my mind was not playing tricks on me. It was a bee. I had two options:

Get stung by the bee!

Try to move away from the bee and risk hurting myself; I still might get stung by the bee.

I went with option 1. I ended up getting an allergic reaction.
(Tisha Butler)

Nature is LIFE. When my Four Piece Spicy traveling crew and I are on yet another adventure around the United States, we typically drive. I love road trips. Every so often, there are bugs that splatter on the windshield. On our road trip yesterday to Ootsburg, Wisconsin, there was a leaf that glided ever so heavenly down . . . left, right . . . twirl, flip and dip, until this reddish-yellow leaf finally hit our windshield. . . bloop!



To my surprise, there holding on for dear life was a mighty but TINY red ant. I could see this little guy's antenna rapidly shaking. My kids yelled out, "Mama, maybe it's hungry!" "No," shouted another, "Maybe he is lost." I laughed and let down my window. "What are you doing?" cried my daughter. "She must be hungry," I stated, "so I'll toss this freshly baked, fluffy, cinnamon-infused bread crumb to her."

We now have an honorary fifth member to our Spicy Traveling Crew. **(Sarah Galinski)**

I will always remember the first time I went swimming in the ocean; that's a smell and taste I won't forget. You taste saltiness after licking your lips and smell fresh air with a tiny hint of burgers and fries that comes from the food stand next to the beach. **(Erika Gonzalez)**

I visited one of nature's most tropical/ colorful islands I've ever seen. My fiancée, her mom, and I visited St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. When I say colorful, I mean from the plane to the ground you could see bright blue ocean, sharks, land, old ships, beautiful yellow tulips, hot red

roses, multi-color daisies, and animals of all sorts. We landed and were greeted by the best tour guides I could've ever met. We had Virgin Jell-O shots in pink, blue, green, and yellow.

When we left the airport, we went straight to the beach. We saw clear saltwater, blue as beautiful as the sky, which could have been mirroring the ocean. It was so clear you could see the fish swimming up to our waist. We fed the fish, we swam with the fish, and we even snorkeled a bit. We ate Caribbean Blue crab caught fresh there on the islands. We witnessed them catch them and make them for our dinner. **(Burnett Reed)**



One rainy day as I was getting off the bus coming home from school, I found myself in an instant tsunami. I casually stepped over mini floods and rapid creeks that somehow ended up in the middle of the road. As I approached the front door, my feet making squishing noises with every step, I reached my hand into my soaked pockets that had been sealed shut by the rain, where my keys were... or at least where I thought they were! After the unpacking, repacking, and reshuffling of my backpack, I realized my keys, like the adventurous Waldo, were nowhere to be found. Without a spare or a chimney to shimmy through, I sat in the chilling rain while it tapped me on my head and shoulders almost mockingly as if to say, "You lost your keys, you lost your keys!"

And just that quick, the harassment from the brutal rain stopped and my mom came home with the key I had somehow left with her—the key that would unlock warmth, comfort, and safety! **(Kwan Hogan)**

Growing up, I spent most of my childhood at my grandma's house in the country. My grandma always had a full house. Most days were chaotic and stressful due to my family always fighting. My only time to get peace was late at night when everyone fell asleep. I would go outside, sit on the porch, and listen to the wind flowing through the trees, making soft whistling sounds, while the crickets chirped all around me. These sounds helped me de-stress and gave me strength to face another day. I still do this when I have a bad day. **(Michelle McKoy)**

A few years ago, my dad, my sister, and I hiked down Mammoth Mountain in California. The place was normally a ski resort, but we went in summer when it looked like the moon. We had intended to hike in Yosemite but overshot with our booking and ended up somewhere that was closer to the Donner Pass than the lush valleys of the national park. It was still beautiful, but in a different way.

From the very top we could see far across the Sierras. The closest mountains to us were

desolate and grey; trees huddled close to the sides, and iron deposits streaked the jagged peaks. But as the mountains moved off to the horizon, they softened into serene waves of blue. They looked so shapely and ordered, like paintings of the ocean in a children's book. We moved down, following whatever bits of trail we could find. Rain fell in scattered patches about us. Chalk broke beneath our boots, rocks smashed to blonde scree by the frost of countless winters. It was an eerily quiet, unforgiving landscape.

Further down we came to a ruined forest. What I took from afar to be strange flowers were just mounds and mounds of dead pine cones that had rolled from somewhere higher up. The trees themselves were hardly recognizable as such—slumped, cracked, arthritic things. The bark hung from their limbs like flayed flesh. Some had fallen out of the ground completely.

I remember thinking that nature was full of visual echoes. A fallen trunk looked just like a whale's rib that used to sit leaning against the wall of my grandfather's house, white and curved. A pile of antlers ahead eventually resolved into dead branches. An alkali lake was like a huge eye watching a hawk hover in the soundless heat. Sometimes in the husks of trees I saw suggestions of faces—bear, wolf, and even human.

(Farren McDonald)

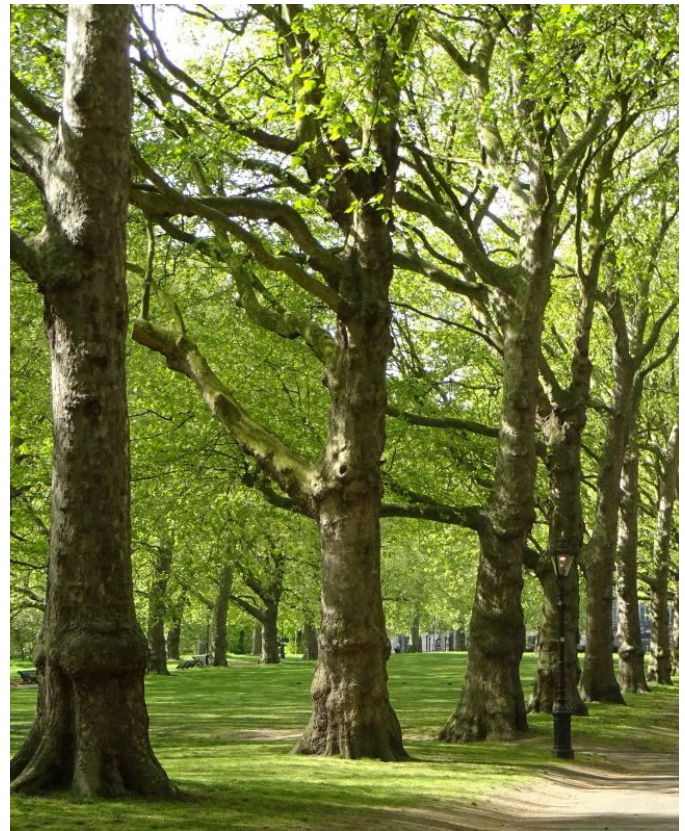
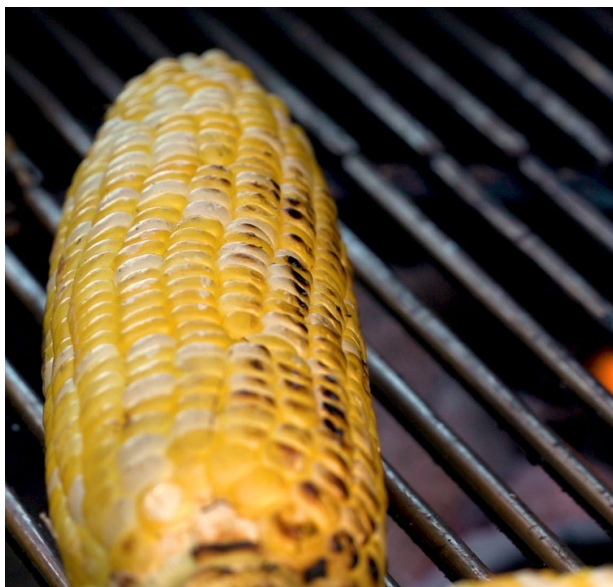


Nowadays all you hear the children complain about is how bored they are. If it's not about a video game/tablet/iPhone or some place that has to do with money, everything else is so boring. It's tragic that due to the new way of living "The New Normal" (started way before the Pandemic), our children have been robbed of their childhood. When I feel stressed, I still use nature to unwind. I go for walks around the neighborhood enjoying the air when the sun goes down to get peace of mind. Sometimes at night I sit in my garage with the door up watching the bright stars in the sky, listening to the crickets or the cars driving down a nearby highway. Nature gives something unique to every season. **(Delisha Smith)**

In general, I'm not really a nature type of person, but I remember back in April fetching water from a stream. Some parts of the stream had clear water, and some parts had muddy water that we couldn't make use of even after filtering until the dirt settled to the bottom. The only thing I could see were trees, grass, and mosquito. It smelt like moisture, fresh mud, and a forest.

Another experience I had was roasting corn; we had to take off the husk, build, and start a fire with charcoal, matches, and paper. The only thing you could hear were the tree branches making a whooping sound. You could see the mosquitos and fireflies flying around. I can still smell the sweet smell of fresh

corn being roasted. I can still feel the source of heat coming from the charcoal pit. It was a nice thing, fun; we would tell stories, run around to keep the mosquitoes away, and spend time outdoors as a happy family. **(Stephaney Obi)**



I remember when I was younger and on a field trip, we got to learn about all the different trees and plants in the world and how the trees help us breathe. From there, I became obsessed with trees. I think they are strong and beautiful despite the fact bugs live in them. I love the strength and beauty of a tree and the different colors trees in every season. I love the fact that trees can give us feelings and moods. **(Yvonne Johnson)**

As I walked through the royal green field, the grass smelled crisp, the air felt thick, and the other children laughed and yelled sounds of joy. I, however, screamed in agony as I approached a territorial swarm of bees. I raced through the field and managed to leave most of the bees behind, but one of the giant golden hive guards somehow landed on my arm. All I felt was heat as if I had burned myself with an iron! I sprinted home, where my mother soothed my wound. After that day, I knew nature was not my cup of tea. **(Asia Pearson)**



My family and I love to hike. We recently hiked a trail in Monona, WI, that used to be and still is an Indian graveyard—spooky, huh! There were depressed trees and a nice view of ponds and the lake. There were plenty of mosquitos, and we even spotted a badger or groundhog. We didn't get close enough to tell. Yes, I was scared, LOL. There were so many hills and narrow trails with roots coming out of the ground connecting to each other. As usual, we kept water

bottles with for long and short adventures.

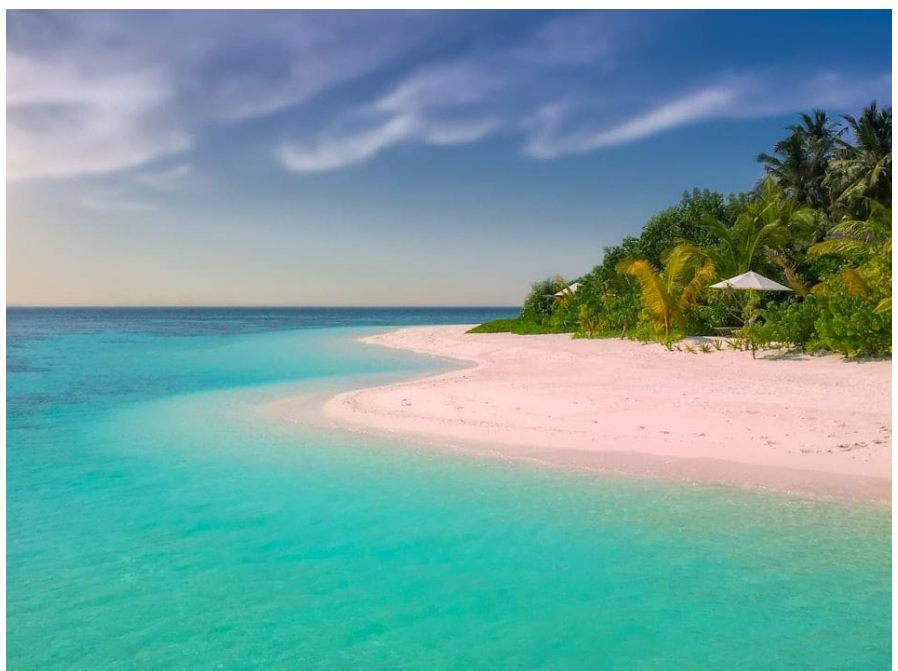
(Dana Stokes)

Deep in the forest, smell of pinecones, fresh grass, animals playing, birds crying, waterfalls running over, fresh air blowing, feet touching water, feeling the breeze of fresh air. **(Paris Foster)**

The ocean was so clear it looked fake. The sand was so white and hot it burned my feet. As my son built sand castles, we felt the Bahama breeze. There I felt so relaxed. **(Sunni Walker)**

On a hot summer afternoon, I made a commitment to myself to exercise more. I decided to take a walk up to the park for a change of scenery. When I got there I sat on my yoga mat with folded legs. I tried my best to observe nature and soak up the sun. In the stillness of the day, a calm voice came to me and said "go walk." As I rose to walk, the feeling of grass under my bare feet felt somehow natural. I was at first fearful of stepping on something hard, but the fear dissipated as I placed one foot in front of the other. I started to feel a presence that I never felt before, as if I was guided to go someplace. I listened to the birds as they communicated to each other, and I instantly became humbled. I understood why my ancestors and other indigenous people turned to nature for answers. They needed not to study to understand and conquer nature; they knew that they were nature and a part of nature. **(Thedora Smith)**

Flowing through life freely....it is freeing...like water in its slow waves...tranquil and chill. It unfolds in front of me at a slow pace...gracefully, yet sometimes chaotically...Ahhh, yes, gracefully chaotic. Such a beautiful crazy thing. **(Jessica Jacobs)**





Reminiscing

As I lay there in the ocean on a warm summer's night
 Glancing at the stars like an eagle in disguise.
 The deep lake overflowing over the rocks,
 bringing chills to my spine.
 Loving the intensity of the summer's night ending,
 but wishing it was still the beginning. **(Shiquita Woods)**

My moment in nature made me whole
 Forced me to meditate, mediate, and set goals
 My moment in nature made me tough
 Pushed me to my limits, forced me to trust
 My moment in nature gave me clarity
 It wisps away my excuses, made me see clearly
 My moment in nature landed me at Odyssey
 They made me a proud student at age 33! **(Faleshuh Walker)**

Have you ever experienced a Chicago winter, without heat?
 Stepping outside in the middle of December
 Trying to catch the sun
 Grandma put plastic on the windows
 How much did it help? None!
 Winter is on the attack
 This must be personal
 Whole family bundled up
 Still that chill on your back
 It's like that hawk is hunting you. **(Calvin Balentine)**



Gritty beach for miles, ripples on forever in the distance.
 Air crisp, skin pimples a slow shiver down my spine.
 The blue night felt so right as the waves danced perfectly with the moonlight.
 It flicked perfectly on my paper. Along with the glow of the fire, I released my true desire.
 The fire within, cooled by the wind along with the flowing of water. **(Feather Lloyd)**



Hear the click clack of the hooves.
 Dirt flying by trampled feet,
 The breeze blowing my hair in the relaxing wind.
 Bouncing up and down like a kid on a trampoline.
 Taking in the horrendous smell
 Letting all the worries go,
 Passing through a crowd full of trees
 Horses running gracefully side by side
 Something that gives me relief from my scorching mind
 Horseback riding is a favorite of mine. **(Cashae Davis)**

I will never forget my childhood fishing trips with my friend Miguel, who was 25 years older than me. He was like an uncle to me. He taught me the essentials of fishing – how to tie knots, where to find live bait (shrimps and worms), where to look for fish, and how to be safe when on the river.

We didn't have a boat, and we did not even have fishing poles. We fished with about ten to twenty feet of fishing line and a hood plus a weight (old sparkplugs) tightened around a soda can or a cylindric shaped piece of wood. When my friend Miguel said fish weren't biting on the bottom using cork as a floater, sometimes it worked perfectly, and other times it did not.

I will never forget the time he caught a crab while using live shrimp as bait. Crab do not really get hooked, but rather they hold on to whatever bait you're using and do not let go. That time, unfortunately, the crab decided to let go of the bait right on the sandy shore (river shores are formed when the water is low; people sometimes call this phenomenon river beaches), and he ran towards it as fast as he could. Unfortunately, it was a little too



late. I could see the crab from afar, remembering its pincers being blue on the top and red on the bottom. It was huge, the biggest I had ever seen.



That afternoon we did not catch anything, but the fact that we almost caught a crab in the river (crab are rarely seen or caught in the river) made our day. We talked about it for days and about how he ran and jumped into the water getting nothing but his shorts and legs wet and full of sand. My grandpa was very happy when we told him, I think happier because I had a blast earlier that day. I would never forget that evening, which was hot and humid but just perfect. **(Henry Irisson)**

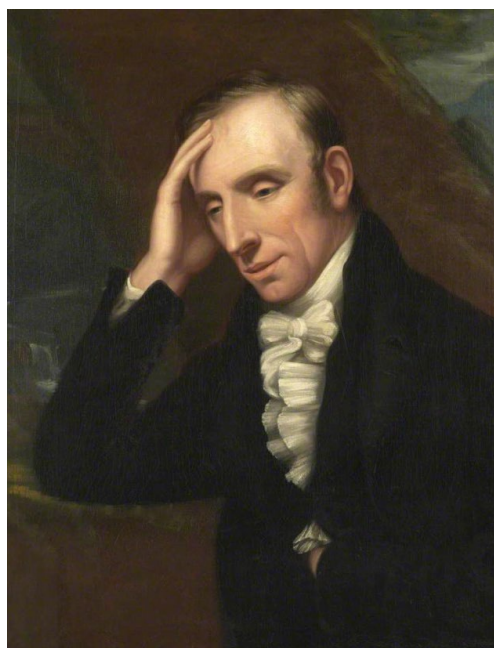
WANDERING WITH WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

*"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"
I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils. . .*

*For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.*

He is or feels alone and wandering. He comes across a large field of daffodils—beautiful scenery, calming atmosphere. He enjoys this as if in a meditative state; Nature brings him peace and tranquility. When he lies on his couch alone, disconnected and upset/depressed, he references this memory for joy and pleasure. In the bliss of his mind's eye, he again dances with the daffodils.
(Feather Lloyd)

Most days my life is so busy. I am rushing to work or babysitting my grandkids. I miss out on the simple things. Then late at night when I am lying in bed, I will realize the leaves on the trees are turning into beautiful fall colors or that maybe my grandson said a new word. It is not until things get calm that I can reflect on the beauty of my day.
(Michelle McKoy)



What I take from this is that the littlest things such as nature and flowers are enough to make one unhappy person happy. The sight of them just made his problems seem miniscule at that moment. He didn't think anyone would guess what abundance of happiness he got just from seeing daffodils and the nature surrounding them.
(Tawania Alston)

When the poet feels lonely, or depressed, he imagines / thinks of daffodils, and his heart fills with pleasure. "And then my heart with pleasure fills / And dances with the daffodils." One feels an absolute serenity and calm.

I get this feeling most of the time before going to bed after a long and difficult day. I try to make negative things positive and go to sleep peacefully, hoping that tomorrow will be rosy. Always after the storm there is good weather and after darkness there is the sunrise. We all have our own special moment, like a recap of the day. I take a good dose of hope and courage to be able to welcome a new step the next day. **(Souad Bidar)**

“I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” says take in every single moment, for each moment is its own treasure. I relate to smiling later because the moment wasn’t the time to smile, or storing that moment away so it can come in handy later. **(Calvin Balentine)**

What seems to be clear to me is that he enjoys nature; it makes him happy. When he isn’t able to see nature/flowers, he sits at home and daydreams about it. What was confusing was how he mentioned wealth because nature/flowers are free, not costing money to see. I often find myself daydreaming about fun events I have taken my son to and we have both enjoyed. **(Anjelica Brown)**

I love this poem. The line “I wandered lonely as a cloud” can seem a little confusing because he suggests clouds are lonely. In my opinion, they are far from that. Clouds are never alone because they are always surrounded by other clouds. Maybe he says this to say he is surrounded by many but still feels alone. Maybe this is his way of explaining being an introvert looking among others as extroverts. **(Jessica Jacobs)**

It’s clear he was at ease in a peaceful bliss alone. I can relate to “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” because I like to sit and daydream in the snowy field near my home and just lie there stuck, thinking, feeling, seeing, breathing beneath the air, lonely as a cloud. **(Dana Stokes)**

Nature brought him peace. Although he wandered lonely, he didn’t feel as though he was. He seemed to be one with nature so much so that he had crowds of company. I assumed that the daffodils were good company to him because of how he described them.

(Faleshuh Walker)

I truly related, and I felt as though I was a cloud. What I took away from this poem is to sit back and embrace nature for what it is and all the abundance that it offers. Take in the moments of fresh air . . . the rain drops and the dew after the rain. **(Sarah Galinski)**

When I read “I wandered lonely as a cloud,” I felt as though he was alone in his mind and thoughts, and his mind continued to wander as he listens to the breeze as the daffodils blow. I also wander off in my thoughts and often am elsewhere or wish I were elsewhere. **(Yvonne Johnson)**



*"My Heart Leaps Up"
My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky.
So was it when my life began,
So is it now I am a man,
So be it when I shall grow old
Or let me die!*

To me, he clearly said that he enjoyed the rainbow in the sky. Throughout his entire life he wants to be able to enjoy it in the same way he did when he first saw it. He even went as far as to say he would rather die if he could not enjoy it. To me, that rainbow symbolizes happiness and life.

(Asia Pearson)

Rainbows give light after a storm, noting pain and suffering and beautiful light after hard times. That extra light can lift spirits in many different ways. I'm thinking he's referring to himself as a feature of nature and feeling that energy in his uplifting.

(Burnett Reed)

In the excerpt "My Heart Leaps Up," I was able to clearly see his connection to the beauty of the rainbow, making his heart happy, and I think earth's beauty is what he connects with. He talked about his heart leaping when he saw the rainbow in the sky, and I can connect with that in seeing the ocean for the first time.

(Sarina Benford)

"My Heart Leaps Up": perhaps it's a testament to Wordsworth's influence that this poem is indistinguishable from a Hallmark Card. The language is very clear so it's easy to understand; that being said, it really lacks any specificity which might make it more interesting. It does perhaps show that simpler language travels down the ages better. **(Farren McDonald)**

"My Heart Leaps Up" – This poem is cool. Rainbows are one of the most amazing things to see, but they go away so quickly. **(Fernando Galindo)**

I loved the "My Heart Leaps Up" poem. The clear message to me was that no matter where life takes you, you should always stop and enjoy the little things in life! I agree completely with this. I do not want to be too busy or too focused on myself that I can't stop and admire a painting, smell the roses, or enjoy a song being played by someone on the street! **(Kwan Hogan)**

In "My Heart Leaps Up," . . . nature is there eternally. As a child I loved to feel the breeze while enjoying the scenery of the trees and beautiful landscaped houses riding my bike around the neighborhood. I loved to be outside jumping rope with my cousins, playing at the park with friends, cheering the boys playing street ball, dancing and flipping in the wind. I remember along with neighborhood friends we used to build tree houses out of cardboard boxes. I loved playing outside in the snow at wintertime; sledding, having snowball fights, making snow angels, building snowmen etc. At no cost physically, financially, and/or mentally, filled with curiosity, I found in nature there was always something to do. **(Delisha Smith)**



LOVING THE AUERBACH LOVE STORY

Students read two stories Emily Auerbach published in the Wisconsin State Journal about her parents' journey out of poverty, long-lived marriage, survival of adversity, and generosity towards the Odyssey Project.

I love that they came from different backgrounds, but when they met, none of it mattered. People were against Wanda marrying Bob because of where he came from, but she still overlooked all of that because love overcomes all. When I see older couples still going on dates, taking walks holding hands, it makes me so happy. I hope one day I have a love like theirs, and I know Bob and his family miss Wanda so much! Death never does get easier—you do just miss them more each day—but somehow peace starts to set in and you feel just a little more able to live and function without them. **(Tawania Alston)**

I loved reading the articles about Bob Auerbach and his family. They gave me the warming sense of my grandparents. My grandpa was born in Germany, moved to New York around the age of 13, and met my grandma in college as well; they too have been married for over 50 years. My grandma was from Michigan, and they married very young also. They have very parallel family values, Bob and my grandpa, and both took education very seriously.

Reading about how loving and selfless Bob is and all the wonderful things he has done is so awesome. After overcoming the odds of being a Jewish immigrant and becoming a highly recognized scientist, he has given back so much. He supports a program that recognizes and



helps those with social, racial, religious, and age-associated barriers and offers them an amazing chance and opportunity to succeed. This program is an amazing tool to be given in the odyssey that is your life, and I understand why the program was given its name. It is so amazing that he matched \$100,000 of his own money to help continue to fund the program. His story is truly inspiring. **(Sarina Benford)**



Sarina at age 19 with her grandpa

For real, I really love the two articles about Robert and Wanda Auerbach. I love how they didn't care what people thought. He was really for his wife. When they spent \$500 on their wedding, that was smart because it's not about—or shouldn't be about—the money. I really love in the articles how Emily said her father felt that "No task was women's work" because they were equal; I respect that. That's a marriage I want. "No, it doesn't get better, I miss her more." ☹️ That's so true. **(Paris Foster)**



Wow. What a profound story and life. It's always amazing when I read about men and women. Mr. Bob is an inspiration, a model. It's good parents like this who raise good children and, in turn, create a better world. I must say, I am also grateful to be a very small part of their legacy. **(Fernando Galindo)**

Determination is a MUST! I will live! I will survive! It's a gotta do life. I want it, so I will it. Marriage is a union until death. Loyalty! Aging gracefully is priceless. How you treat others and live your life ages you very well. Love is eternal. These stories were beautiful love stories. Thanks, Bob! Pay it forward! Love, Life, Travel . . . by will or by force. **(Sarah Galinski)**

I would like to start off saying this love story was amazing! This reminds me of the movie "The Lovings." Unfortunately, this generation may never know this kind of love. They say that history repeats itself; when it comes to this part of history, when love was real and respect was given, I haven't seen it in the 31 years I have been alive.

I have been unhappily married for almost four years and am currently going through divorce. I have been going back and forth with the judge and state representatives of child support for the last six months. The last hearing was September 29th, and for the third time I was denied the divorce that I deserve

because "he had to work." **(LaBresha Green)**

I liked how Bob used his terrible upcoming and discrimination to make sure others don't struggle the same.

Just like Bob, I was raised in a household where we believe women and men are equal and there are no gender roles. When I was growing up, my dad helped with household chores and even sometimes would cook dinner. **(Erika Gonzalez)**

When reading both articles, I found it apparent that both Bob and Wanda were meant for each other. Love is a crazy rollercoaster, but if you are with the right person, those crazy ups and downs will feel small and less frightening.

My personal favorite part about both articles was when Bob explains why he doesn't see himself as the head of the household, how the respect for the woman he loves trumps the need for him to feel more powerful than her. Many people, if put in a situation just like this, would have probably given up a long time ago. The fact that they stood together when people were saying the marriage would not work out or when they came up on hard times, such as the fire, shows that their love is not tainted by the social norms. Through all hard times, there is always a light that you can find shining in the heart of someone you love! **(Kwan Hogan)**





once my immigration situation gets taken care of, I will continue to donate and even give away myself in person thousands of toys.

Bob's personal story is moving and thoughtful; he is a role model to follow. I'm glad I got to read your parents' story, Emily. Thank you for sharing, and thank you and the wonderful team for all the things you have done for us and previous generations. This program is awesome, and it truly encourages people to continue dreaming and accomplishing those dreams.

(Henry Irisson)

As an undocumented student and person, I truly understand what Bob went through. The fear of someone knocking on your door with a deportation order, the feeling of being always persecuted, and how unwelcoming a society can be with newly arrived immigrants, I feel all this to my core.

It's a very beautiful story of love and dedication to one another no matter what outsiders thought. They chose love and stayed strong and grounded in it. And they succeeded in life even when they were persecuted for loving one another. I value everything that stands for. **(Jessica Jacobs)**

I was also moved by the amount of money he donated to our program; that says a lot about the character of a person. I have my own personal Facebook non-profit page where I have donated toys and shoes to kids in need from 2011 until 2017. I got a couple of donations a few times, but it was mainly myself putting 3-6% percent of my annual income into it. I had to stop the last few years as I have struggled with a lot of things, like losing jobs, my transportation, struggling to pay rent, etc. I'm hoping to go back to helping others eventually. It helps me if people like my page, which is called Drawing Smiles. It has photos of my sister giving away the toys. I'm hoping that





Bob and Wanda receive a Friend of the UW Odyssey Project award

Both stories related to their struggles and how they loved each other with everything in them. They had a long marriage. Bob Auerbach was very generous to the Odyssey Project. Despite the hatred of the Holocaust, he embraced diversity. The joy he had playing the piano bought joy to many. Everyone will always remember the piano man. **(Yvonne Johnson)**

I believe Bob and Wanda were pioneers of their time. Their personal hardships made them both into beautiful loving people. I aspire to be as positive in dark times as Bob and Wanda were. I appreciate the push against separation and respect for love over all. My multi-ethnic bloodline from many proud generations may have had a harder experience. It's refreshing to see people who turn hardships into blessings while so many others become bitter and hateful. Your life seems amazing, Bob. I honesty would just like to know more. Thanks for sharing. **(Feather Lloyd)**

My own wedding cost around \$300. That's shoes, dress, a new shirt for me, and the license. I invited only three close friends and my mother.

After the ceremony, we caught the ferry across the bay to Oakland and drank in Heinhold's First

and Last Chance Saloon. This is where Jack London first realized he wanted to be a writer. The floor collapsed during the 1906 earthquake and has never been repaired. Now the whole place is slanted, so if you put your drink on the bar it's liable to slide off and smash against the back wall.

Afterwards we went to an Irish bar started by some people I grew up with. We had fish and chips and drank whiskey and Guinness until we passed out.

The next morning, I had to go to court due to accepting a fake ID during a shift at the bar I worked. I was still wearing the suit I got married in. I was cleared of the charges and we went for burritos.

I've honestly never really understood the need for a huge party; the only thing that matters is the relationship between the two people, in my opinion. The ludicrous cake isn't going to help when you run into trouble. **(Farren McDonald)**

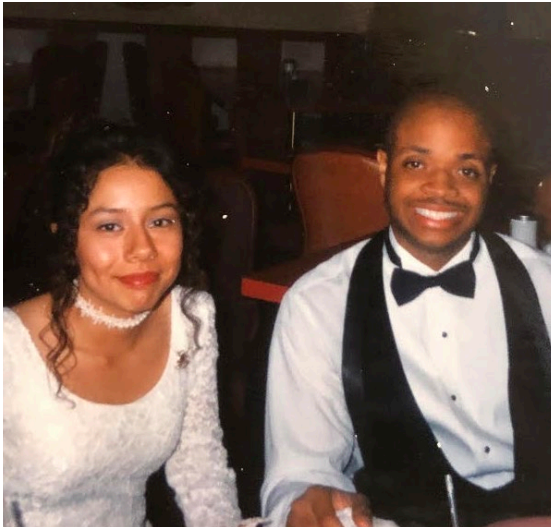


Farren's wedding photo

Wanda and Robert have a marriage that many people dream of. The thought of 62 years filled with companionship, respect, and love is very rare in today's world. I was married for seven years and did not feel any of that, well maybe love in the beginning. Marriage is hard work, and they made it seem as simple.

Robert faced many hardships in life as a child, but he did not continue to live in trauma. It takes a strong person to choose to live in happiness and love the way he loved Wanda. Their marriage is a testimony of courage and strength, especially when the thought of them dating was frowned on because Robert was a German Jew.

I can relate because when I was growing up, I was told to marry a Mexican man. If I had to marry outside my race, then marry a white man. I was forbidden

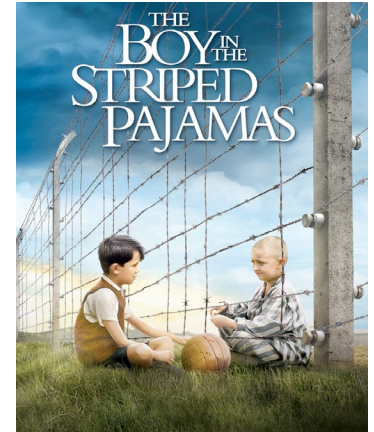


to marry a Black man. When I met my husband, I remember being nervous about how my family would react when they found out he was black. I am happy to report that even though I know my family had not wished for me to marry a black man, they still showed him respect. Then after a few years, they did not see him as a black man; they saw him as Brad. **(Michelle McKoy)**

I am actually in tears after reading the article. Two people from different backgrounds overcame adversity TOGETHER! Their beautiful union lasted 62 years. I can only hope and pray to meet someone who values and loves me as their equal to spend eternity with the way Robert and Wanda did.

So many thoughts are racing through my mind about Bob and his family escaping being placed in a concentration camp. One of my favorite movies is "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas."

I still cannot imagine what it was like for Jewish people in Germany during those times. Bob is someone we all can learn from! **(Asia Pearson)**



First off, thanks to both your parents for having Emily, making something out of nothing, for striving for greatness even with all obstacles in the way. Thanks, Bob, for contributing to our learning. I really love both articles because they highlight what most people want and wish for. They make me want to fight harder to keep good healthy relationships. **(Burnett Reed)**

The part that I can resonate with is the fact that time doesn't heal all wounds. When you really love someone, the more time you are away from them is the more time you miss them. Being married longer than most folks I know have been alive could affect Bob's ability to feel whole without his wife. **(Thedora Smith)**

I can relate to being married. I have been married for a one and a half years now. My wedding cost about \$12,000. It's really hard being married; now my husband and I are separated. I'm not really sure what's going to happen. I would love to have a love story like the Auerbachs. They really loved and valued each other. I would love to get some advice on being married and what should I do.

I can also relate to discrimination. I haven't been treated as poorly as Bob, but I have endured some racism. The funny thing is I had never endured racism until I moved to Madison. I would love to ask Bob how he still has a heart after everything he has been through. **(Sunni Walker)**

Reading this article gave me the first thought that they are very strong people. My second thought is love is so beautiful, and it makes me believe that there are good people out there. It relates to my value of love and marriage because I always had the thought of marriage and growing with my spouse, until I got my heart broken for the first time. Once that happened, it gave me a lot of fear about relationships and changed my concept some. I always knew before that I would be just like my grandma and granddad: still together, taking care of one another. Then I lost sight of that thought. Hearing the story of Bob and Wanda Auerbach makes it more beautiful.

Another thing that stuck out is Bob going through

all those traumatic changes and still coming out on top of things. That gives me the thought to stay determined and never give up. When it comes to our education, it's nice to know that someone who has been in our shoes or worse still made it through. He placed a path on our journey for us to walk on. I'm appreciative of even becoming a part of Odyssey. Knowing there is good out there, passed down to us, means we can pass it down to others and keep the cycle going. That can make change. **(Keyanna Wilson)**

I felt that he's an inspiration. I love that he wanted his wife to be his equal, not him to be head of the household. The fact that he donated to Odyssey says a lot about him. **(Shiquita Woods)**

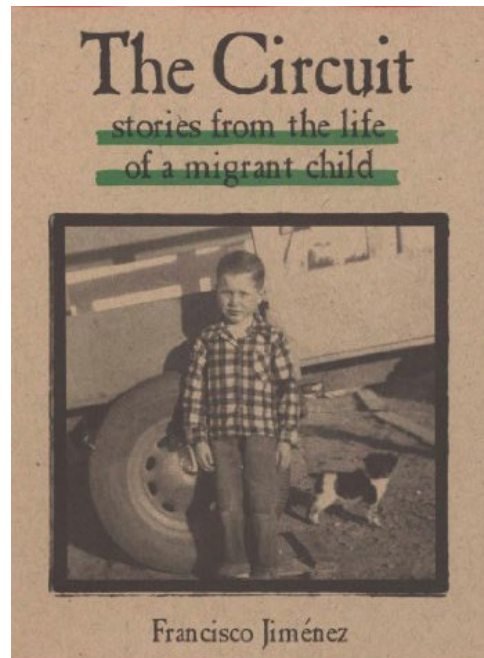


CONNECTING TO THE CIRCUIT

When I finished reading, I was sorrowful. I knew the feeling of just getting comfortable in a new area or school and then starting all over again. I could relate to this story. I grew up in Gary, Indiana—well, I lived there up until about third grade. After that, I moved at least once every year for the rest of my life. I'm not sure why we always had to move and start over; I never really asked since it was a normal thing. I would make friends at school, then move, then eventually I didn't care to make friends anymore.

I remember poverty and neglect, as they call it: boiling water on the stove for baths, roaches, rats, lights being cut off, and my mom stealing electricity from the outside of the apartments. We were always left alone, or should I say I was left home alone to care for my siblings at the age of six or seven at the most. All the other kids would be playing, and we would be bound to wherever we lived. It wasn't safe in most places we lived, but even when it was safer my mom still would not let us go out or do anything. **(LaBresha Green)**

Reading this story reminded me of my childhood. Both my parents are alcoholics, so there was never any stability. Every time something went wrong, which it did often, we would move. My parents' way of dealing with things was to run and get a new start. By the age of five, I had moved to so many places that I was scared to get used to being in one place. Moving around so much is hard on a five-year-old child. I never understood why my parents kept looking for greener pastures. All they had to do was quit drinking and face life. Sounds simple, right? Not to alcoholics.



I learned to adapt to my surroundings quickly, that drinking alcohol was not for me, and that I did not have to follow in their footsteps. **(Michelle McKoy)**

Growing up as a child, I was taken away from my mother and had to move to several different places. It was to the point where I got used to it. It seemed like it didn't bother me on the outside, but deep down I was torn as a child. **(Valeria Gordon)**

I'm from Mexico! I can relate a lot to the story. I came here not speaking a word of English. Although I have not moved from one place to another, I

have felt the same when I entered my first English class. I never attended ESL classes as I taught myself English, so when I was brave enough to sign up for a class at MATC (Madison College now), I was very afraid and shy to even speak. **(Henry Irisson)**

What I learned was to love my people more--to respect the struggle and to always be proud of my people. **(Fernando Galindo)**

I can relate to the story as far as the family struggling and moving around a lot goes. My mom had me at 16, and I was the second oldest out of four. I remember moving almost every year while I was in elementary school. I also loved school so much that I cried if I got sick and couldn't go. **(Yvonne Johnson)**

The part of this story I can relate to is being a part of the system of oppression, the haves vs. the have-nots. I too grew up in a large family. In our household, my father worked outside the home and my mother was a homemaker and caretaker of the kids. I learned from this story that humanity is in everyone. How will you tap into your humanity? **(Sarah Galinski)**

I relate to “The Circuit.” I’ve seen my life repeat itself in many ways while changing in others. I’ve put myself on a circuit and gotten complacent with the circle my life goes in. **(Calvin Balentine)**

I can take from that story that life can be so drastically different for some people growing up. Also, it teaches us not to take the small things for granted, like showering inside or a mattress to sleep on. Some people face day-to-day barriers that I wouldn’t think of having to deal with on a daily basis. **(Sarina Benford)**

This little person teaches us that we should never give up in front of the harsh conditions of life. He also teaches us his sense of responsibility acquired from an early age. Going to school to enroll himself without the help of his parents or anyone is a very courageous action on the part of a child. **(Souad Bidar)**

Growing up I had a speech impediment. I would say words funny or not be able to pronounce them clearly. I was made fun of in school. I remember feeling like Francisco. I was scared to speak/talk in school, and the bullying gave me a lack of self-confidence. Having to speak in public gives me anxiety even to this day. I still have trouble saying some words correctly. I wouldn’t say having a speech impediment growing up caused me some traumatic experiences, but I do think about how those kids were truly mean to me and the teachers did nothing to stop the bullying. **(Anjelica Brown)**

The family was poor and had to move. They were not making enough money;



even the kids were working. The lesson of the story for me is not to take my life for granted and always let my daughter Londyn be a kid, no matter how hard life gets. **(Paris Foster)**

There are many parts that I can relate to, but one part that really stood out to me was when Francisco talked about his family getting deported. Francisco explained how it was his worst nightmare; like Francisco, that is also my worst nightmare and a fear I have to live with every day. **(Erika Gonzalez)**

One part that got to me was his brother. Francisco couldn’t even be happy, which he deserved, because he felt bad for his brother because he was yearning for school just as he did. This just reminds me of my older sister. Her dad died when she was young, and I always felt for her. My dad was alive and there, but I just never really felt like I could enjoy his presence because it made her sad, which I totally understood. Even though Francisco was tired and aching for childhood freedom, he still felt the pain of his brother who had to continue the circuit. **(Brianna Johnson)**



I don't wish to overstate this point, but when I arrived in America, I had little money; coincidentally, this was in California. Failure to me meant losing my marriage, my new friends, and sliding back into a lifestyle I desperately wanted to escape from.

Seven days a week I hit the pavements in search of work. I walked halfway across San Francisco and back more than once. My legs ached. I caught buses at odd hours to dangerous industrial estates where everything was chain link and razor wire. In the backs of the moving trucks I was the only white face and the only one who spoke English. I worked three jobs and slept on couches and floors for months. I did demolition in the days and learned cocktail making at nights. In Wisconsin, I hammered stakes into the hard ground until my fingers went numb with the cold and my feet were lost in the growing mud.

There was never much security, and the randomness of this existence wore me down spiritually. Along with it came a host of unhealthy coping mechanisms and a sense that life was just passing you by.

There was a real sensitive heart ticking under "The Circuit." As an aspiring writer, it showed me that plain, honest language can be the most effective. **(Farren McDonald)**

Just getting up every day, taking care of me and my kids, and repeatedly doing that, praying that they'll be there for me when I'm old and wrinkled, I have learned that family has a bond that no one can destroy. Working together is better than being alone. I moved around a lot growing up. **(Dana Stokes)**

Panchito was afraid to speak English aloud because he felt he was not fluent. No one should be afraid to communicate no matter what language they speak. This is something I can learn

from when it comes to being patient and flexible with those who do not speak the same language as I do. **(Asia Pearson)**

I can relate to the ending of "The Circuit" when he was excited to get home to tell his parents some good news and it ended up being a disappointment when he got there. I have put my all into becoming the best single parent and caregiver that I can be. Every time I get comfortable to move ahead, I start moving too fast and get distracted with fear of failure; then all plans fall through. I feel that I always end up back where I started, nowhere but disappointed with myself. **(Delisha Smith)**

I can definitely relate to finally feeling comfortable and ready to open up, only to find out that I have to go someplace new and start over. I was almost always the new kid every school year. **(Faleshuh Walker)**

I can relate to others treating me poorly or thinking I'm not good enough because of the color of my skin. **(Sunni Walker)**

I was raised by a Spanish Mexican family, so maybe there were some cultural similarities. I have picked strawberries during the season before and had to move around due to money issues. I also can relate to working so hard you feel like you are going to fall over and collapse. **(Feather Lloyd)**

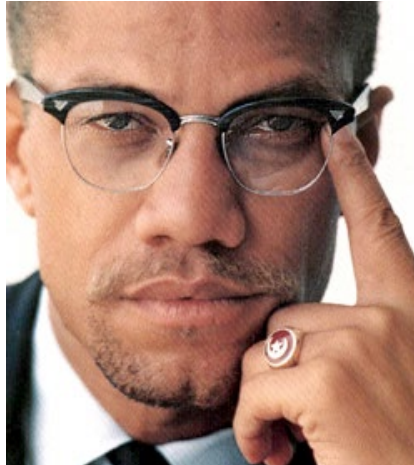


When I was younger, I would move a lot. I went to three different elementary schools, and each time I would have first day jitters. So, I can only imagine how Panchito felt when he was able to go to school. Then when you finally find someone you can relate to or someone finally notices you, even if it is a teacher, it means so much because you feel less lonely and more eager to learn. Having all that taken away without even being given notice can really make a child sad. **(Tawania Alston)**

INSPIRED BY MALCOLM X

"I knew right there in prison that reading had changed forever the course of my life. . . . My homemade education gave me, with every additional book that I read, a little bit more sensitivity to the deafness, dumbness, and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America. . . . I don't think anybody ever got more out of going to prison than I did." –excerpt about "Homemade Education" from The Autobiography of Malcolm X

I think by homemade education he means how he taught himself things he would not have learned in school because of all the daily distractions we have and the lack of other history we should be taught. He created his own way of learning and his own curriculum based on what he saw benefiting him and the next black man. This piece of writing is interesting to me because he speaks of how he read for 15 hours on end, would miss sleep and try to get lighting the best way he could just to LEARN. Instead of wasting his time in prison, he took the initiative to study a dictionary just to be able to articulate everything he wanted to say and understand. That speaks volumes. **(Tawania Alston)**



being forced into learning. By him reading and educating himself by choice, it gave him the mentality to want to learn and read better. He became excited and proud of himself by copying the dictionary and learning new words, and it drove him to continue on with reading in prison. Being able to teach yourself about untold history, in his case African American history and the history of the black man, is a rewarding

feeling. I can relate to this piece in the sense of myself applying to be in Odyssey. Deciding that you want to educate and learn for yourself is what I feel the phrase "Homemade Education" comes from. **(Sarina Benford)**

By homemade education, Malcolm is saying he did it his way. His education was not achieved in the way of the institution. He was able to learn by studying the things that sparked his interest and imagination; his education was developed in the most fundamental of ways. He was blessed with access to a wealth of knowledge, while in a situation where he had an abundance of free time. What surprised me the most reading this is when he speaks of the "human encyclopedias." I've heard of Malcolm's education and how he was able to contain an unbelievable amount of knowledge within his memory. I thought that was unique, but he speaks of the "human encyclopedias" as if they are common. **(Calvin Balentine)**

When reading "Homemade Education," I felt Malcolm wanted to educate himself rather than

The primary reason for Malcolm to educate himself is his desire to improve his writing skills so that he can effectively communicate with Elijah Muhammad and tell other people about Elijah Muhammad's teachings. He first started reading books to increase his knowledge, but he was frustrated by his lack of vocabulary. The dictionary itself seems like a boring little book that we take for granted, but at that time, it excited Malcolm. He was excited that he could memorize and understand of a lot of the words.

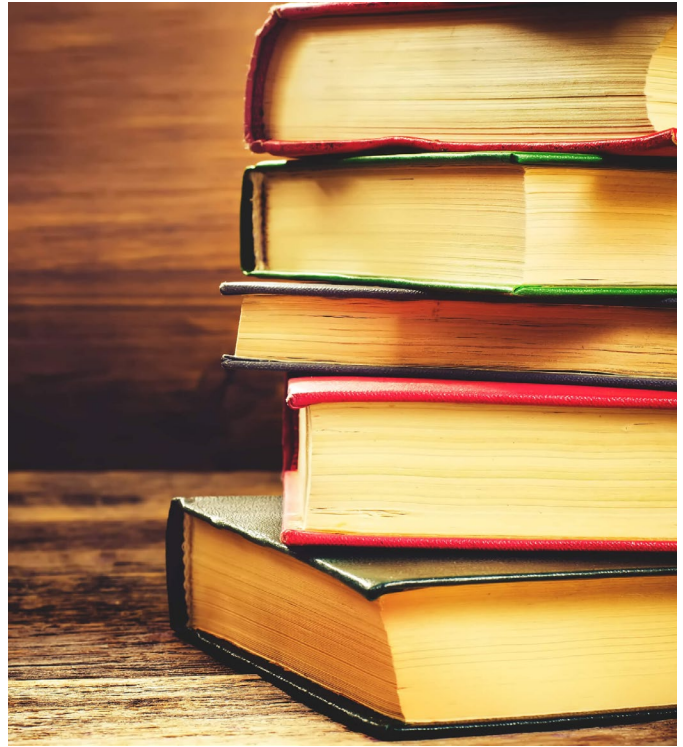
When you are self-taught, you have no one to ask questions! This is where it gets very interesting: you're going to ask yourself! With homemade education, people have the freedom to create their own approach, drawing inspiration from the knowledge of their choice. **(Souad Bidar)**

I think what Malcolm X's phrase "homemade education" meant was teaching yourself, reading, and writing at your own pace at home or in a different setting other than college or a school setting. I agree with his homemade education piece because during Malcolm X's years in prison, he learned to write better and much clearer. Malcolm did a lot of reading and copying from a dictionary to help him study and learn some more words. He improved his penmanship while being locked up. Even though he was in prison, he taught himself and even said that people who heard him speak/talk would have thought he went to school beyond the eighth grade. Malcolm also said prison enabled him to study far more intensively than if he would have attended a college. Malcolm said he had to study as much as 15 hours a day in prison.

(Anjelica Brown)

Malcolm X's "Homemade Education" is an education that is taught by a person who is not certified. He was able to educate himself while incarcerated. He was very concentrated while teaching himself, and it made him forget he was in prison. I also partly have a homemade education. I have isolated myself to self-teach myself growing up. **(Tisha Butler)**

I think Malcolm X's phrase homemade education means being self-taught. He felt he was somewhere comfortable where he could gain more education than anywhere (prison). He then was in the state of mind of books, books, and more books. He fed himself education and motivated himself to learn more. My feeling about this is you may not know something, and sometimes the best way is to make time to teach yourself. Reading this, I would say "Education waits on no one." **(Cashae Davis)**



I think he meant he taught himself. In a way, he can understand, do the work, and also help people who were like him with learning. Even in prison, you don't give up. He was in there reading everything, not worried about anyone or anything, putting his focus on his books and his studies. **(Paris Foster)**



I've read this book at least seven times. Malcolm X and this book are both my inspirations to learn and read more. I was fourteen when I first went to prison. I didn't know how to read at all. I was in segregation once. I was so bored. All that was in a cell was a book called *The Enforcement*. I read all the words I knew. In that moment, I knew I had to read more. I read anything I could get my hands on.

(Fernando Galindo)



I love the relentless extremes that Sir X was willing to go and risk everything for his Homemade Education. Dedication isn't even a strong enough word to describe Sir X's NEED to self-motivate and self-educate. While in prison Sir Malcolm utilized the "glow" from a corridor light to keep reading past his mandatory body in bed lights out. Now that's a book I want to read—a book so engrossing you can't put it down, even if you're risking your life and limb.

When I think of something homemade, there is a deep richness to the smell of the entire house...a taste of authenticity in the air so thick and rich... mmmhh HOMEMADE!

Where is home? What do you consider home to be? Homemade education is your personal outlet. In this reading Sir Malcolm found outlets beyond measure in self-teachings, coupled with very extreme life lessons that catapulted him into a life's journey that would shape and mold a great movement, By Any Means Necessary! Thank you, Sir Malcolm X.
(Sarah Galinski)

A lot of people believe intelligence is based on the level of school you achieved, but what people failed to realize is that we are always learning new things and that schooling does not determine our intelligence level. Malcolm X did not let his unfortunate life stop him from gaining knowledge; he instead took it into his own hands to learn how to read in jail. Anything can be learned if the interest and the willingness to do hard work is there.
(Erika Gonzalez)

To me, home education means to have self-taught yourself on knowledge that was not presented to you as a person of color like it has been presented to a white person. It means to have that hunger and curiosity to learn and have better opportunities in life.

A few years ago, I was in some trouble with Dane County. I had to do a little time away from home. I was surrounded by women who were just there to pass time, but I couldn't wait to come from work and go to my little area to start reading. It was food to my brain. **(Valeria Gordon)**

Based on what I read, a "homemade education" is referring to Malcolm X's self-teaching and learning while incarcerated. He started off not understanding what he was reading; words were foreign to him as if the books were in another language. He started reading the dictionary and became fascinated with what he was learning. Once he started to understand what he was reading, he enjoyed reading and spent most of his time in prison reading. He believed that he learned more in prison than he ever would have if he went to college. He, just like William Blake, felt school was not that important.
(LaBresha Green)

To me, "Homemade Education" is the want, the need to go out and hunt for the tools to help you grasp the knowledge you need to survive, even when these tools are out of reach! For example, Malcolm X turned 10 years of prison time into 10 years of learning, exploring, and sharpening his "Tools" all within a cell. He didn't let his situation hinder him from his thirst for expanding his knowledge. Just in these few short pages, it motivated me how he kept digging to find a better version of himself, which is why I'm in this program. I feel I can relate to the majority of the issues Malcolm faced with reading and writing. But as I work and learn I want to be able to demand attention when I speak, or if I'm delivering some form of presentation, I want to be able to draw everyone in just by opening my mouth. His goal is mine: to be the best and most confident me I can be! **(Kwan Hogan)**

Malcolm X's homemade education reminds me of the educations others like him have gotten. For instance, it reminded me of Fidel Castro's time in jail. He spent two years incarcerated after a failed attempt in the Moncada military headquarters in 1953. In the one of Fidel's readings, I remember him saying that he never read and learned so much as he did in prison.



Now, with this I am not advocating for anyone to be in prison in order to read, write, or learn as much as these famous 20th-century people did. I do, however, think that these stories are encouraging to anyone who wants to find inspiration to get back to where they left off.

Malcolm X's 'Homemade Education' teaches us that no matter what adversities we have in life, we can always find a way to learn and educate ourselves. He says that it has awakened a part of him that was dormant for most of his life. It gave him the sensitivity needed to understand the "deafness, blindness and dumbness that was afflicting the black race in America."

(Henry Irisson)

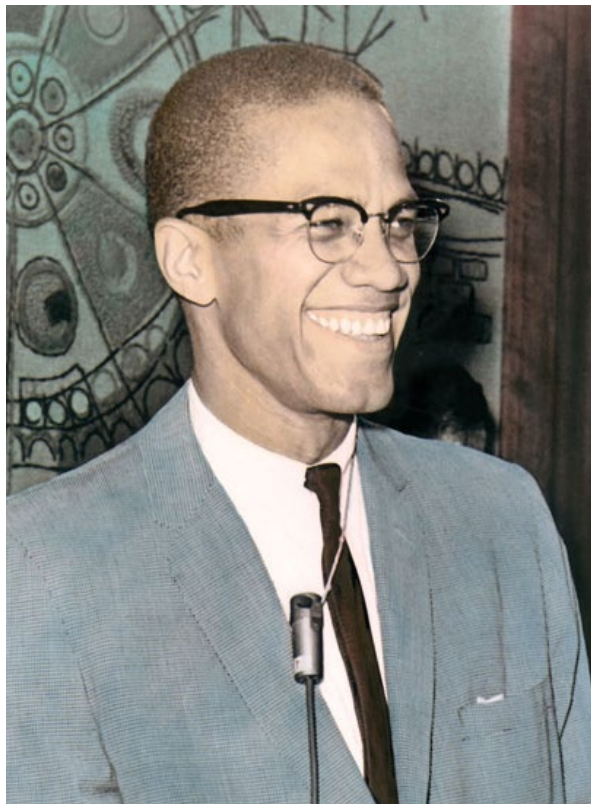
During his incarcerations, he was able to get by his own yearning for knowledge the education he was unable to receive outside of prison in the white supremacist society. He was also able to learn things that he would not have learned in public school either because what was taught was fraudulent. He used the time he was imprisoned

constructively, and by doing so he learned more than he ever could imagine. With his 'Homemade Education' he was able to share what he had learned after his release so that others could hear the truth too, the real truth.

I can relate. My personal response is that during my incarceration, I too reached out to educate myself through various books. By doing so I was able to learn a lot about myself and the world around me. I felt a freedom as well behind those walls. **(Jessica Jacobs)**

Homemade education is practically teaching yourself in the best ways that help you, not through standard practice but by picking and choosing your own curriculum and guidelines. This text was so deep to me because I remember my dad telling me, "If they ever want to hide information from black people, put it in a book." And in so many ways, Malcolm expressed that by his findings. He was in shock about what he learned, but he also wanted to make sure he was reading and finding accurate information. So, he opened his knowledge base by reading a dictionary and finding his own way to

keep and maintain what he learned. Reading this definitely made me want to read more. **(Brianna Johnson)**



I believe that what Malcolm X meant when he said homemade education was that you can teach yourself to read and educate yourself with books and knowledge. You can challenge yourself to read beyond one man's journey, gaining knowledge and understanding truth, religion, and mankind. **(Yvonne Johnson)**

Malcolm is speaking in regards to how he has acquired his knowledge. He is saying he is self-taught and did not attend the conventional schooling that was created as a mechanism for class separation. He attended the college of life and prison. There he was able to self-educate and acquire the information he wanted to ingest in a more focused way. He said he first started with the dictionary so he could actually understand what he was reading.

Then he chose knowledge and literature based on what would help him to educate and help Black people. I believe this is the best education besides hands on getting thrown right into a situation to learn. Full engulfment of experiences good or bad are what I believe help to shape a quality mind. I familiarize with this because I also have sought out educating myself before I had the opportunity to attend a school of higher learning. I also learned a lot in real life that many others have never gotten to experience, hence shaping the all-around person I am becoming. I like to seek knowledge without bias, and that can be easier separated and identified when doing your own research and self-study.
(Feather Lloyd)

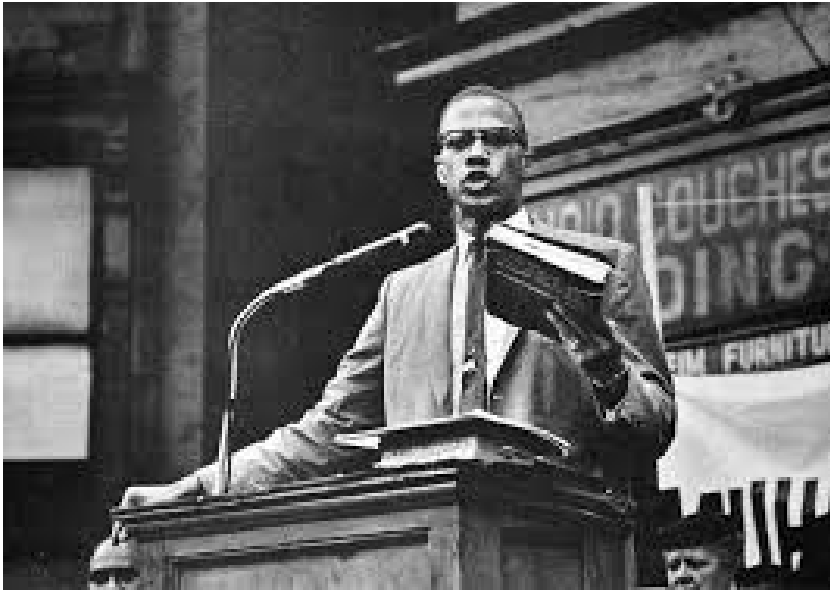
Malcolm X's education was one he cobbled together himself, in stolen hours between the patrols of guards, by the dim light of a lamp that barely reached his cell. He followed no prescribed syllabus but only the course of his heart and the arrow of his curiosity. He did this not to earn a degree or to receive status but so that he might become mentally alive and "sensitive to the deafness, dumbness and blindness that was afflicting the black race in America."

This is what he means by a homemade education.

In contrast, institutional education as it was delivered to him reduced the history of the Negro to a single paragraph (complete with a humiliating joke by the teacher). By minimizing the role of blackness in America the teacher was also able to effectively neutralize the black student's interest. Thus, Malcolm was mentally imprisoned long before his actual incarceration.

I found there to be a complete lack of self-pity in this excerpt. Even in the hell of prison Malcolm is laser focused only on the betterment of himself and his race. His personality shines forcefully through his writing. I sense a man who is tireless in his pursuit of learning. He has a questing mind that is never satisfied with the easy answer but is always on to the next thing, the next fact, viewpoint, or lesson. For him, the homemade education is one that never ends. There's something to be learned in that. **(Farren McDonald)**





Malcolm X didn't finish school, so when he would write letters to Elijah Muhammad he realized he needed to educate himself because the slang he used on the street didn't articulate what he wanted to write on paper.

The first step was to understand all the words in the books he was reading, so he wrote down and studied every word in the dictionary. This helped him expand his knowledge by understanding the words he was reading and improved his penmanship. That was just the beginning to homemade education. Malcolm's thirst for knowledge had him reading everything he could for up to 15 hours a day. Homemade education is Malcolm's version to educate himself without going to college.

The education that Malcolm X received by homemade education was better than any education you could receive by going to college. He read all different kinds of books that made him understand the history of black people and other races. This gave him an advantage that many other people with college educations did not have. When you go to college, Malcolm X was right that there are many distractions that can interfere with your education. Also, professors

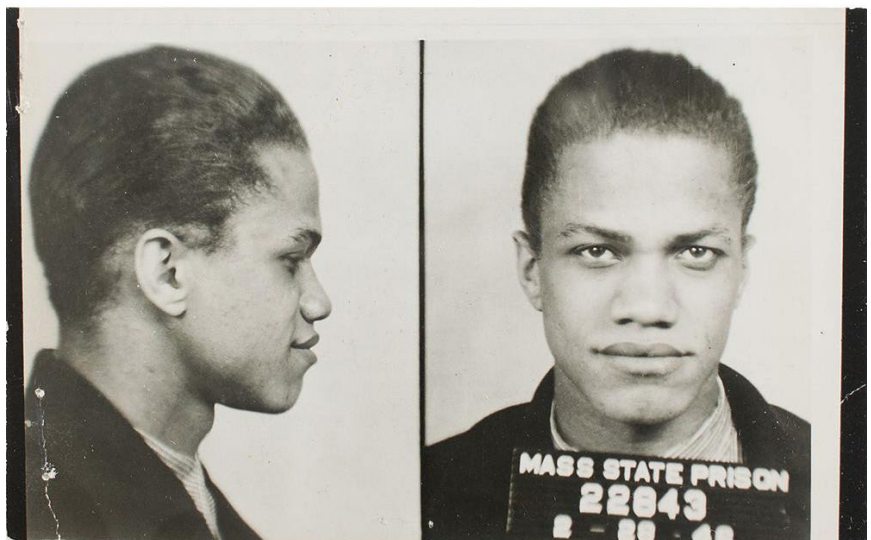
get to decide what you are going to learn and if you pass or fail. With homemade education, you get many more versions of history and worldviews, with no debt, so to me this sounds like a better deal.

(Michelle McKoy)

Homemade education is the only way/direction you choose to educate yourself at your own time and pace, and with your own things of interests, without distractions and restrictions. Homemade education is educating yourself/investing time to improve/enlighten yourself. Being your own teacher allows you to learn more from the little you already know or barely know.

I feel this piece is remarkable. Malcolm X sacrificed time and effort to train his mind to learn and expand beyond what he already knew/barely knew to the point where he knew it all. **(Stephaney Obi)**

I believe the term "homemade education" reflects his personal experience with gaining knowledge. He did not go past the eighth grade but still managed to educate himself through reading and the dictionary. He was able to educate himself without indulging in systematic teachings that he felt did not reflect history accurately. **(Asia Pearson)**



I think what young Malcolm was thinking when he used the phrase “Homemade Education” was to highlight the greatness of self-education. He’s expressing how he had nothing and made something out of it. I felt the piece because he has so many valid points on how we can have so little and can go so big no matter the situation. He followed his mind and made a difference.

(Burnett Reed)

When Malcolm X spoke about homemade education, I think he was talking about teaching himself with the limited resources that he had. He went to the library and was reading and writing out books. He did whatever he could do to learn the way without professionals. He wrote his story while doing informational listening and reading others’ stories. A degree is no definite sign of intelligence.

(Delisha Smith)

I believe that a homemade education means that he didn’t receive knowledge from school. He studied, and it led him to be hungry for more knowledge. **(Thedora Smith)**

A homemade education, as Malcolm X explained, is a self-crafted education. Essentially it is taking the initiative to educate oneself using whatever methods or materials that are available. I am wowed by Malcolm’s focus and ability to adapt. The fact that he was able to self-motivate in the midst of racial ugliness is very encouraging. Regardless of why he was in prison, he made a choice to do and become better. He made personal progress a way of life. **(Faleshuh Walker)**

When Malcolm X says “Homemade Education,” he is talking about how he taught himself everything he knew by reading books in prison. Basically, prison saved his life, or better yet, made him more knowledgeable. Before prison, he did not speak correct English; he spoke slang. He was ignorant to a lot of things, most importantly, the “Black Man.” I loved the part where he said if you started with a Black man, a white man can be produced. But a white man can’t make a Black man because the white chromosome is recessive. Also, I liked the

part about if he went to college, he wouldn’t have learned as much. I believe this is true. I went away to college and there were many distractions.

(Sanni Walker)

Home-made education means he was self-taught and found his own way. He learned to read and articulate, and he helped others because of it.

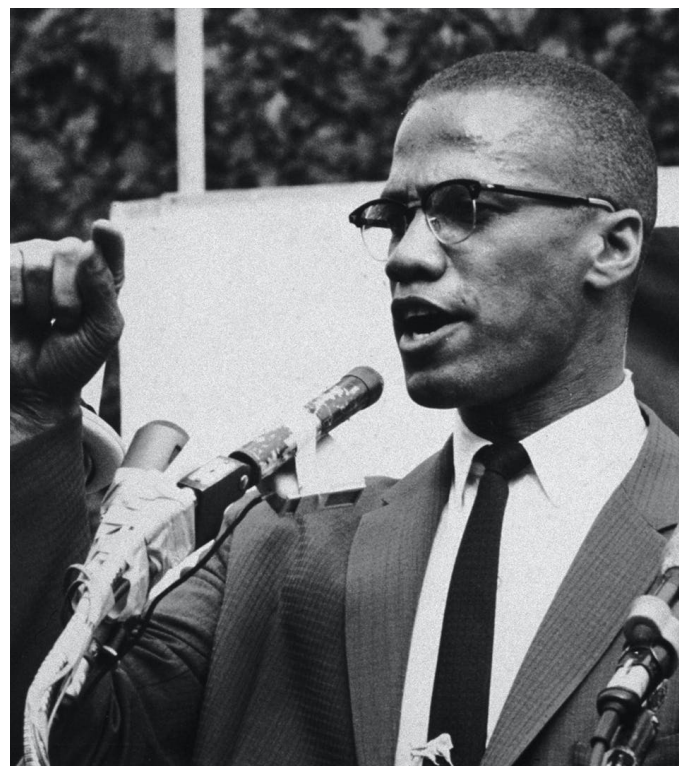
(Diane Walton)

Home education means there is a way where you could be self-taught, opening your mind to learning things from A-Z. I think this piece is very motivational for those who struggle with learning or even disciplining themselves. He breaks down so many tools that could be utilized.

(Keyanna Wilson)

He wasn’t aware of how to read and write. He taught himself while in jail to do both. He was very persistent in learning about the things he was saying, which is why he studied and copied the dictionary on his tablet. He was really big on Mr. Muhammad’s teachings. Throughout his learning, he became a leader himself eventually.

(Shiquita Woods)



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

*What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.
—Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*



Betsy Jasmine Alfaro

My name is a short form of Elizabeth. Betsy means “God is my oath” or “God satisfaction.” It has many meanings, but the ones that are true to me are shy, caring, outgoing, loyal,

cute, athletic, and having no confidence when speaking in crowds.

My name came from the nurse who was helping in our room at the time. All during the pregnancy, my parents were told I was a boy, but surprise! I was born. My father wanted to name me Elizabeth, but my mother did not, so the nurse suggested Betsy. My middle name is Jasmine, which means gift from God.



Tawania Annie Alston

My name Tawania means “able or robust.” I was named after my cousin who died earlier in life before I was born. The thing with my family is we always name our child after someone! So, I was named after my cousin, and my middle name

is Annie, which happens to be my grandmother’s name on my dad’s side. My siblings as well as our children are each named after someone in the family. It’s how we keep legacies alive for the ones who passed on and also show love for the people who are still living.

My only problem with my name is the fact they added a silent “I” into the mix, and people constantly mispronounce my name. They could’ve easily kept the spelling of my name the same as my cousin, which is Tawana. Other than that, my name is very unique, but I don’t feel like it’s shaped my identity at all.



Calvin T Balentine

My name Calvin T Balentine

Was always my source of shame

Calvin, I got from my daddy, who was never in my life.

All I really knew about him is that he was on drugs

and was too busy out running the streets to be with me or my brother.

T, I was told, was given to me because my mother wanted a girl and had chosen the name Tina.

Balentine came with a lot. My family was known for everything good and bad,

so revealing that I am a Balentine was like a box of chocolates

I never knew what I was gonna get.

My name Calvin T Balentine

is my source of pride

Calvin, the name I gave to my first born,

represents an odyssey from my father to my son.

We represent the breaking of chains, the end of generational curses.

T, this is me. Having a name like no one else helped me feel

I didn’t need to be like anyone else. It made me proud to stand out.

Balentine, – is my family name and there are only six of us.

My children being the last generation, it’s important to me the name lives on and that the teachings of Grandma guide us to a better place.





Sarina Michelle 'Reena' Benford

I was always told by my mother that she chose the name Sarina while she was pregnant and at the pool. "BOOM!" It just came to her, and she knew that was going to be my name. The name Sarina is unique in spelling, and I do not personally know another Sarina with the same spelling. I think it makes me special. My middle name is Michelle, but I do not know why. My last name is my favorite part of my name, Benford. I am proud to have my last name because it shows my family name, and I am my father's only child. For the longest time I had always wanted to name my child Ben, middle name Ford. So, I am glad I was blessed with a stepson named Ben! If I get married, I may choose to keep my last name.

When I was child, I always wanted to pick out the personalized bike plates you would find at the store, or a bookmark with general names on them. There would be a "Sam, Sarah, Seth," or, if I was lucky, a "Sabrina," but no Sarina. As I've grown older and realized how unique of a name I have, I have grown to love it. When people ask my name, I usually have to say, "Sarina, you know, like Serena Williams,"



followed by the tennis racket hand motion.

Looking into the meaning of my name, I have found in Hebrew it means "princess." I have also known my name to mean serenity or

to be serene. I consider myself a princess as well as someone who can be calm and peaceful, so I guess my name fits! In all seriousness, that is such a fun fact to find out my name means princess in Hebrew.

My very close family and friends calls me "Rina/Reena," which was made up by my Uncle Brian, who would say "REENA COCOA BEENA!!" when he would greet me as a kid.



Souad Bidar

My name Souad is an old Arabic name. I was named by my mother because during her pregnancy she watched Egyptian films and was a fan of an actress named Souad who played the heroine.

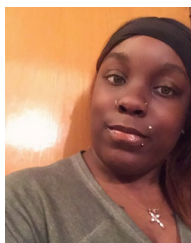
My maternal grandmother called me Saa'eede because her late sister was named Saadia, and Saa'eede is the reduction of the name Saadia. So until I was 12, all my cousins and my mother's siblings called me Saa'eede (until the death of my wonderful grandmother, God rest her soul in peace). I only heard the name Souad at school or outside the house while playing with friends.

My paternal grandfather called me Masseouda, a name older than mine; a name that disappeared like dinosaurs. When my darling grandfather called me by that name, he sang a song to me which means "my worm-eyed little princess Masseouda would agree to come with me, and we will explore the world together" (it rhymes in Arabic). I made others around me jealous. My cousins and father's siblings only remembered the word "worm" from my grandfather's song and called me Douda, or worm in Arabic. It was awful. If I saw one of my class friends outside while I was accompanied by one of my cousins who called me "Douda," it would be a disaster. I would always come back home crying.

My nickname is Soussou, but only my sister and my brothers call me that.

My name is SOUAD = SOUU-UH-D, not Soueed or SuEd or Swan; some call me Swat. The meaning of the name Souad is happiness, optimism, blessing, and a lot of kindness.

It is also a type of plant that smells good: Carex Sedge in Arabic is Souad. People with the name Souad are distinguished by their cheerful and playful spirit. They are characterized by strength and great self-confidence because they don't care what others think of them.



Anjelica 'Pooh Bear' Brown

My name means like an Angel. My name is unique because it is spelt with a J instead of a G. I have a cousin the same age as me with the same name, but hers is with an G. I always have to tell people my name has a J in it and spell it out for people. I really don't know why my mom chose to name me Anjelica. I remember as a child, kids asked me if I was named from the TV show the Rugrats. They would ask if I was like Angelica off the show.

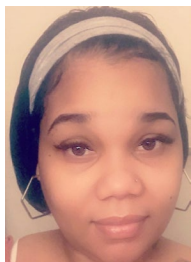


I have a special nickname, which is Pooh Bear or just Pooh. I have been called by my nickname since I was born. I also used to love Winnie-the-Pooh growing up. I'm 28 years old, and to this day, my family still calls me Pooh Bear or Pooh. I don't mind being called that from family members, and I only let a few people who aren't family call me by my nickname.



Tisha Lashay Butler

My mother said when she found out she was pregnant she was overjoyed. So, she looked and found a name that means JOY and also was unique. She came up with my middle name a day after she gave birth. My last name came from my mother's paternal side. My mother's paternal side is from where my mother was born: New Orleans, LA.



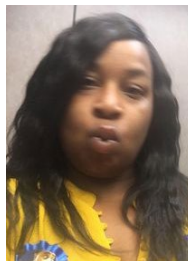
Cashae Naté Davis

My name Cashae was meant for me to have. It's a very unique name like myself. Everyone thinks because my name has cash in it that I have a lot of cash. I wish!! My aunt picked out my name. I do believe my name is French; at least, that is what I tell everyone. Cashae reminds me of a soft, loving, and caring person.

Naté is my middle name, pronounced Na-Tay. My aunt also gave me this name. She got this name from one of her favorite perfumes back in the day, which was called Jean Naté. My middle name was also given to my niece. Everyone thinks it's just plain ol' Nate, but it's not. The accent mark above it gives it its true pronunciation.

Davis is my last name, a very popular last name. I was given the last name from my mother's side of the family.

I can say that not many people have my name. I get a lot of compliments on how pretty it is and how they never heard of it. My name makes me know that I'm beautiful, and it goes right along with me.



Paris Ashlee Foster

My name, Paris, is important because not too many people have it and it's the capital of France, city of love. I'm full of love. My name is perfect; I love everything about it. I'm the first person in my family and only person who has it. My name has brought me nothing but Korean luck.

Ashlee is interesting because it's not spelled the regular way. Lee comes from my father's middle name, James Lee Foster. I really like and think it was smart and different to name me with my father's middle name. That's exactly what Paris Foster is: different. Foster is also my father's last name. My name is perfect.



it

**Fernando Galindo**

My home is a reminder of absence.
My father's name, but no face or
memories.

My name is a name of oppressors
to my native roots.

My name, in some circles,
represents nothing but bad.
My name has restraints to it.

**Sarah Galinski**

Hello, Hola, JAMBO!

My name is Sarah. I am named after
my mother's mother: Sara Ann.

Sarah is biblical as well. When I was
growing up, my siblings used to call
me Mama-Sarah. I guess I was the

bossiest of all of us, lol. Whatever the case, I did
get married first, and I also had children first. They
spoke that onto me, and I accepted the energies.

My eldest brother, who was murdered four years
ago this upcoming October 2020, gave me the
nickname of "Blackie," and I gave him the name
"Black-Jack." My brother and I also came up with a
secret handshake. I miss him.

**Erika M. Gonzalez**

My first name is important
because my grandmother really
wanted me to be named after my
mother. My middle name comes
from a religious god, "la virgen
Montserrat." My middle name

comes from my mom's promise to my grandmother
to name all her children.

**Valeria Vanshay Gordon**

Valeria comes from a Latin
background. It means to be strong
and brave. My Auntie Johnna
named me—both first and middle
names. I was a healthy baby when

I was born. My mother would say
to me growing up I would be made fun of at times
'cause I grew up in the ghetto, and little other black
girls did have a name like me. So I always said that
I had a white girl's name. I used to be ashamed of
it, but as I got older, I realize that it's different and
accept it.

Vanshay comes from Ireland. This name is
associated with clan affiliation, with many different
physical characteristics such as red hair. Well, I have
red hair and tons of freckles. ☺

Gordon is derived from a Scottish background.



LaBresha Tasha Curry Green

I don't like my given name given. My mom was a teenager who thought it was cute. There is no meaning, and my middle name is spelled wrong. It is not Tosha or Tasha; it is Taché.

My last name was inherited from my grandma's husband, who never was related to me.

Curry is my maiden name. I'm in the middle of a divorce. If I had the time and money, I would change my name.

Every time someone pronounces my name, it makes me irritated, I already don't like it, and it's really not that hard to say. LaBresha does not look like La Breasha. I won't own it, but I can remove LaBresha to just Tashay Green.

When I go somewhere, for an example, a restaurant, and they ask me my name, I say Rachel because I never have a problem with anyone understanding it or repeating it wrong, and my food is never messed up.

My name doesn't mean anything, but all of my children's names do: Uriah, Neil (messiah), and Isis. I believe names and things that we say have power.



Kwan Ian Hogan

When I was younger, I never really liked my first name. For whatever reason, whether it was too short or not exciting, I just was not a fan! When I asked my mom why she had named me Kwan, she said that she

took it from the famous ice skater Michelle Kwan. Now in my mind, at the age of ten or eleven, this meant that I had a girl's name, an ice skater at that, which did not make being confident in my name any easier.

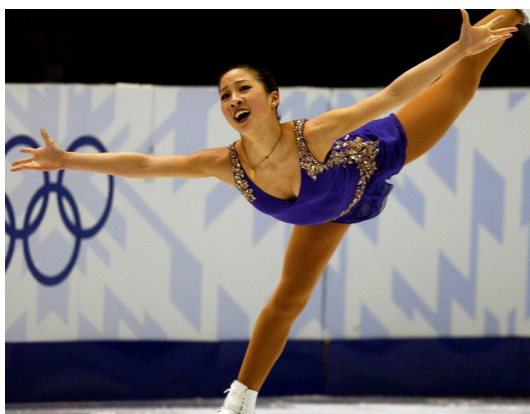
One day out of curiosity I went online and looked up my name. I learned that it has a Korean

origin and means "strong." After I found this out, my outlook on my name changed; not only that, the way I walked and carried myself changed too. I had always been respectful as a child but would not always get that same respect back. Whether it was from classmates, teachers, or older kids, I would get picked on! "My name means strong," I would tell myself late at night while reflecting on the day. I came to the realization that strong people let it be known that they are strong and that they don't let people tell them otherwise! From that moment, I decided to stop holding my tongue and started letting my voice be heard.

I believe my name is perfect for me and makes me the man I am today. I am a "strong," and by the African definition of my name "strong-willed," man who demands respect but gives it out like charity!

My middle name I kept to myself for the longest; I just didn't like how all of my names sounded together. Sometimes when I would write my full name out, I noticed that every one of my names ends in "an": "Kwan Ian Hogan." I am not sure if this was on purpose or accidental, but that was the first time I smiled when I saw my name written out! Unlike my first name, I never asked my mom what it meant, where it came from, or even why she decided to give me the name . . . until now. I had told her about this assignment, and she got to work on answering all my questions. She told me she had a friend that she met when she was pregnant with me whose son was named Ian. My mom researched the name and found that the name has a Scottish origin, which means "The lord is gracious." Now it was no wonder to me why my mom wanted to keep this as my middle name.

Being raised in a Christian household, I went to church a lot. Honestly, knowing what my names mean, I feel that I was blessed with names that define me as a person of confidence and faith. I used to want to change my name, but now I want to scream it from the roof tops.





Henry Oropeza Irissòn

My name's personal story begins with my mother's professional background. She was (retired now) an English teacher in Mexico, and she loved, and still does, anything related to the English language

and culture; therefore, she gave Anglo names to all of her kids. For instance, my sisters' names are Melissa and Cindy, and, of course, my name is Henry. That is the personal story of my name.

My name and my last second last name are very unique. I'm originally from Mexico, and I never met anyone with the name Henry. Also, the last name Irissòn comes from a tiny place in France. My great-great-grandfather migrated from this place back in 1833. It is actually the same year Madison was founded, which to me is interesting because it makes me think of us in parallel worlds, haha! I came to Madison, founded in the same year he left France.

I do not like that some people here in the States make fun of me or even get offended when I say my name is Henry because they are expecting me to have a Spanish name and a Spanish last name. My first last name is Spanish because in Mexico we use two. I have gotten in small arguments when I was younger about it; now I just look the other way when people doubt that Henry is my name. Some pause and say: "yes, and?" I used to say: "and, what?" Now, I just do not say anything. I guess the "and?" part is that I am supposed to have a name with Spanish roots.



Jessica Lee Jacobs

Jessica in Hebrew means "God Beholds." That's pretty deep to me. My mom told me she wanted to name me Mariah, but my Auntie Fran badgered her into naming me Jessica. She ended up naming her

favorite cat Mariah. I seriously laughed so hard when she told me this. So, I guess it's safe to say that my Auntie named me.

My middle name is Lee. My mom chose this to name me after her father. When my grandpa found out that his granddaughter was going to be named after him, my mom said he strutted around like a proud peacock. This makes me happy. My grandpa was a good man, and I adore the fact that I have this piece of him with me.

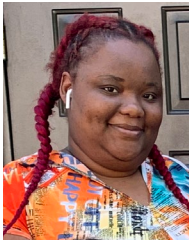


My last name is Jacobs. From what I gather, this is a Jewish last name. This name comes from my biological father. My mother's maiden name was Moody. Jacobs is the only thing that I have from my father. He was not around much in my life. I have thought about changing my last name to Moody because my mom raised me, but the reason why I haven't is because it would be something I would do out of resentment, and I do not want to be that type of person. So, I have not changed my name and I am working on the resentment and learning forgiveness.



Brianna Johnson

We look forward to receiving Brianna's essay about her name soon.



Yvonne Vannetta Ann Johnson

My name is Yvonne Vannetta Ann Johnson. I was named after three family members.

Yvonne came from my older cousin because my mom was mad at my dad so agreed to name me after my cousin, who begged. Yvonne is a French and Spanish name meaning tree or archer. It's funny how I just found that out because I love trees. I do not like my name because it does not describe me a person. I think if you name a child after someone, it means you hope they will be something like that person. I don't feel close to that person whatsoever. Every time we are in the same place, her name is acknowledged for her and they will call me a nickname, so it makes me feel below her.

Vannetta is one out of two of my middle names, and I got it from my grandma. My grandma got it from her grandma. Vannetta is Greek and means butterfly golden. I love this name because I am so much like my grandma, I have her strength in so many ways.

Ann is my second middle name, which is from my great aunt. I think she is so beautiful. Although I don't see her much, when I do I get this love that is young and fun.

Johnson is my last name, which I got from my grandma. She kept it from when she was married, although he was not my grandfather. It was my mom's last name. My mom chose not to name me after my dad. Although he was a great dad, he was not there at the time I was born, just like her dad wasn't, so we kept the Johnson last name. I don't like it that much due to the fact there are a lot of black kids named Johnson. People always seem to think we're related, and it gets overwhelming at times. So hopefully I'll get married one day. But overall, my names are different in their own way. Johnson does mean kind, nice, and faithful. Maybe someday I will like my names more.



Feather Marie Guillen Lloyd

Feather is a word describing the covering of a bird, an appendage that helps them to fly. As I typed that, I had an epiphany that I am just that. Marie Guillen is the rest of my maiden name. My middle is

a passed down common family name. Guillen is a proud Spaniard name. We have a coat of arms and used to be a small country until invaded and taken over. My name together is an original. I am a matriarch, being the first-born daughter in my generation. I hold a tittle of respect in my family but also am a black sheep. I have never fit in, just as my name hasn't.

My mother and father named me Feather for many reasons. It was my mother's nickname in her teenage years up until I was born. I was two months early and weighed four pounds eight ounces. The name then officially was given to me. I used to hate it and couldn't wait to change it to fit in. I soon realized, name or not, that I did not have that choice with my ambiguous features and large light. I was noticed for that and, well, who else is Feather? I believe my name reflects my personality well now. Just like a feather, I am flighty and flowing.





Farren Patrick McDonald

Farren Patrick McDonald. The first part is actually an Irish surname. My grandmother's name before she got married was Winifred Farren.

I'm proud to bear her name. She was the great storyteller of the family. As a young woman, she saved up enough in five years working in Glasgow to return to Donegal and buy her own bar, which was fairly unusual for a woman at the time.

The bar was called the Fisherman's Inn. In Ireland most bars close at 2 unless you have what's called a Fisherman's license, which allows you to be open 23 hours a day. These licenses are grandfathered in, and no new ones are produced. Shortly after purchasing the bar, she toured the local area and bought up all the licenses. This meant she was the only game in town. The pub still stands, but we don't own it anymore.

She once told me in respect to romantic suitors: "What use are they if they can't f**k, fight, or play the accordion?"



I still laugh thinking about that. Grandad played the accordion. I think later in life she might have regretted her romantic advice, yet here we are nonetheless.

My middle name is Patrick. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland, though he's never been officially canonized by the Catholic Church. Patrick was actually Roman-British, from what is now Wales. The story goes that Saint Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland. There is no evidence snakes ever existed in Ireland, however. Some people have taken this story as a metaphor for Patrick driving out Ireland's pagan religions and replacing them with Christianity.

My last name McDonald is simply a typo. McDonald is a Scottish name; the Irish version is McDonnell, and it's the name most of my family bears. However, the doctor present at my father's birth misheard and recorded it wrong. My father never corrected this typo and in fact passed it on to me, so we are the only two people in the family with this name.

I asked him once if he was concerned about our descendants not being able to trace their family tree. He laughed and said that was their problem and they'd have to make their own way regardless of where they came from.



Michelle Lee McKoy

My parents were not expecting me to be a girl. They wanted a son named Michael, which they got four years later. Michelle is the female version of Michael and our names sound similar. When I was growing up, my mom got tongue-tied when she yelled out our names.

Michael was very sensitive. He cried a lot, so I would be the one to calm him down; this made us grow up to be close. I had no idea the Hebrew origin for both our names is "who is like God." This made me feel special, but what I loved most is sharing this meaning with my brother. I feel our name has shaped us to be forgiving and unconditionally loving, just like God.

My middle name is Lee, defined as protective shelter; this fits me perfectly because I am the protector of my family and friends. Growing up, I always had to protect my siblings from bullies, especially my brother Michael, who got picked on because he was so sensitive. I would have to go to the school and warn bullies that if they picked on him again, I was going to push them down the big hill at recess. To this day, my home is where my family and friends go to when they need a safe place to stay.

I always tell people I am the real McKoy because I spell my last name with a K instead of a C. I was told by my ex-husband that his great, great grandfather chose to use this spelling because it is different than the spelling of most white people. I am not sure how true this is because my ex-husband lied a lot. When I looked up the name McKoy, the only thing I could find is that the name is found in the UK, Scotland, and Canada, but not much else. I kept his last name because I liked that it was different and easier to pronounce than my maiden name of Parras. Also, because I have been a McKoy for most of my life, going back to my maiden name just did not feel right. I am and will always be a McKoy.



Stephaney Nkechi Obi

I have a few names as a result of being both American and Nigerian, but let's start with my English name. Stephaney (uniquely spelled) means a crown. When you think of a crown, you think of beauty (jewels, diamonds, rubies), honor (respect), something of high value, precious, and highly valued. My mom named me Stephaney.

My middle name, Nkechi, originates from Nigeria in West Africa and means a gift from God. I am a strong believer in Christ, which can sometimes be hard to reveal because everyone has their various beliefs based off traditions, cultures, or even politics. But I'm a Christian, which makes this name very significant to me because, believe it or not, everything comes from God. The good is a blessing, the bad is to build your faith, mold your character, or sometimes even to humble you. But when you say a gift from God, it's something specially made and given to you from God to make you happy when you're sad, to make you feel whole when you're empty; it is something that makes your heart leap, something that brightens your day; it is that which you need to be made whole.

As for my last name, Obi, it means heart/the heart of the family. I can't say much about that; it's my



father's father's name, and it gives me a sense of warmth and belonging. Hey, what can I say, other than this is me: Stephaney Nkechi Obi! <3



Asia Shavon Pearson

My entire life I assumed my first name, "Asia," was just the name of a continent my mother just so happened to name me after. I was teased in elementary school for having this name. Kids would call me China instead of Asia. They would yell, "Asia lives in China," which is why I hated my name for many years. Recently I discovered new meaning in the name. In Arabic, the name Asia means the rising of the sun or lively. I could not have picked a better word to describe myself, as I am always full of energy and, as many of my friends would say, "the life of the party." Growing up, I have come across many incidents, particularly during the job interview process, where people would assume that I was Asian up until the face to face interview. I even had a woman who interviewed me once for a position tell me I do not look like my name, and I did not get hired for the position.

My middle name is Shavon, which means beautiful and gracious. My last name, Pearson, was derived from "the son of pier."



Burnett Dontel Reed

My name is Burnett Dontel Reed. I received this name from my father back in 1993. I was given this name because it resembled one of my father's last kids. My name means brown. I searched this on Google today prior to doing this assignment. I wouldn't have ever done anything like that to see what my name meant. But since I did, I've learned a lot.

My father has been deceased since 1993, so I walk with his name with pride. I wanted to meet him in person--that would have meant a great deal to me. The impact my name has had on me has been good on the one hand and sometimes not the best on the other hand. Sometimes people think I'm my dad just by the name, and sometimes that confuses me.



Delisha LaTawn Smith

The name Delisha has a Latin meaning of having the pleasure or being a delight, which I am. It was one of my parents' close friend's name. Delisha is a name you won't hear very often. A lot of people pronounce it wrong, and it used to annoy the heck out of me. I feel disrespected and/or even unsafe when someone calls me the wrong name, but I've grown to overlook others' mistakes.

The name LaTawn is my grandmother's personal banker's name. She said every time she would sit down with her, my grandmother would stare, admiring the name LaTawn on the banker's name tag. It's French. It's rare. It's someone who works well with others, loves to discuss things, loves music, is a good healer, likes quality, and is charming, intelligent, confident, loving, artistic, generous, and co-operative. In a strange way, all these things that I am can be found in the dictionary when you look up the name LaTawn.

The most common name, Smith, originated in England. A smith is historically known as a person who works in metal. It's the side that brings out the



best in me. Smith is my father's last name that he inherited from his dad. My grandparents were both from Mississippi. They were happily married with 16 children. My dad's parents took a big helping in raising me. We are the food-loving, fun-loving, unpredictable, fun and loving Smith family. I love and take pride behind my last name, and it's very occupational. I have no problem with snagging an interview/ job.

Delisha Latawn Smith was born August 15, 1985. It was a joyful day for both my parents; I was their first-born child. I was the new addition to a big God-fearing family. I was my mother's brother's first niece. I was also my mother's parents' first born grandchild. My grandmother worked at Montgomery Wards and at JC Penny. She said she couldn't wait to doll me up. My parents put a lot of thought into the name Delisha Latawn. It had to be the most unique name of a beautiful baby doll.



Krystal Lynn Smith

Krystal was the name chosen by my grandma. Growing up, she would always call me her "krystal ball," which always made me feel special. My name starting with a K has also always made me feel special and unique.

My middle name is Lynn. I was named after my aunt whose middle name was Lynn. I want to carry this name into our next generation and name my daughter Lynn.

Smith is a generational name from my mom's side of the family. All our initials are KLS.



Thedora Smith

Well, I'm not sure of how I feel about my name, Thedora. I sometimes like it, and then sometimes I don't. My mother tells me this story of how she got my name from a woman

that she admired. The woman told her to name me after her mother because I was born on her birthday. I don't know much about the woman's characteristics: was she kind, was she talented, or anything special? She was not even related to me. The origin of my name is Greek. This is the part that I don't like because I have many unanswered questions.

What I do like about my name is that not a lot of people that I know have my name, and in the Greek language it means a gift from God. I do believe I am a gift from God and I have a special gift to give to the world. This has encouraged me to look up what my name would have meant in Egyptian because I found that many of the people who changed history studied in Egypt.



Dana Stokes

I was named by my dad; his name starts with a d as well. Automatically I think of strength when I think of my name. I was 9 pounds 10 ounces, like a Great Dane, swift and smooth. The

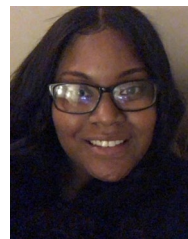
difference that my name had made for me is that it is short and sweet plus it's very easy to remember, which is a good and bad thing. Anyway, that's the way I feel. My name is unisex; that's how that reflects on my identity.



Faleshuh Walker

I made a killing that night. It was past midnight, Halloween, in Wisconsin Dells. Some friends and I went to a costume party at a place named Marley's. I decided I was tired of dancing and headed to the bar. That's where it began. I started to bet each unsuspecting suitor \$20 that they could not spell my name in three tries! I'm proud to say that I am undefeated.

I was named by my father, but the unique spelling came from my mother. I was told that she was in so much pain due to the doctors separating us without first cutting the umbilical cord that she just sounded it out. If they were to ever put my name in a dictionary, it's technically spelled phonetically. Growing up, I never used to correct people for mispronouncing my name. Now there will be a coaching session when necessary. I'm too important to myself to ignore it now.



Sunni Elán Walker

Sunni was my grandfather's nickname (Sonny). My name was supposed to be Joi, after my aunt. When my mom was in labor, my Aunt Toni said, "If it's a girl, Sunni. If it's a boy, Sonny." My mom said she did not care as long as they got it out of her.

I love my name. When I was younger, my grandmother used to sing this song to me called "Sunny" by Shirley Bassey. I think my name means I'm a very bright person.

Elán is my middle name. I'm not really sure what it means. I got my middle name from my aunt Indria Elán Moore. As you can see, we do a lot of name recycling in my family.

Walker, my last name, is from my dad. I heard that back in the day you would get your last name based on something you did. So I would assume my dad's family used to walk a lot. LOL



Diane Walton

My name is Diane Marie (Christian/middle name) Walton. I always thought Diane was just a nice name.

My mother said she chose this name for me after a spunky, go-getter actress named Diana Riggs of the early sixties, that she liked to watch on television. But my father chose to modify it to Diane. Thank you, Daddy ;)



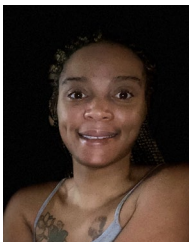
Francine is my middle name. It's a very old name that originates from France! It comes from a Latin word meaning beautiful flower. Woods was derived from the Old English word meaning wood and indicated that the origin bearer lived near the woods.

My mother randomly chose my first name. The second name comes from her god-sister. My last name is from my grandfather, which is the same as my mother's last name.

When I was younger, I researched the name Diane/Diana and its meaning. I came to love my name after I found that the name "Diana" is the French version of Diane, the name of a goddess, a patroness of the Moon, and protector of childbirth, among other heroic things. According to Wikipedia, Diana has been considered a triple deity, merged with a goddess of the moon and the underworld. I feel like my beliefs and life's path seem to resonate with the goddess of my namesake.

Well, now that I'm older, it has grown on me. It has had no effect, really, good or bad. But there are a few good friends and celebs I share my last name with. A few TV shows and movies had characters with my middle name. And the only person I heard use my first name was my favorite comedian, Kafti.

Overall, I don't really like my first name because it's ghetto to me, so I'll stick with Francine when I get older.



Keyanna Lanae Christine Wilson

Key to me means I am a key who has the power to open doors for myself and others close to me. My middle name came from my godfather, who passed when I was a child. My

last name came from my dad.



Shiquita Francine Woods

Shiquita's origin is "Modern English." My understanding as a child was it was basically the same as Chiquita Banana, which is spelled with a C, not S, and is influenced by the name

of the logo mascot. Chiquita—in Spanish, it means a small or petite girl. So I'm assuming that's why that was the mascot, but I am not quite sure.



ALUMNI CORNER

MY JOURNEY

BY RENÉ ROBINSON '08

I was born in Chicago, number eleven of fourteen children. At one point in my life, we had ten people in a three-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment. It was lively, challenging, and sometimes disappointing, but never a dull moment. It was family, my family. I didn't have a choice in the matter.

We were poor. How poor were we? We were so poor that my uncle, who worked at the Campbell Soup Factory, would bring us cans of soup that couldn't be sold because of flaws (bends and dents). The cans didn't have labels but contained numbers, which identified the type of soup. We memorized the numbers because we had to. If you didn't know the numbers, you were stuck with the soup no one wanted, which in our house was the tomato soup.

Survival, that was my life. Not only did I have to survive on the south side of Chicago, in the ghetto, the low-end as we call it, but at home as well. Can you imagine fourteen children vying for attention? Fourteen children wanting to be loved? Fourteen children striving to be better than the next?

It wasn't all good but neither was it all bad. We were taught principles, morals, and Christianity. We were required to excel in school. You would think that such an upbringing would produce upstanding and productive individuals, and it did for ten of us. Unfortunately I was one of the four who didn't quite meet the challenge. I was persistent at taking the wrong path and making poor decisions. I had my oldest son at sixteen and was forced to attend a high school for pregnant girls. I married at seventeen and had my second son at eighteen. It was a blessing to have a husband who was also the father of my children (where I come from, that was a unique happening in itself), but unfortunately with that came physical abuse.

I could go on and on about the many ups and downs due to the poor decisions I made over those thirty years, but I want to talk about the good news! I made it out of that situation and relocated to Madison, WI. I got a job, an apartment, then a used car. I joined a church that made me feel at home, and then I heard about the UW Odyssey Project, one of the best decisions I have ever made.

Odyssey is for people just like me; those who wanted to do better but couldn't for whatever reason. Having made so many poor decisions in my life, I feel I'm somewhat of an expert in understanding how easy it is for people to mess up, to make mistakes, and choose the wrong paths.

Odyssey gives you the feeling like the little red engine we read about in elementary school, "I think I can! I think I can!" It releases the "Wow" factor as in "He did that? She did what? Really? They left Britain to do the same thing in America? I didn't know that." Then it begins, the desire to know more, the desire to understand, the drive and tenacity to do better and to critically think, analyze and understand what you are reading. And what's so fantastic about Odyssey, it's generational. I tell people that all the time. Not only does it change the lives of parents, it changes the lives of their children, which will change the lives of their children, etc. Odyssey is a "Mind Opening Experience"!

Before Odyssey, if someone had asked me to write a poem or told me that I would be analyzing Socrates, Shakespeare, Emily Dickinson, and Frederick Douglass, I would have rolled my eyes up, down and sideways. But there I was, at my Odyssey graduation, earning six UW Madison credits and reading this poem I wrote about the value of lifelong learning:



My Journey

My journey started about nine months ago.
 How I would fare, I really didn't know.
 Reading, writing for sure there would be,
 But from six to nine PM, that I couldn't see.
 The professors were there for all to meet,
 Outlining History, Humanities, and Philosophy.
 I was scared but I didn't know why,
 Maybe it was the thirty years that had quickly gone by.
 Getting acclimated was a little rough at first,
 But soon thereafter to read books I would thirst.
 See, prior to Odyssey, I didn't read.
 All the info I got was from the TV.
 But things have changed, mainly the screen
 From the TV to the computer, I'm now a Google Queen.
 My journey, my journey, who would have thought
 Would be the beginning of me being taught,
 Being taught the importance of opening my mind,
 Instead of sitting around wasting my time.
 Thank you, Odyssey, for choosing me,
 I've found knowledge, my greatest discovery.



Rene Riffs on Plato

I believe the prisoners in Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" are us: people, human beings in general. It has nothing to do with race, economical or educational status; I consider those sub-caves. We have all been fettered (shackled and chained) from generation to generation. We have been taught how to think and what to think. The expansion of our mind has been limited to our surroundings. We have been made products of our environment by our communities, our neighborhoods, and our upbringing; we were all born in a cave.



The cave is like a one-sided coin: seeing only one side. If you are born rich, do you know what it is to be born poor? If you are born poor, do you know what it is to be born rich? The importance of getting out of the cave is to find out what's on the other side of the coin; such as Socrates' example of going from the darkness to the light. I believe every human being in this world is dealing with some form of darkness, whether by force or choice.

We need to walk towards love, passing by hate. We need to walk towards courage, passing by fear. We need to walk towards "I can," passing by those infamous words, "I can't."

René performs as a musician, motivational speaker, and dramatic reader (Sojourner Truth, Maya Angelou, and others) in church, at community events, on the radio, and for every Odyssey class.