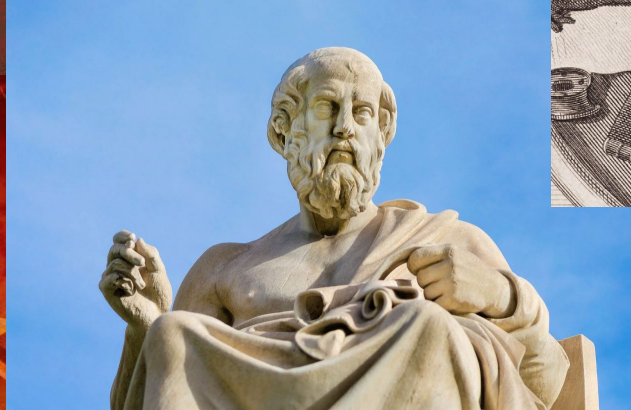
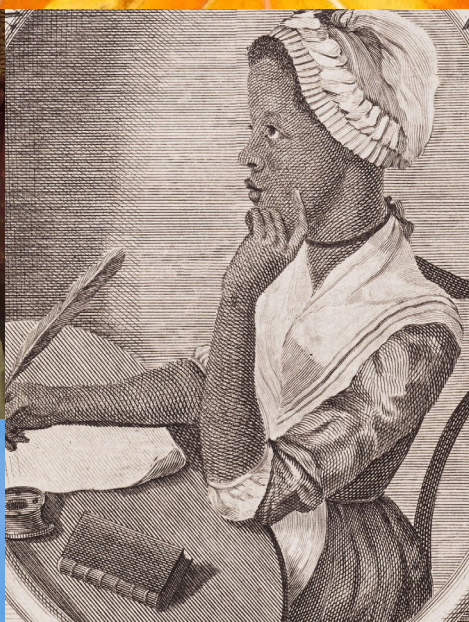


YEAR 18, ISSUE 6

NOVEMBER 18, 2020

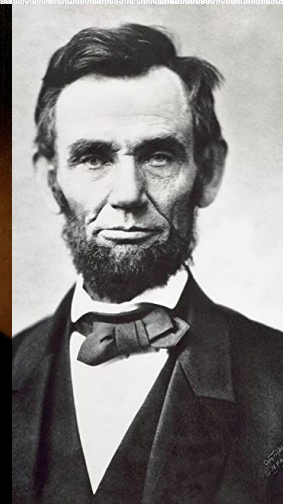
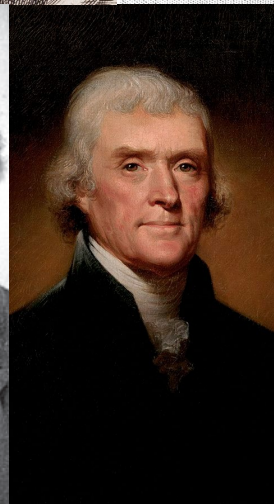
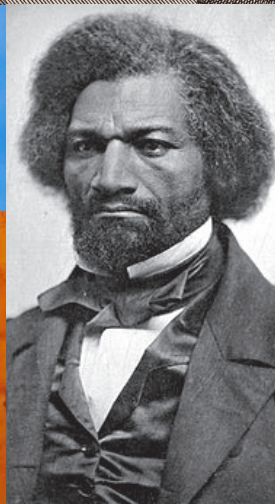
# ODYSSEY ORACLE

## FALL REFLECTIONS



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# FINDING PLATO'S CAVE TODAY



I have two strikes against me that society has given me: one being Latina and two being a woman. It's seen in society that someone like me will amount to nothing. No

matter if it is a low paying job or little to no education, finding a way out of the cave is a choice many people try to make. Many are looking for the opportunity to grow, for a better future, and to be able to say, "I'm the first to graduate." **(Betsy Alfaro)**

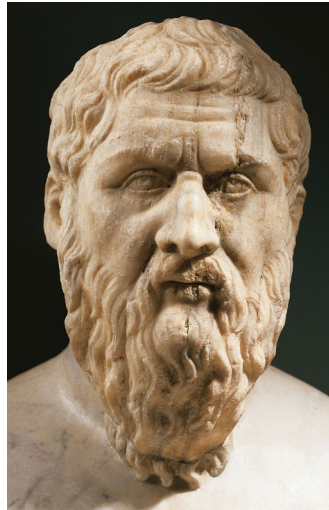


A cave many others and I have been stuck in is depression. Specifically, in the black family/ community we have a stigma that mental health does not exist. Most people struggle in silence because of the fear of judgment

or it being dismissed and not taken seriously. So, we stay in this depressive state, unable to talk or communicate, feeling trapped in our own minds because of the fear of people not understanding, thinking we're crazy, or that our problems are minor when in reality they are enough to make you hate every second of life. We sit back and witness and/or are victims of racism, injustice, molestation, drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness, etc. and wonder if we can even make it out of this life (cave) alive. We're afraid to speak out because of the repercussions of what's said and the ability for some to shake it off as insignificant. Some people are strong enough to reach out and receive help and can live outside of the cave, and some people never make it out. **(Tawania Alston)**



My cave would be my limited experience. Most of what I know is what I have heard i.e. seen on TV or heard about from someone else. Even with basic things such as religion, I read the Bible, and it gave me all the shadows of a



relationship with "God." Growing up, we get shadows of adulthood and parenthood until we actually become these things. Once we become these things, we get blinded by the light. Many of us become confused and start acting "crazy" as we adjust.

My transition from the street to a job was similar, with me feeling around in the dark, not seeing clearly the paths before me. I see more clearly now but it's still not

clear. Hopefully my ascendance will let me reach that level. **(Calvin Balentine)**



The Allegory of the Cave makes me think of religion. . . As a child I was not brought up in an extremely religious household, but on my mother's side they are quite religious and actively practice Seventh Day Adventism.

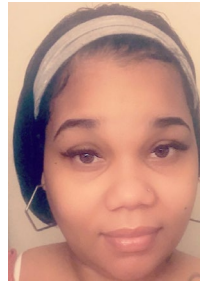
My grandma can come across as very judgmental at times, and this is what makes me think of Socrates explaining the prisoners in the cave. Only able to see what the shadows from the flames project is like believing something you are told that is based on an illusion. Religion is the cave for this metaphor and shelters that fear of the unknown and what life is.

You can live your whole life sheltered and selective in sight to only what life shows you of religion, "the cave." Then after dealing with the death of a loved one, you are taken outside of the cave and submerged in light and a world you have to adjust to. Once adjusted and feeling the change, you look back at the world and the cave you knew your whole life and see it in a different sense. You want to show others back in the cave, but you cannot force that change; it is something you have to experience yourself. **(Sarina Benford)**



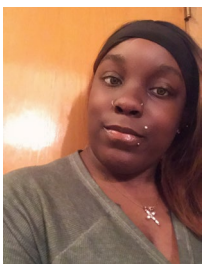
... Several great names have lost their lives in the name of difference, often considered heretical over time. The Allegory of the Cave still applies today. Even if things have changed, this is still the way it is. As soon as someone is different and turns to what is

good, he becomes dangerous and is condemned to be killed or imprisoned. Plato's cave is still relevant because being different always causes huge problems. **(Souad Bidar)**



I once was in a cave, a VERY DARK cave. I was trapped in a world where I couldn't find myself. I didn't know myself anymore. I felt lost, like there was no light. I was blind, blind to love. I dealt with a very bad domestic relationship. I was beat on every day by a man I

thought loved me. I couldn't go anywhere. I had to do what he said to do. I was emotionally, physically, mentally, and verbally abused. It was the worst feeling in life.

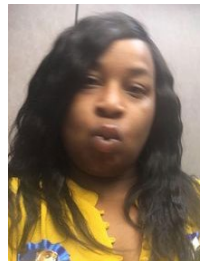


My experience in a cave is me being in a domestic abuse relationship with my son's father—physical, emotional, and verbal abuse. I felt trapped in the cave and couldn't leave or see the light. That changed when I was abused in front of my son, who wasn't

even a month old, which made me realize my son doesn't need to grow up seeing this. So I called the cops, ended the relationship, and got a domestic abuse restraining order against him. I am now free, living happily with a three-year-old.

**(Anjelica Brown)**

I had to find a way out. I finally spoke up, I didn't before because I was scared. I can go on and on ... But the most joyous part of this all is the light. I saw the light again, and I began to find myself. I was done and never looked back. I am a strong woman, and I will never go back in something so dark again. **(Cashae Davis)**



Every day of my life I feel like I'm trapped in a life that's not mine. I waited for everything, just to do everything alone. Even though I'm not really alone, why does it feel that way? I have so much pain and hurt I'm dealing with. Nobody knows; nobody understands. My biggest fear is not being the mom I have to be for my daughter, and that's not the life I want for Londyn. I want her to go after all her dreams. Even if she fails, I'm going to be here, uplifting her no matter what. I really don't know, but maybe that's why God's blessing me. Now I know deep down I'm not okay with everything but still need to be the best mother I can to Londyn. I have to keep putting her needs first, making sure she's happy, while deep down I feel trapped alone in a cave, praying that God will take all this pain away. **(Paris Foster)**





spontaneous and heart throbbing. I get a huge adrenalin rush EVERY TIME! Travel is LIFE!  
(Sarah Galinski)



One cave I recently observed is the lack of respect transgender women go through. Even though there has been some process in getting

the gay community more rights, there are people stuck in the caves that refuse to accept transgender women. Transgender women in 2020 can marry in some states, but with people still in the caves, these women still face public humiliation, harassment, and getting murdered.

(Erika Gonzalez)



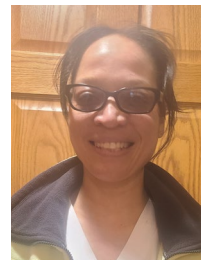
Allegory of the Cave is a great depiction of most of my adolescence and late 20s. My cave was gangs, streets, and prison. I truly believed that being a Mexican American, that was all there was for me. When I first

started middle school, my aspiration was to make it to prison. I was going to do everything I had to do to make a name for myself on the streets.

When I made it to juvenile prison and adult prison by the age of 17, I was surrounded by people in the same cave. So my way of thinking was reinforced by them all. But there was one thing I did consistently: I read books, many different books. As the years went by, I realized how I had played myself. My mind was opening. I could start to see the folly in my ways. (Fernando Galindo)



My children and I have been inside a cave before. The cave was damp, deep, and dark, really cool in temperature as well. I have seen caves on television that I really would not mind visiting one day with my children. Adventure is



I have been in my own cave. I was addicted to alcohol. I would get so drunk that I would have blackouts, not remembering anything I did but still aware. It was a scary thing. I have been in trouble with the law over it, getting several OWIs, which cost me \$20,000.

When I lived with my mother, I witnessed a lot of drug use from my mom and her friends, with people coming in and out of the house at all different times of the night. She even tried to sell drugs to me one time. Wow! She was very abusive verbally, mentally, and physically. I had to drop out of high school because of it.

I got tired of it and finally put my foot down at the age of 15. I went and told someone about my home situation, and they helped me out. But it still affected me because I became an addict, watching all that stuff that was going on. I'm glad I was able to come out of it on top. (Valeria Gordon)





I think that a person growing up in poverty could relate to this. The majority of low-income people are not given the opportunity to participate in the best education. When it comes to assistance such as section 8 and food stamps, for some reason, people are afraid to lose their benefits.

When I was 19, I had section 8, and I was always worried about how much I could make before I was kicked off. Section 8 was a safety net for me, so I would never make over \$3,000. I was uncomfortable knowing I would be on my own with rent payments.

I learned early that I would be okay if I stayed in these systems. I could stay at home, not work, and get free food. At this time, I didn't even have children of my own, just my teen sister who I had guardianship over. I was 19, and I didn't have Uriah until I was 25. I spent over five years not knowing what I could have done to better my life when I had my three children.

Once I realized that section 8 was holding me back, I decided to take a chance, move to Indiana, and pay regular rent. There was no good outcome and I regret moving there, but I wouldn't have ever known if I didn't try. Maybe I wouldn't have had my daycare business today if I continued to have section 8.

**(LaBresha Green)**



If I had to relate this Allegory to something personal in my life, it would be my consistent financial battles, which I believe many can relate to. Whether it's being late on rent, not knowing where your next meal is coming from, or not being able to put gas in your tank, I feel like we all have had problems working overly hard for money, instead of making the money work for us. My mindset at a young age was not to save but to get things I felt like I couldn't live without, which wasn't exactly what I needed. I found myself in a constant loop of getting paid and blowing it all on pointless things that would



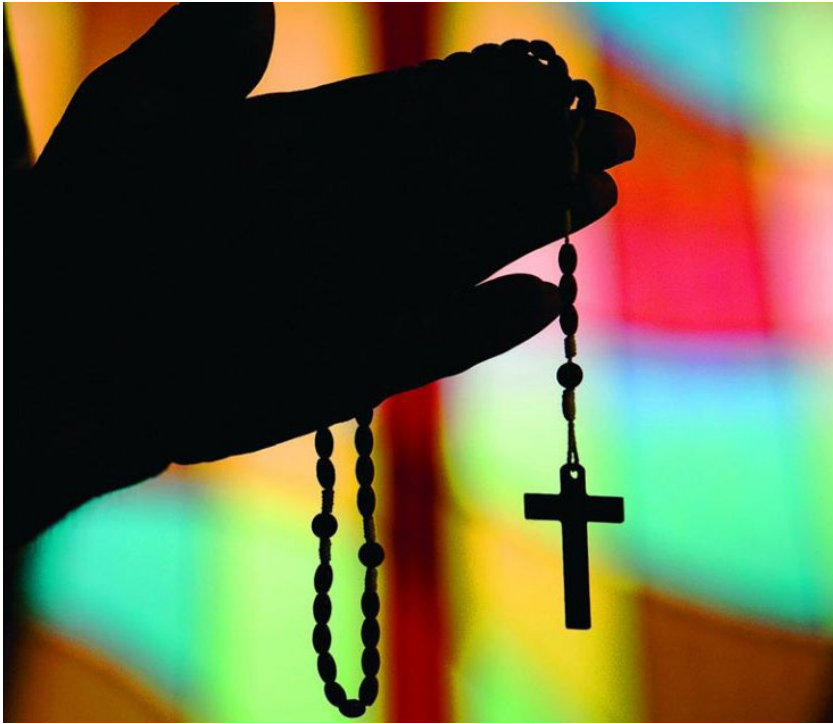
be gone in a week or less; then there I was again in the dark wondering how I was going to make it out!

A couple years ago my friend showed me where the light was, which meant I still had to climb and make changes for myself before I was able to reach that light. My friend had introduced me to a boss of his who was in personal finance. After sitting down with him and talking for what felt like hours about my spending, my income, my goals, and my "restrictions," I had decided that enough was enough. This was the day I chose to take my life back. I didn't want to be the one in my family always asking for money but never able to give it when my family needed it, for whatever reason it may be. I am the man of the house, and I want to take care of my mom and sister!

Now I feel like my goals are clear, I know I am not fully out of the dark yet, but I do see the light in the distance. I won't stop climbing until I can say I'm debt free. I took what I learned and formed it into a way that will work for me. . . Society . . . makes us believe there is NO WAY I can break these chains and live a happy and worry-free life. What we must do is find a way to dig ourselves out of the holes we have fallen into when we were given the title of "lower class." If you don't have a shovel, use a big rock; if you can't find a rock, use a stick. No stick? Dig with your hands. In other words, don't stop trying to reach that sunlight no matter what life throws at you! I want to be debt free, and I will achieve my goal!

**(Kwan Hogan)**





I grew up Catholic, and I was blind for a long time about religion in general and the existence of a God. Once I was able to see the hypocrisy there is in those (some, not all) who attend church, I started questioning things and revolting against my family's

wishes to take me to church. There were a lot of attendees that were there simply to gossip. Another thing I realized was that Jesus was never white as they portray him in paintings, clay figures, and books (catechism, which I took three times but never finished). I started realizing that religion and the Catholic church are just a way to control masses, to avoid taxation, and to have men control women. I am no longer interested in finding out more about preaching a religion. I do think that if religion is going to make a person a better woman or man, go right ahead. I have conversations with some of my aunts about this topic, but their answer is always the same: "How can you think that way, OMG!" **(Henry Irisson)**

The cave that I lived in for so long was a product of the environment I was raised in. Growing up poor brings so many aspects of trauma and creates



an environment of its own. And in this lifestyle, you learn how to live only to survive. You live to numb the pain. Absentee father, due to his own pains, a struggling addicted mother along with an abusive stepfather: that was the environment I lived in that shackled me, imprisoned me in a cave of PTSD and drug abuse.

I knew no other way to live because I was raised in it, so I believed it was my destiny to be nothing more than this. In this cave my belief system was based off pain and hopelessness. I would get small glimpses of the fire in the corner of my eye that would give me a little hope sometimes. However, living in this cave for so long, I did not know how to get out. I was led out by others who were stuck in it before me, and I was shown the truth of who I really was. Slowly in time I realized that my mom, my father, and my stepfather were all products of being chained in this same cave of ignorance that addiction brings. Without the people before me who helped lead me out, I would not be able to go back into the cave and lead others out as well. This is my duty as a human being: to show others the truth and a different way to live through my experience, strength, and hope.

This is not limited to just addiction. I see the truth from a deeper level now. The system was set in place just for this—to oppress people so that they gain and keep power over us. Addiction, mental health, and crime stem from poverty created through class. This is how they want it. So, we do not use our voices and speak up against the injustices, the brutalities, and the oppression. If we stay ignorant and uneducated, they will always have the upper hand. And with that, people stay addicted, suffering with mental health issues, incarcerated, homeless, and angry. **(Jessica Jacobs)**





The first experience I had with feeling like I'm in a cave was when I was in high school. I loved to sing and had done talent shows and everything. I had sung in front of big crowds before. Acting in the school play was my next big step.

The choir director hosted auditions for the school play. My choir teacher and I did not get along, as I was always tardy to class. But this was a passion of mine, so I was still going to audition. When walking into the audition, I noticed there were only white teens auditioning. It made me nervous because 85% of our class was black, Latino, and Asian teens. Where were they? Everybody, including the choir director, looked at me as if I didn't belong or this was a secret club. I still auditioned, but what I realized was the play was not diverse at all. It was about white people, from what I remember. She kept saying there was no proper part for me to read, and I was embarrassed. Everyone just looked and stared. So I left and never went back to choir either. It just didn't feel right, and I completely gave up singing.

One day, months later, my friend invited me to go see the play. I hesitated but went. When I went, I realized there was one very, very dark girl in the play; she was in the background. But I noticed her immediately. She had a few lines at the end, but it was just great to see her there. Long story short, I learned to never let anyone discourage me from my passions, to always keep pushing and keep trying. Those negative influences may hurt, but if it's something I desire, instead of being blind to my own potential or letting the choir director guide my future, I should still go for the role she said I was not made for.

Another example of me feeling like I was trapped in a cave is living in Madison, WI. I lived in Madison for 26, almost 27 years, and a lot has changed during that time period. I feel like a lot of blacks are hindered here from realizing their highest potential. I feel like no matter what I do, I will never get ahead here and I'm not welcome. That's crazy. I've lived here my whole life, and this doesn't feel like home at all. Every time I go to an event, bar, movie, or museum, 80% of the people I see are whites, and

they are not as welcoming as you'd think. They always look at me as if I don't belong, kind of how my old choir teacher looked at me. Certain restaurants I will not go to because I feel like it's really segregated and once I walk in, all eyes are on me. It's eerie, like a movie of some sort.

Why not move out of state? This is a question I ask myself every day. When I turned 18, I decided to leave and move to Atlanta, GA. When I went it was like Wakanda from the movie Black Panther,



so beautiful. I never saw so many blacks in my life. They were busy working and building. The black-owned businesses, colleges, and homeowners made my heart burst with ambition. The only thing was I was broke and homeless. In order to succeed down there, you have to have some type of goal in mind—a venture, business idea, or education. Everything was moving so fast, but you had to be ready to jump on the bandwagon. So I came home and tried to convince my family of this utopia. Maybe if we all left, we all could help each other get ahead. They were like, "If it was such a grand place, why come back?" It's like they didn't believe me. I tried to convince them and bring them back the knowledge I had found, but nobody cared. They were so accustomed to their lifestyle, income, renting apartments, and lack of education. I am not saying that they couldn't get an education here but that it was much easier to get ahead there than here. I was confused on what to do. For years I just went back to what I knew and limited myself. Basically, I was like a figure in Plato's Allegory of the Cave: I went to see and discovered something great. I went back to educate my family, but they were blind to the truth of success in Atlanta. Instead of me going back to Atlanta, I stuck with my family, still knowing we could be great. I conditioned myself into the cave instead of just leaving and not listening to anyone about it.

**(Brianna Johnson)**





The cave that I observed in me today is COVID-19 and the BLACK LIVES MATTER movement.

Being told to stay home and don't leave unless it's important and giving you a curfew really makes life hard to live. It makes you feel like having fun is a bad thing but getting sick is worse. Yet we are not God. Not even science can say who will live or die from the virus. To have your kids at home full time and not being able to work full time, to have to put parenting aside and learn to become one's kids' teacher when I was told it takes a village to raise a child is hard. I did not get it until now. I know how to be a mom but am still learning how to become a teacher, doctor, and friend.

Another cave is being called a nigger because you're black and just getting off work and going home. Or having a gun pointed at you at 10 years old for mistaken identity. Feeling like less of someone because you are darker can make staying in the cave sometimes feel easier, yet it is hard and lonely. **(Yvonne Johnson)**



In all our lives we are only able to comprehend things at the level of consciousness that we are at. To achieve another higher level of consciousness is not easy. It will hurt, cause pain and suffering or great sacrifice. As humans we have done nothing but look for

the easy way. Any way to make any activity less interactive or less stressful for ourselves is the goal. We are hindering our species so much we don't even see it. We lack in physical capabilities, health, boundaries, and common sense. We do not want to live by natural laws because we are humans, and humans create their own. We are too deep in



our cave. It's so clear and obvious yet so painful no one wants to accept it. So, the cave is our perception of our lives. Are we living a dream? Is this American dream just one big nightmare? Is that the truth outside the cave? We are all in our own caves, but some of us are closer to the light. Some have glimpsed around, and some have broken

free full sprint. But rest assured, there are many self-created obstacles as you try to get through to the light. Many people will call you crazy, getting scared of you and maybe wanting to kill you. That's what happens to visionaries today. **(Feather Lloyd)**



Sometimes life seems like nothing but an endless series of caves. I grew up in a culture soaked in alcohol. As I've groped towards responsibility, every shred of advancement makes me look back in horror and amazement at the wantonness of my

previous behavior. How could I live in such a crazy scenario? How could I grow so accustomed to it? And yet I often yearn for the mindlessness of that existence, where nothing really mattered, and any difficult feeling could be erased with ease. It reminds me of last week when we did the Declaration of Independence: "Experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed."

I gravitated towards Odyssey specifically for aid in escaping the cave. It seemed to me that with everything going on in the world, it was no longer acceptable to be ignorant or uninformed.

**(Farren McDonald)**



cleaning. It was my version of the allegory of the cave.

I knew that I was too young to be made so old, deprived of living life and being happy, feeling like a commodity, a piece of property instead of feeling like a person. I stayed there for years because of ignorance and most of

all criticism – being told that staying was the only way to make things right. Leaving was hell, full of planning, plotting, saving, and strategizing, but I'm happy to have found the courage to leave and never look back.

Now here I am, free, happy, out of the cave, and flourishing like never before. **(Stephaney Obi)**



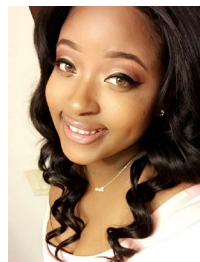
I was born in a cave of darkness surrounded by addicts and dysfunction. I was raised by idiots. Yes, idiots. So many people tell me that I should not say that about my parents, but they did not live my life. Most people cannot

comprehend just because someone birthed you does not mean they were good. Both my parents wanted to party, drink alcohol, and do drugs rather than be a parent to us. I was forced to be the grown up, and I hated that job. My brothers and sister always said I was the bad seed because I questioned my parents' choices and refused to follow in their footsteps. I fought hard not to be like them, and that caused me a rocky relationship with my family.

I am the only one who does not suffer from addiction. I broke so many generational curses just to find my own happiness and a better life for myself and my kids. I had to get away from my family and love them from a distance. Doing that, why was I called selfish? I am not going to lie: that was so hard at first, being alone trying to figure things out by myself. I had to do it because that was the only way I could find peace. I survived by surrounding myself with people who love, supported, and cared for me. These became my family and support. I understand what it is like to be stuck in that cave and what is like to be the only person to question whether something is normal. I am so glad I got out and will never return. **(Michelle McKoy)**



My allegory of the cave was being in a relationship where I was not able to socialize, go places, work, or continue my education in pursuit of becoming a chemical engineer. I was limited to only cooking and



In these past few months, I myself have been trapped in a cave, and that cave is my own mind. I was recently diagnosed with anxiety and depression. Unfortunately, that diagnosis came with one of the scariest things I've ever experienced: panic attacks. This disorder is classified as a mental health issue.

My mind and its frequent negative thoughts have become my enemy. I am trapped in a constant battle against sadness and pain. I hope to win the battle and escape my mind, hopefully sooner than later. My goal is to stay positive even in dark times and look at my glass as half full instead of half empty. My cave is anxiety. **(Asia Pearson)**



I've caught myself in a cave on several occasions. I was into trouble coming into Madison, with several things hanging over me, which led me to be trapped in a state of mind of believing I'm a troubled person who would not or could not succeed

in any setting. I was so deep in that I went into depression really bad. I sometimes fall back into it. But I keep reminding myself anything is possible with a supportive community. **(Burnett Reed)**





The world is in too deep; all humans need to be re-educated. We all are prisoners within our own underlying beliefs. The prisoners are the people who are suffering from needs that those who govern selfishly leave unaddressed. **(Delisha Smith)**



I sometimes do feel like I'm in a cave...from work to everyday life. I recently visited Atlanta and haven't felt the same since I've been back. The kind of freedom I experienced there was amazing compared to what I feel on a day to day basis. When I'm at

work, although I love the work itself, I can feel the way I'm looked at differently and even treated differently. I compare this feeling to being in a cave because I feel stuck in a continuous cycle in having to be the bigger person and ignore the judgment. I've learned a lot about myself from being put into situations like this. I've learned you can't change who you are or others. I've learned acceptance, and that is a different kind of peace. **(Krystal Smith)**



I am a single parent, and sometimes it seems like I'm in a cave. I get up, cook, clean, teach, work, run, and do hop scotch all in one day every day! My sons are my sun. Making time for just ME is essential to my life. Hey, everyone has an answer to their awakening.

That's the experience; there's nothing cliché about it. The blessing of having my own place is I don't have to live with anyone else annoying me. The independence I have and the "I won't fall easy" motto and attitude have gotten me out of the dark cave and into the light many times. I'm trying my best to find knowledge (episteme) rather than what everyone thinks is truth (doxa) in order to master this old art of puppetry. You must anchor your true beliefs and understanding. It wasn't natural to be in a cave. When you get out and see the truth, you need to go back into the cave to drag

others out. Know that having found true wisdom (episteme), illusions can't intervene. Others can move from doxa to episteme until all have gotten out of the cave. **(Dana Stokes)**



My cave was called 4120 S Prairie, apt 1107. Born and half raised in the Robert Taylor Projects, what I saw was what I knew: pissy hallways, crappy plumbing, and trash decorating the stairwells as if it belonged; pedophiles, winos, and big kids with warped minds. There were police raids on a Tuesday afternoon because they felt like it. They would bust right in the door and accuse us of something we didn't do. Someone of authority or providing charity: those were the only white people I knew.

In my cave, white people were clean, wealthy, darkly charitable, and unrightfully cruel to EVERYONE that looks like me. They had the better version of everything but had no clue how to appreciate it.

In my cave, the white people were simply here to show me all of the things I could have, all the ways I could live, BUT I did not deserve them because I came here in the wrong skin.

Fortunately, I got out of the cave, not because I chose to, but because we were forced out. I left one cave to be thrust into a new one.



My new cave was Madison, WI in the late 90s. I had gone from only being around those who looked like me to being the only one that looked like me. I was the tallest, the black one, with kinky hair and an urban style.

If I turned to my left, there was country music; if I turned to my right, there was Britney Spears. I could look to my front at a cemetery across the road from my school or look right behind me at what felt like seven million white people. All were just staring, some smiling, and others with confused, curious looks.

They had a burning desire to touch my hair, ask if I played basketball, or seem shocked I knew both my parents. They were surprised that I'm intelligent and gentle but alarmed because I will also become savage when needed. Although I'm still in this particular cave, I've been fortunate enough to find some hidden rooms that keep leading me to my way out. **(Faleshuh Walker)**



I felt like I was in a cave before. My brother got shot on the Fourth of July last year, and I was in a bad place afterwards. He got shot about ten times, and he was in a coma for a little over a week. The doctors notified us that he was brain dead. His mom thought he

would get better, but when he woke up, he was



a vegetable. His mom kept him on life support for two months, and finally he passed from pneumonia.

I felt like I failed as a sister. I had not talked to my brother since January. I just wished I could have saved him. On top of all that I had to watch my brother suffer. I could not sleep, I didn't want to get out of the bed, take a shower, or anything. I was at one of the lowest points I had been in life.

**(Sunni Walker)**



I have once been in a cave. The cave I was in, I thought it had no escape, until one day I thought about all the people I knew who knew me and love me that could have gotten me out of the situation. Two people showed up, which I was really thankful

for. I never really got out of it mentally, and I can't say it's easy, but it does take a lot of rebuilding. Something that I never knew then is what follows, which has taught me to be more careful and pay attention. **(Keyanna Wilson)**



I was incarcerated and didn't understand how I was going to get out. I couldn't call anyone because I couldn't remember numbers. I was on the verge of losing my job and did. It was just more of being held against my will for me.

I didn't like it at all. The fact of my child seeing me taken was very hurtful for both of us. I just learned a lesson that I should never get in trouble because I'm not fit for that at all.

**(Shiquita Woods)**



# FINDING PLATO'S CAVE TODAY

## ODYSSEY BEYOND BARS CLASS OF 2020

*Men in Kevin Mullen's Fall 2020 English 100 class at Oakhill Correctional Institution also read Plato's Allegory of the Cave and wrote about its application to their own lives.*

I think [Socrates and Glaucon] are talking about the people within the body of the government or religion. What keeps them in the cave is safety—they think they're safe in the world that they were taught. It's important to learn so you can see and escape from what you have been taught.

Yes, I lived in a world where I was TAUGHT that I'm from the Hood, and I would never succeed in anything legit. That selling drugs was our best form of seeing good money. I was TAUGHT that no one cared about us besides our brothers. That gangs were part of being a part of the higher power in our Hood. I lived in a cave where prison was a good thing, and where dead bodies were a part of life. **(Chavez)**

I believe the Allegory is about democracy. The people are the citizens, following blindly with only the information given in the dark by the shadows. [The citizens] need to come to the light of knowledge and take their rightful place. That is destined. And once you have experienced both the light and the dark, you now have a deep understanding of your rightful place in this world.

I observe caves on the regular. People are so used to gathering information without investigating the merits or intentions, leaving them in the darkness of their own minds. Like myself—I lived in a cave all my life, growing up believing what I saw and what I was told, when it was all an illusion—misconceptions of what life is really about. **(Randy)**

In my opinion, the prisoners that only see the shadows refers to the people in the world who only see what's in front of them. I think in today's time, social media, tv, and music are all things that keep us in the cave. Getting out of this cave and the [journey] to light symbolizes truth or better understanding. **(Malik)**

The prisoners are people like myself—those comfortable residing in obscurity, unwilling to step out of comfort zones in the status quo. Isolation becomes comfortable, residing in the darkness. The darkness allows one to not see all the “stuff” hidden, not being able to identify problem areas in our lives, which become personal barriers that keep us from advancing forward. We are unable to truly identify the true person we were created to be. Not much good comes from limiting one's self to reside in darkness. In order to flourish, one needs to come into the light to become and remain vibrant. We need to allow ourselves to interact with others and socialize, as was intended.

When we remove whatever our chains in life are, we remove the restrictions and barriers that we have created because of fear and not desiring to be hurt again. The reasons for isolation and restricting one's self are endless. When we remove self-imposed restriction and come out from under our rock, where the darkness is, we come into the light where life can regenerate itself—there is where the growth can begin. We will desire to articulate ourselves to others, listen to others, and process what is shared. When we interact, we see things from a fresh perspective. Possibilities are now endless, and let the growth begin. We will gravitate to others as we see ones of wisdom and desire to learn what they have to share, building on the solid foundation we build. Once we have this proven foundation, we can build upwards and outwards. Building relationships is a gift to one's self and others that continues to invest forward without end.

At one time, I was a “Master Cave Builder,” with all the trappings of secluding myself in darkness and isolation . . . My cave was a continual wall all around me, with a heavily fortified gate at the entrance. Why did I unknowingly reside like this? Hurt, shame, insecurity—just to mention a few . . .

Then there came a time when I made the decision to examine the light, and I felt gravitated toward it. Little by little, I allowed myself to see the scars and bruises that were there but had been hidden in the dark. In the light, I also allowed myself to interact with others more . . .

I am so proud of allowing myself to come out of my cave, removing the barrier chains I allowed to be there. Now I live in the light and am proud of the direction I am going in and loving the relationships I have built. Also, I am grateful to those whom I have learned from along the way. Never stop moving forward and asking the tough questions. **(Randal)**

### Solitary Confinement of the Mind

Breaking the chains of the forced solitary confinement of my own making was the hardest thing for me. I was self-confined, meaning I retreated into my mind when I was handed a 20-year sentence. To deal with the uber-traumatic experience of being taken away from my loved ones and thrust into a multi-tiered cage with some of the most heinous beings in human history was a cultural and emotional shock.

Understanding the reason for my incarceration and in agreement with it, for a life was taken (even in the defense of my own), and punishment must be administered. And yet I found that my new dwelling place was not to my liking. I retreated into the chaos of my mind where emotions, thoughts, and beliefs converged with an earth-shattering force that threatened to rend me apart, yet it was still better than where my physical body was. People in prison talk about being “institutionalized.” It’s a statement that a person who is institutionalized is so accustomed to prison life that they’re like an automaton in prison.

Most people who put that mantle on are those who have been incarcerated a long time, i.e. 15 years or more. I had 21 years to do and

didn’t want to be institutionalized, so I retreated into my own mind, thinking it would be a safe place to shield me from becoming accustomed to the prison lifestyle.

I couldn’t blame them [for becoming institutionalized]. It’s the same thing every day, and the only thing that changes is the weather, and after a while that starts to seem the same as well. One tries to participate in groups and programs only to find out that they are mostly generic and the same, and the only difference is in the name. It could drive a man crazy. It took me to change my outlook and expand my thinking to get out of my own way. [I felt] anger at my plight, even when I believed that it saved my life, for the path I was on was only leading to an early death. I still couldn’t bask in the glorious rays of enlightenment until I let go of my simple way of thinking. For me, listening was my biggest problem. I didn’t want to listen to anyone who disagreed with me without giving me concrete proof of why I was wrong.

Then I sat down with a man who unfortunately will never see the streets again, and he gave me the best piece of advice I was ever given. He said, “Ali, what’s wrong with trying something new? Experience is your best teacher. If you don’t like it, no harm no foul, and what do you have in here but time? Your life is utterly yours no matter where your living arrangement is, and you can be free even if your body is confined.”

Those words lit a fire within me, helping to break the shackles I put on myself and opening the door of my solitary confinement cell. They urged me to experience any and every program or group

available to me, with an open mind this time, and to interject and ask questions (something I never did before). The knowledge of self and the world outside these walls flooded my synapses. I learned and thirsted for more, and in the search for more I learned that I had a hidden talent. That talent helped calm the voices in my mind, which in turn helped me to better express myself. **(Ali)**





The “prisoners” are a person’s way of looking at something—one point of view. They are so blinded by the darkness or ignorance that they cannot see past the darkened shadow and into the light of a new life and possibilities.

Addiction . . . While using, I was seeing life completely differently. I was stuck, locked into a worldview I couldn’t escape. I was looking for a shot of hope, the bright light, something positive that would help me climb out of the dark cave. As crazy as it may sound, prison was that release from the cave. Now the light I’d been looking for I’ve found—my faith, education, and another shot at life. If put back into that life, I would be able to help the others (prisoners) suffering from addiction.

**(Jamie)**

The prisoners are people in society who have been so stuck in their ways, mainly because they are forced to only see one view of things. The chains keep them in the cave, as well as the thought that if one were to escape and try to free the others, one would be put to death. It’s important for them to get out, so they can see the light and the realities of the real world, so they have a clearer vision.

I was in a cave once for a very long time—the cave of addiction. The chains of drinking and drugs were holding me there, until I was able to break out and see the realities how good life can be without them. I wanted more. I wanted to stay free. **(Blake)**

The prisoners are the citizens or people. The darkness (aka, the shadows) or not learning keeps them down there. The light is the sun (aka, knowledge or wisdom), and they want to learn.

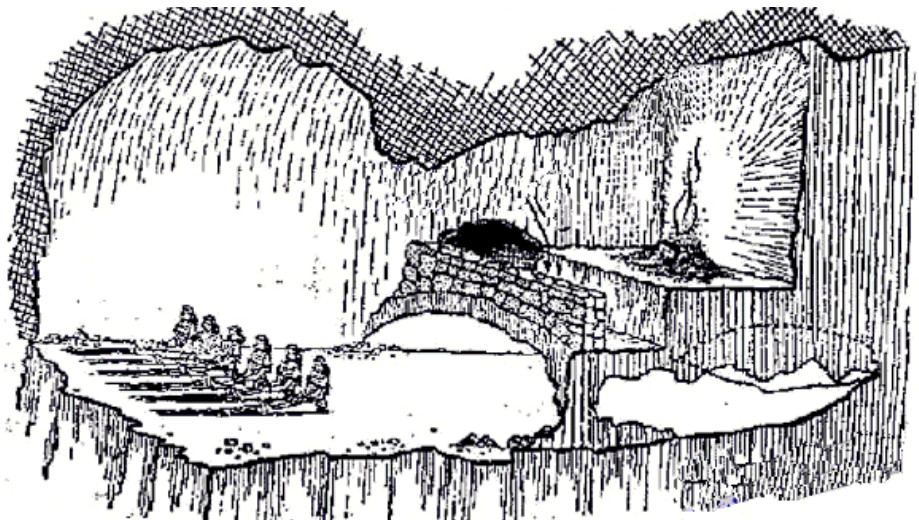
Meth was my cave. I didn’t learn or want to learn because I was too worried about doing more meth. There are all kinds of caves that people are in,

like sex addiction, drug addiction, and gambling. Even being stuck on themselves, caring only about themselves [is a kind of cave]. Sins are big causes. **(Christopher)**

Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” can be applied to everyone’s lives in all times—throughout the past, present, and future of humankind. In just the last century, American society has been brought from the depths of the darkest caves into the just and fair light. Women’s rights, freedom of speech, many laws and a great amount of prejudice and racism has escaped the darkness by the determination of enlightened minds.

I myself have been lost in that undesirable cave many times, but I’ve also found my way into the light as well. Becoming a health-conscious individual has been one of my proudest journeys, finally finding the exit from a cave full of unhealthy and destructive behavior. Just recently, I have found the exit to the path of a life without incarceration, from living in the blindness and darkness of the cave within the world of committing crimes.

Everyone, including me, must still continue the endless path to enlightenment and a just life by always looking and searching for the exit from whichever cave they find themselves in. Once one exits the cave, one must go back to help and guide others who have not yet found the entryway to a better form of knowledge. **(Jon)**



# CHANNELING FREDERICK DOUGLASS

*It is 1852, and escaped slave Frederick Douglass has just read an editorial in The Southern Quarterly Review stating that slaves cannot dream of liberty because it is “a conception which belongs so naturally to the white man.” The essay goes on to argue that it is “a cruel task to disturb him in the enjoyment of that life—slavery—to which God has destined him,” that slaves “bask in the sunshine and are happy,” and that “Christian slavery . . . is the brightest sunbeam which Omniscience has destined for his existence.” Frederick Douglass responds:*



*Dear Editor:*

Has it not been shown in your every action that you wish to oppress us? Have you not shackled us at every turn, beat us on every whim, and demeaned us with every sentence, with the goal of making us accept slavery?

May I ask you, sir, who enjoys being denied the common decencies that are afforded to all? Who, I ask, enjoys being beaten to within an inch of his life? Who looks forward with joy at the thought of hunger? Who, I ask? I am sure you will find the answer is no one.

Who would enjoy taking children away from their mothers? Who enjoys raping children, killing defenseless women and babies, emasculating men, all while claiming to do the work of God? Surely the answer is a savage. Only a savage can behave in such a manner.

You insult your white brethren with such a lie. No one who has seen the back of a slave as it cracks with welts and bleeds from patches of missing skin, no one who has heard the wails of a mother as her baby is sold to a faraway plantation, no one who has looked into the eyes of a man who is no longer a man because he has been broken will take such a lie for the truth. **(Calvin Balentine)**



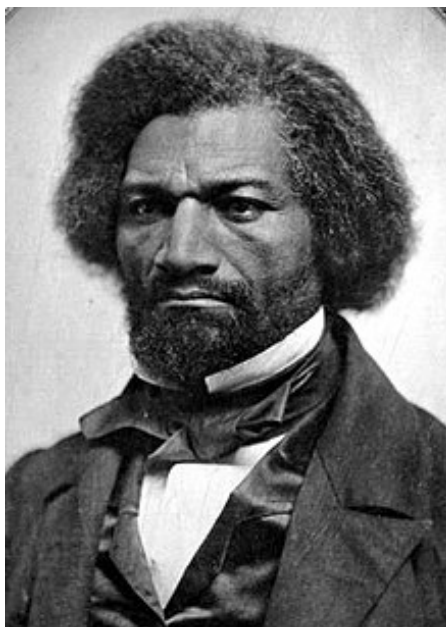
I write in response to your article about Christian Slavery. When writing on how the negro feels, I wonder how you yourself can speak about that which you are not. Is your skin not white? Are you not in the position of the many?

To exclaim and declare such thoughts and expressions on slavery through Christianity has led me to believe you think yourself to be a man higher than God—to have no mercy in enslaving another human being based on the tone of their skin. Has the Bible not taught you mercy?

God does not create man to be unequal; man creates inequality. Give me liberty or give me death! I too am a child of God who should be allowed freely to decide the course of my own

life. It is a cruel task to disturb anyone in the enjoyment that is life—freedom—to which God has destined them.

When responding to your article, I want to leave you with the words of a simple man who believes in the simple freedoms of his own life. You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man. Slavery is the ultimate interference, Sir, from the brightest sunbeam—that is life, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness. **(Sarina Benford)**





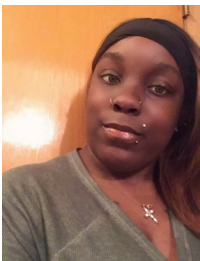


You say, "The negro, left to himself, does not dream of liberty." What do you know about freedom? Do you have any idea of freedom according to the Bible? "Freedom is the power given by God to act or not to act, to do this or to do that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. Freedom attains its proper perfection when it is directed toward God, the highest good and our beatitude."

You determine the fate of human beings who have been disqualified by prejudice, discriminated against by slavery, or, worse yet, dehumanized by ideologies which believe that there is superiority between humans and hatred of others.

Dear Sir, if you think that slaves are incapable of learning, then why have laws which prohibit educating them? There are no laws prohibiting the master from teaching or instructing his dog or horse. We forbid instruction to slaves not because they cannot learn but precisely because they can.

Finally, I remind you that we share a common humanity. We are all equal. We have to respect each other. We must publicly and strongly denounce all forms of treatment that we do not wish to see inflicted on us or on any human being. **(Souad Bidar)**



As a slave, I asked for liberty, justice, and freedom, the same as a white man. Like my black brothers, I did not ask to be enslaved. We were taken from our families to be given to white families and to be treated like dirt, yes dirt—the dirt on the ground, the ground we walked

on every single day. We slaves do not enjoy being slaves. We do not enjoy being called out of our names. . .

You tell me what type of enjoyment you would get out of being in the fields from sun up 'til sundown, picking cotton, working in the hot heat in the fields, not able to take water breaks without being punished, especially if we didn't pick enough cotton for the day? Did we enjoy being whipped, or should I say beaten brutally 'til we are bloody, blood dripping from our bodies to the floor, open cuts on our body

from being whipped so hard, barely able to stand up nor walk, not able to express how we feel without getting whipped or punished?

We want to be treated the same as you; we want equality. This is not what God wanted! God wanted all of his creations to be free and enjoy life to the fullest, not being sold into slavery, whipped until our bodies are bloody, and treated like dirt.  
**(Anjelica Brown)**



You do not know me or many people that have been oppressed for years. May I enslave you and your entire family for one whole month...just a mere thirty days? I would then want to hear from you how "God" has destined this for you. You cannot even fathom for a second that I would be your OWNER, let alone your SUPERIOR.

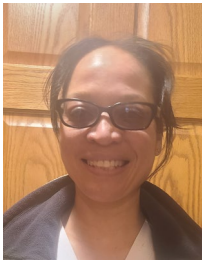
Furthermore, you speak of slavery as if it is a luxurious vacation. I was stolen from my mother as a baby, not getting to bond with her or have the luxury of being breastfed, held, kissed, or hugged. Then to further insult my intelligence, you label slavery "Christian Slavery," as if that softens the blow. Your simple mind must be taught that you are not superior to any other HUMAN BEING; you are a man, just as I am. I am a FREE MAN.

**(Sarah Galinski)**



I was very disappointed and saddened after reading this article, not basking in the sunshine and being happy. My mother was taken from me as an infant, and I don't know how old I am. Other Negroes and I are treated worse than animals. I had to teach myself how to read and write to better myself. I have worked hard all my life; and even when self-employed, I had to pay for the freedom to work.

We are overworked and exhausted, receive little food, few articles of clothing, and no beds. We are beaten or whipped, and sometimes even shot by the plantation overseers for breaking rules or sometimes just because. . . . How can you call yourself Christian and treat humans as property? **(LaBresha Green)**



How can you say that I do not want to be free when everybody wants to be free? Have you asked me about my freedom? We should all be

treated equal. You say that God has put us on this earth to do the work for the white man, but there were many different slaves in the Bible, not just black people. So do not go saying that slavery was destined only for black people. Working 16 hours or more in the hot sun, no water, no break, no shade, no type of comfort, with only the white men on their horses watching our every move—and you think I am having a good time in the midst of all this? According to the Bible, you do unto others as you would have them do unto yourself. How dare you try to persuade us to think that slavery was God’s brilliant idea for us, and not yours! How dare you try to blame this on the creator who created all of us to be as one!

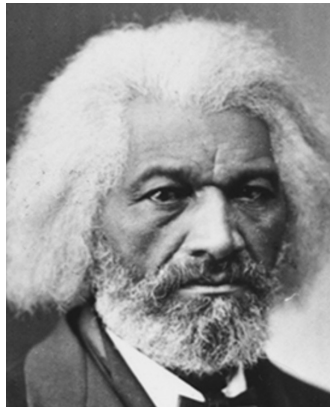
**(Valeria Gordon)**



Happiness? Enjoyment? For years my ancestors have been oppressed and killed because they are not doing what the white man wants. These are not jobs that help the family; no, this is slavery meant to break down the mindset of the black men and women.

How dare you! You are telling me in our “free time” as slaves we do not dream of being free, which is our right as humans? That is nonsense. As a child I rarely ever saw my mother, who lived on a plantation far from my own and was only able to sneak away at night. And my father, you ask? He was thought to be the slave master at the time. I wish that I could have grown up close to my family, without the fear of getting split up and sold like grain on the market.

You speak of happiness and the enjoyment of being a slave. What is there to enjoy? Where is the happiness that “God has destined”? You must be referring to the happiness we feel when sleeping on the ground in potato sacks, or being cold with



no clothes to wear or even shoes on our feet. Ahh, the enjoyment of being awakened early after a restless night of sleep to be called into the field for more delightful work. There is no enjoyment in hearing your aunt being humiliated, stripped down, tied up, and whipped just for finding some small ounce of enjoyment in her life. These conditions are barbaric, without a bit of God in it.

To all my black brothers and sisters still facing oppression and slavery to this day, I say educate yourselves; there is nothing more terrifying than someone who knows his/her rights and can articulate them well. Keep fighting, keep singing, and keep praying! Oh, and read “The Columbian Orator” when you get a chance. **(Kwan Hogan)**



Slavery is just an abomination and outrage to our society. Do you know what it is to be under nourished since the day you were born? Do you know what it is to over-work every single day of your life? Do you know what it feels to be whipped, to not have enough clothes during the night and during winter?

Is it a Christian thing to treat your fellow Christian humans with such outrageous behavior? Slavery is not God’s plan; it is your plan. Would you be happy if your daughter, your mother, or any member of your family experienced this abomination?

I encourage you to read the Bible and truly exercise what it says: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” – John 13:34. Why can you not for once put hate to the side and practice the word of the Lord?

Are you a patriot? If so, do you believe in the Declaration of Independence, a majestic, well-written document that describes us as a nation for all, a nation where “are men are created equal”? Remember, we are all created equal; we are all created in the lord’s own image. **(Henry Irisson)**





How dare you say I do not dream of liberty when my liberty was immediately taken away from at birth? Slaveholders treated us as livestock. We were separated, sold, traded into slavery, and stripped away of our freedom.

Nothing naturally belongs to the white man; the white man is only fearful of losing employment to the black race. We are all entitled to the same free thinking and freedom. It was not until I moved to Baltimore and the wife of my slave master was teaching me to read when my slave master stopped her and stated I would be of no-good use learning. That moment changed me forever. I decided to further my learning. With that I understood the cycle of slavery. Suppressing the knowledge and teachings would further ensure a life in bondage, thus continuing the cycle.

You say it would be a cruel task to give me my freedom? What is cruel are the slave catchers, overseers, owners, and watchmen, all doing their jobs in securing my lifetime of misery. The whippings, beatings, 24-hour surveillance, rape, lack of food and clothing during the seasons are far crueler. God has not destined people to be slaves. You use religion as a cover up of all the unholy things you do in slavery. God loves all people, whatever race, color, or creed. You are trying to justify your actions with the Bible. You are committing those same sins that you preach against every Sunday.

You stated Christian Slavery, free from interference, is the brightest sunbeam which Omniscience has destined for a slave's existence. I do not exist to serve you; I am a man and my own master. Christian slavery will never be free from interference and will no longer exist, for I will teach my people the true Omniscience and our true destiny. **(Brianna Johnson)**

Do I not have the same right to dream of liberty as you? Who are you to act as God to use Christianity to control the minds of slaves, to beat them bloody,



wiping red tears, until there is no man standing? Should I not have equal clothes on my back and shoes on my feet as you to lead and learn, with good food, with one's mind and own free will? The same as you, I bleed, hear, see, talk, and feel, though my skin is as

black as the rubber of your boot. As I age, my hair will grow as white as you and the sheets which you rest upon to keep you warm at night.

Slaves should have as much right to freedom as any man, woman, or child. From one child of God to another, let us have freedom of will, with liberty and justice for all. **(Yvonne Johnson)**



The Negro left to himself would never imagine enslavement of his being, for all humans are born with freedom. This is the grace of God, and no man has the right to take it from another. You speak as if the Negro does not desire freedom or

liberty. Are we not human? Does God not sacrifice his own seed for the sins of all humans to be free? Does a bird not desire to spread its wings and fly? Does a fish not want to swim free? None of these animals are taught this; it is a natural occurrence of a living being. We are all meant to be free! No God of mine, Christian or otherwise, would allow the heinous mistreatments I have witnessed upon my fellow humans. For no need or activity should allow such cruelties on another.

Freedom is a natural state, and it is unnatural to trap another in such a way. There is no basking in slavery; there is no joy in being considered property and being treated worse than a cow that is no longer producing milk. Are we not born of a mother just like you? But we are born only to be sold and to never feel the love and comfort of a mother's bosom. Even the loudest screams of the innocent go unjustly ignored. Slavery is by far the cruellest system known to man. There are no sunbeams in a life of slavery. **(Feather Lloyd)**



I won't tarry too long on introductions, for with every wasted breath, multitudes more of my brethren are being born into bondage. Like the countless, nameless souls that preceded them, they will live in chains and die in darkness.

Since the publication of my narrative seven years ago, I have undoubtedly become a well-known personage among abolitionists and men-stealers alike. I call them men-stealers, for no other name suits them quite as well; it fits them like a well-tailored coat, though they chafe at the wearing of it. They chafe at it, because they are wont to dress up their barbarous behavior in accommodating language, just as you like to cloak yours in the garb of Christianity.

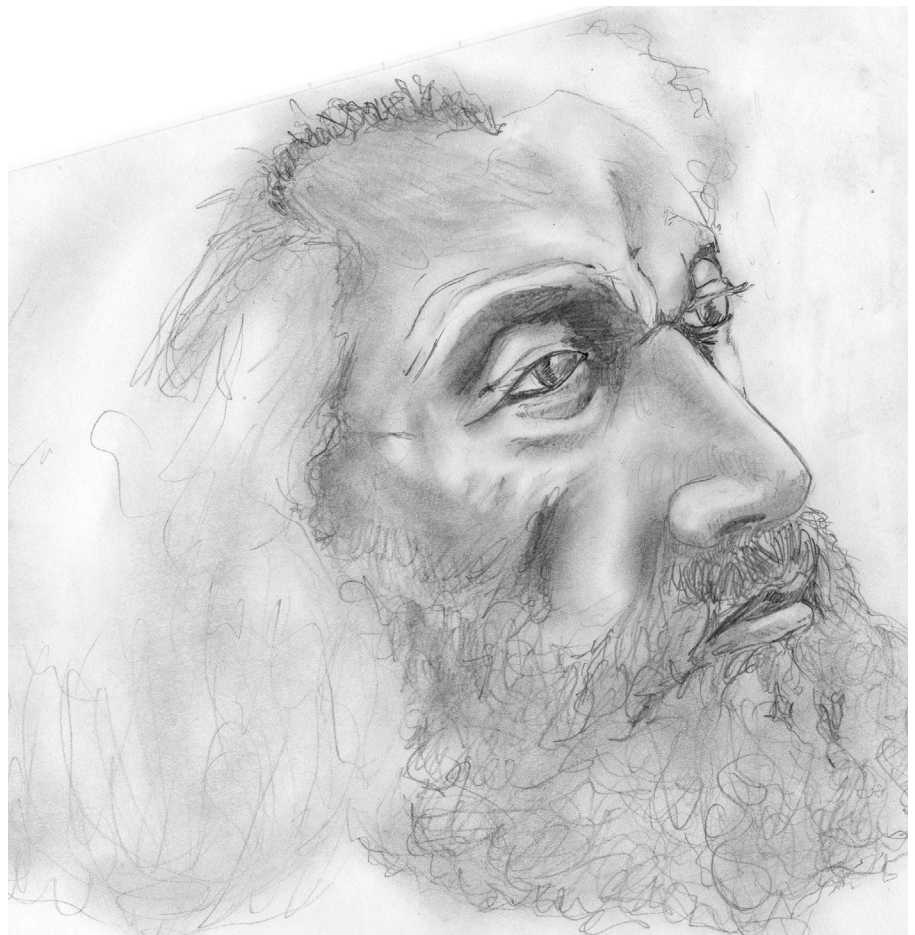
Today, I am a free man, and I write to you as living proof of your ignorance, your heresy, and your hypocrisy. You claim the negro can't dream of freedom; in fact, he can scarcely dream of anything else.

By now, the daily cruelties of slavery should be self-evident to any right-thinking person. Abduction, abuse, molestation, deprivation, starvation, whippings: all these injustices, you claim, as just in the eyes of God. You twist scripture to line your pockets, and in doing so mark yourself a demon and an enemy of man. The slave is not happy: he sings in pain for all the things he will never be, the children he can never raise, and the fruits of his labors which he will never taste. Yet his bitter cries are drowned out by the infernal clanging of your church bells.

Perhaps among the readership

of your fine journal there may still be some honest souls wrestling with the horror that is daily perpetrated on their doorsteps, in their names, and in the name of the God they hold sacred. It is to them I humbly submit these words. Just as a mighty tree springs from the smallest sapling, those 26 letters I learned all those years ago in Baltimore have led to this moment, and to a movement gaining steam worldwide. I look forward to the day when views such as yours are a historical curiosity. Until then, I work for all my brothers and sisters, for whom slavery is not an abstract issue they can debate, but a physical reality with which they contend.

But do not think us enemies. If ever you were to find yourself to our home, you would receive the most open welcome and want for nothing. Indeed, it would be a great privilege, to treat you just how men ought to treat each other, as brothers, and equals. **(Farren McDonald)**







Patrick Henry said it best: "Give me liberty or Give me death!" To say that a Negro does not dream of liberty is like saying a White man would love to harvest his own fields. Why would any man enjoy being forced into obedience and have every freedom taken from him?

As a child I was taken from my mother at the age of one and only saw her three maybe four times in my life. My caretaker was an old slave who could barely care for herself. I went to bed cold and hungry every night because the rations that were given to me were not enough. I lived in fear every day because I did not know if I was going to be beaten or killed by the hands of my master. I often thought of ending my own life, but the fear of not knowing where I went after death is the only reason I am still alive today.

You say that God has destined me to be a slave because of the color of my skin. Do you not read the same Bible as I do? Have you read the ten commandments? Thou shalt not worship any other God, but I am forced to worship my Master as God. Thou shalt not commit adultery, yet you take a woman slave in your bed while your wife is in the next room. Thou shalt not kill, but slaves are killed every day. The God in the Bible I read would say you are wrong and that the way you treat slaves will cause you to be condemned to live in hell once you meet your death.

How does the white man sleep at night with a clear conscience? Does he not realize that beating, killing, raping, and torching slaves is not basking in sunshine or happiness? No slave should have to be forced to endure a living death every day. We deserve Freedom the same as the White man. Slavery must end and never be allowed; it is not of God! I am your fellow-man, but not your slave. **(Michelle McKoy)**

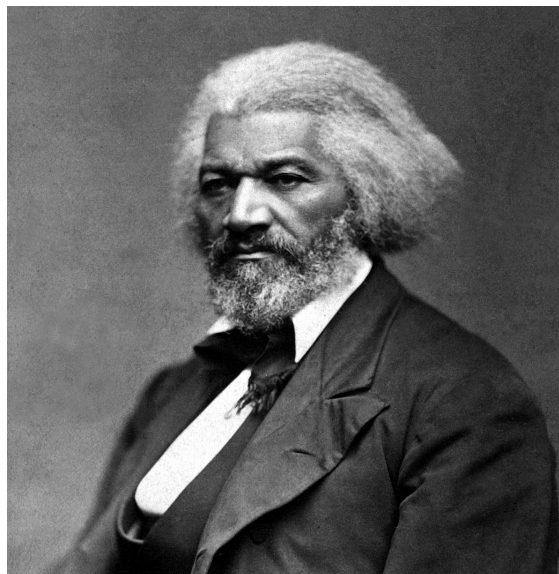


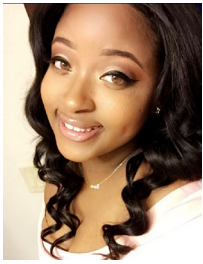
I am a man born of a woman as are you, and I have a name. I was not born into this world in chains, I will not live in chains, and neither will I die in chains. Liberty should never be a topic of discussion, for it should be an equal right unto us as it is to any

other race. Who are you to play GOD and give that natural gift from GOD to the white man ONLY when it is meant for all mankind? Who are you to play God and pretend to read the minds of men and understand the feelings and deep emotions of a slave if you have not been one yourself? Knowing the cruel, ruthless, heartless, and undeserving amounts of pain inflicted on them daily, you call that enjoyment? That is the most absurd thing one could hear. Christianity or the Bible never stated that slavery was for a particular race but that God created man equally and in his own image, none superior over the other, none in charge of the other, and definitely NONE MASTER OVER the other.

You are a slave within yourself because you are bound, mentally cruel, ignorant, and blind to the truth. As for me, I have no fear because to fear is to fail; I have overcome and conquered that which the white man thought I could not. So, if you fear me, do not. I am just a man of color by birth, an ex-slave who was robbed of his rights, and a man of substance and knowledge who will NEVER be

robbed of that. We all know that knowledge is POWER and POWER rules the world. May you bask in sunshine, become unhappy and burn in the hottest part of hell under the torment of Satan if you wish the black man to remain in shackles and bonds under the torture of the white man without knowing liberty. **(Stephaney Obi)**





I have seen and heard slavery is a righteous deed, according to those who are not slaves. How can a slave be joyous while having his flesh torn from his body for partaking in normal life tasks? Did the slaves tell you they were happy when they were burning in the sun, working

their hands and feet to the point of exhaustion? Did you ask the slave how he felt? Liberation is not a concept that belongs solely to the white man. Liberation should be the right of all human beings.

When you have seen many mothers ripped away from their children and sold like cattle, I assure you it does not bring jubilation to the mind. We endure. We breathe. We love. We are not property, nor are we objects to be handled.

How can the religion of any one man permit him to own another man? When a sunbeam shines bright it is a light for all to see, not dark or gloomy like the cloud of slavery.

It is true slaves are unlettered and untutored but not by the will of themselves. I had to teach myself in clandestine to read and write. Being born into slavery is the equivalent of being benighted, as we

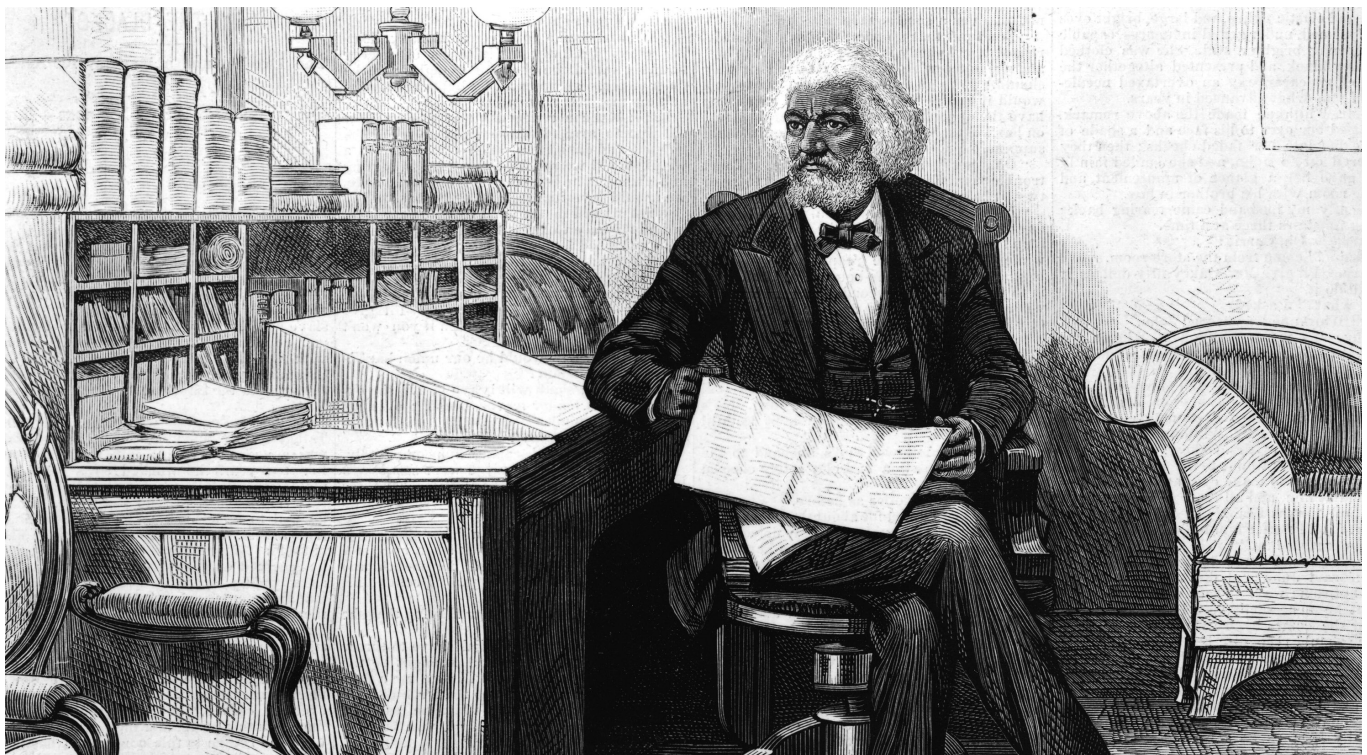
are not cognizant of our own age! Not being allowed education does not grant any human being the right to determine the life of another. The only concept a slave dreams of is freedom. **(Asia Pearson)**



In what world would anyone think slavery is a happy place for anyone to be in? How can a man persuade himself that he is better than the next man? I ask myself this, and my mind starts to wonder. My life was never mine; my soul was dark and full of curiosity. My soul quested for

knowledge and understanding for hours, days, even months, on why wrongdoing to my people was a hobby to slave masters.

My feelings are fragile; my brothers who sit shackled next to me want love, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. You cannot know how I feel, if you feel for me. My thoughts were given to me, not picked by me. My brothers and I sweat together, and I want to utilize any and every tool in the reach of my bruised arms to uplift and empower my brothers. There is no way for me to be free under the guidance of a man who believes he is a spiritual man yet has little to no morals. **(Burnett Reed)**



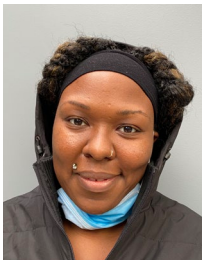




How dare you say that us slaves enjoyed the cruelty and isolation from the world? We had to work in the field no matter what the weather was. We were beaten for no reason; our women were raped. You say slavery was in God's plan and that we naturally belong to

the white man. Slavery is nothing but a manmade institution.

What happened to "all men are created equal"? Is the Golden Rule not "do unto others as you would have them do unto you"? How many whippings have you gotten for just being human? You said we don't dream of Liberty? I prayed to God begging him for deliverance from slavery. "Give me Liberty or give me death." I am Free! **(Delisha Smith)**



You mention how it would be hurtful to interrupt a slave's enjoyment of slavery. When has a human being's bloodshed and tears ever become enjoyable? I can remember watching Mr. Severe whipping my aunt. It was terrifying

to hear the sound of her loud agonizing wails and seeing the blood from her back flow like the river from a waterfall.

It is hypocritical to say that it is the destiny of the Negro to endure slavery when in fact your God is supposed to be love and full of mercy. Where is this love that is to exist, and why is it not shown towards the Negro? Is the Negro not a man as well? Yes, he is indeed a man! **(Thedora Smith)**



I hope this letter finds you as you are frolicking around in your lovely home equipped with a warm bed, warm food, and the warm loving touch of your lover. Although I can appreciate a fellow man's opinion on the way my life appears to

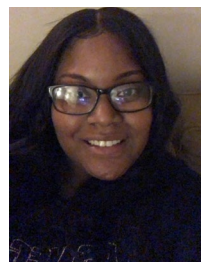
him, I am unable to appreciate yours. I am having grave difficulty placing a bigoted person such as yourself in such an honorable category. To call you

a man would make me a hypocrite according to whose definition we are utilizing. To you, I ask these questions.

Is liberty not something that is rightfully mine? Is it not something that your Declaration of Independence promised to me and every person who possesses these same physical attributes of mine?

Do you please your God with your behavior? Does he bask in joy as he gazes down on you treating humans worse than cattle? I dare not be bitter at you for your lopsided perspective. It is the fault of your owners. One thing I know is you can take the knowledge away from the slave, but you cannot take the slave away from the knowledge. He will seek until he finds. He will learn a little and thirst for more. He will be curious and brave.

Here lie a few closing questions, my dear Editor. Does the blood that you saw traveling down my brother's wound from the whip of his master indicate his happiness? Or does the hard skin on the bottom of my feet that has decided to take on the persona of a shoe indicate MY joy? Have you yet taken the time to participate in a slave's so-called happiness yourself? **(Faleshuh Walker)**



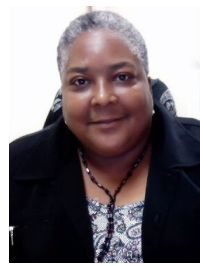
Who are you to say that the black man does not dream of liberty? Why would the black man not dream of such a thing? Do you think we enjoy being slaves, being taken away from our families and working for the white man and for free at that? NO, WE DO NOT!

Why would you think a black man could not grasp a conception of liberty, and what makes you think only white men can do this? I taught myself to read and write. You were taught these things, yet I am more educated than you and I educated myself. I tricked little white boys into helping me read.

You stated that it is cruel to disturb slavery as it is an enjoyment of life and destined by God. What is

enjoyable about being beaten, eating scraps, not knowing your family, not being clothed, sleeping on the cold floor, not being educated, and working for people that treat you like the scum under their show for free?

I was not destined to be a slave. No person, no matter what color, should be treated so poorly. I have experienced things I would never want anyone else to. I have witness deaths and beatings at a very young age. When I was a young boy, I only got a shirt and had to sleep on the floor. I have lived a cruel life caused by the white man. But yet I still move forward and survive. Put yourself in my shoes for a day and see if you fold. **(Sunni Walker)**



In your delusions of grandeur, you and other white people like you have convinced yourself into believing that Christianity has given you the right to press upon people of color your demonic thoughts, actions of cruelty and murder—actions due to fear of losing control if we don't do your bidding.

In your insistent false beliefs, you have convinced yourself of our happiness in the eyes of God that captivity is our destiny. Yet you keep us in chains, under guarded watch, and oppressed in various cruel ways. In truth, you fear of our Greatness, our Gifts from God, our Genius.



We are human beings, like you, and should be treated as such. **(Diane Walton)**



The dreams that you think I do not dream of I do, even beyond my wildest imagination.

I feel that is very cruel to treat others how you would not have wanted to be treated (for that is the way I was taught as a child and raised). But that right was also taken from me, unfortunately.

No one enjoys slaving for the next, especially when the sun is out burning them while working. That is very discomforting, stressful, and depressing at the same time. No one enjoys being called out of their name, being hit with welts, branches, sticks etc. No one enjoys being unappreciated at all by any means.

It is a life that I was forced to live but did not choose to live. I could not wait to be free so I could tell others about the many hardships of a slave!!! **(Shiquita Woods)**

*Sincerely,  
Mr. Douglass*



# SHOWING OFF STYLE

*Students experimented with persuasive writing techniques and literary devices.*

## Alliteration:

Layla likes to leap like a little frog. (**Betsy Alfaro**)

Henry has heavy hair. (**Kwan Hogan**)

My hike today left me happy and humbled by nature. (**Feather Lloyd**)

Although our sojourn into the slimy, sucking swamps of Slopsilon ruined our shoes, we succeeded in squirreling away a significant sack of starbulbs, a fruit highly celebrated for its succulent skin and sweet, sticky inside. (**Farren McDonald**)

When someone ate the last donut, I was green with grief. (*also assonance*) (**Faleshuh Walker**)

He stated that he would happily help in her holistic approach to fighting hunger of the homeless during the hurricane. (**Diane Walton**)

Lately I've been feeling depressed, defeated, and dispirited. (**Tawania Alston**)

Baby Brian loves to bounce on the bed. (**Sunni Walker**)

## Superlative:

As a child I told my mom, "When I get older, I am going to get you the biggest, bestest, most beautifullest house in the whole wide world." (**Calvin Balentine**)

The woman across the hall had the most atrocious, unholy, vigorous smell coming from her door. (**Brianna Johnson**)

My children are the loudest and the sweetest small beings I have ever met. (**Asia Pearson**)

Michelle Obama is a woman of substance with the classiest wardrobe I've ever seen. (**Faleshuh Walker**)



## Chiasmus:

To love forever is to is to be forever in love. (**Feather Lloyd**)

You can take the girl out of the city, but you can't take the city out of the girl. (**Sarina Benford**)

It is good to be powerful, but it is more powerful to be good. (**Souad Bidar**)

I watched him ascend from hell to heaven only to watch him descend from heaven to hell.  
(**Calvin Balentine**)

## Exclamation:

I can never give up! I will not give up! I will finish school! (**Jessica Jacobs**)

White men are the DEVIL!! (**Sarah Galinski**)

No Justice! No Peace! (**Diane Walton**)

The presidential race has had me on the edge of my seat! (**Asia Pearson**)

## Oxymoron:

My sister's singing is enough to raise the living dead. (**Cashae Davis**)

Suddenly a chilling heat rushed over my body. (**Kwan Hogan**)

I love my perfect imperfections. (**Jessica Jacobs**)

Slaveowners are legalized kidnappers bringing slaves to a living death. (**Yvonne Johnson**)

Don't mock me with appreciative disregard. (**Diane Walton**)

When I think about my husband, it's bittersweet. (**Sunni Walker**)

**Onomatopoeia:**

The door whined in the wind. (**Kwan Hogan**)

My biggest pet peeve is when bugs buzz by my ear. (**Tawania Alston**)

**Simile:**

That computer you have is as old as a dinosaur. (**Kwan Hogan**)

I want my life to flow like the waters that run in a stream. (**Jessica Jacobs**)

Her emotion roared like thunder in a great storm. (**Feather Lloyd**)

Her beauty is unmatched, like a fully blossomed rose. (**Asia Pearson**)

**Metaphor:**

Reading is food for the soul. (**Sarah Galinski**)

**Assonance:**

Light the fire. (**Erika Gonzalez**)

**Repetition:**

Every morning, every evening, and every night, I am a slave to children. (**LaBresha Green**)

Show me you respect me. Show me you can believe in me. Show me you care. (**Diane Walton**)

**Irony:**

My daycare children's parents are SO understanding and value my time SO much that they drop off and pick up their children whenever and wherever they want. (**LaBresha Green**)

Donald Trump is the most helpful, insightful, loving human being on this earth. (**Brianna Johnson**)

You are such a genius for placing the metal plate in the microwave. (**Stephaney Obi**)

**Parallelism:**

Hate me and leave me alone, or love me and keep me close. (**Jessica Jacobs**)

Every morning I walk in the office to my cubicle to do the same work just different borrower, same process just different borrower, same underwriter just different borrower. (*also repetition*)  
(**Michelle McKoy**)

**Analogy:**

A pen in the right hands can be as deadly as a sword. (**Sarina Benford**)

**Rhetorical Question:**

Can you not see the toll his abuse has taken on her? (**Brianna Johnson**)

Have I not as good a right to be free as you have? (**Sarah Galinski**)

Was it not said that she ate from the apple first and then offered it to the man? (**Jessica Jacobs**)

How can America be land of the free, yet so many are still imprisoned by their prejudices and closed minds? (**Asia Pearson**)

Do African Americans not have the same right to go running, shopping, or driving by a friend's house as any race, or will it always be suspicious? (**Tawania Alston**)





# FOOD MEMORIES



My favorite food that my mom made when I was a kid was lasagna. Just thinking about it takes me back to simpler times when bills were the last thing on my mind. I remember coming home from school sitting right down at the living room table doing my homework while my mom started dinner. After a while, the smell of air would turn into a zesty aroma, filled with garlic, onions, tomatoes, and peppers. This wasn't the right place for me to do homework, I soon found out.

My favorite part about being around when she cooked the lasagna was when she asked me to taste the food. I would say yes without hesitation. I'd even sneak food out of the pot before she asked because I couldn't resist. Every bite was like a cheesy ocean crashing down on your taste buds. like a tsunami spreading spicy Italian sausage debris in just the right places. The pasta noodles were so soft and full of flavor It felt like a crime to demolish something so precious. To this day, I haven't had a more mesmerizing lasagna than my mom's, even when she was going through her vegetarian phase. **(Kwan Hogan)**

Layers and layers of pasta are on the base of the baking pan. Next in the lasagna is the ground beef, then ricotta cheese, then a layer of pasta, more cheese, another layer of ground beef, followed by tomato sauce and then another layer of pasta. Here come the green peppers, mushrooms, and more cheese, served with parmesan garlic bread knots with melted buttery flakes on top. Homemade ice-tea washes it all down. Oh, yeah, and there's sweet, delish pumpkin pie for whoever cleans their plates. **(Dana Stokes)**

MaMa Sarah is an expert chef at creating master dishes out of four to five ingredients. You'll find yourself SMILING ear to ear with just a sniff of my baked mac n cheese. From the bubbling of the sharp cheddar cheese to the taste of caramelized onions, this dish will literally have you in the kitchen three or four times until it's all gone. Finger-licking good, ooey-gooey goodness is in every spoonful of pasta, with lava-like, running-down-your-chin cheese. **(Sarah Galinski)**





taste the best. I made a run to the store early in the afternoon. It was raining and dark, I remember, and I made myself go up and down through the aisles, finally getting the items I needed and heading back home. Once home, I looked at the clock – OMG! It was 3 PM and I still hadn't started. Dinner was served at 6 PM sharp Sunday through Thursday of every week. I decided to cook right away (*tres leches* tastes better when cold) as I still needed to cook the main course for my housemates.

Oven ready at 375 degrees as advised, I started making

### Baking is not like Cooking!

I used to live in this beautiful co-op located just a few blocks from campus. There were 17 of us, women and men—sometimes more women, sometimes more men. Everyone in the house had chores; one of the chores was cooking once or twice a month. Since I love cooking (it's kind of my therapy), I decided to cook twice per month.

After my first couple of months, I had already cooked a few times for the house, but I still needed to prove myself that I was a complete, total cook. So, the only way to prove that was making myself bake a dessert. Finally, the time came (somebody's birthday), and with that I had to decide what kind of dessert to bake. I decided to play it "safe" and stay with what I thought would be easy to make. My favorite dessert is *tres leches* cake, so I decided to look for recipes online. *Tres leches* cake uses three kinds of milk (hence the *tres*): sweetened condensed milk, evaporated milk, and cream. Though there are many variations out there, these are the ones most Mexicans use. I came across a couple of good recipes online (one from All Recipes.com, and a Mexican one) and kept the one I thought would

it. My first surprise with baking is that it is not anything compared to cooking a meal. In baking, you must respect portions and timing. So, this was my first challenge. I followed each single step, but I made a little mistake as I noticed my cake mix was a little bit soft. I checked everything again: four eggs, X amount of flour, milk, baking powder, salt, and a touch of vanilla: checked! What is going on? The recipe says it should not be too loose, and mine looks very loose. Well, how about a little more flour, I said. Tan, tan, tan! Big mistake!

After we had our meal, the moment of truth came upon me, the moment I noticed the birthday housemate was having trouble getting through. Oops! When I was given a slice and took my first bite, I almost lost a tooth. It was as hard as a rock. I learnt my lesson the hard way. Baking is not like cooking. But thanks to this mistake, I have come to almost perfection with this cake and now I make it really well. The cake bread is so creamy and moist, and the taste for the three milks along with a nice touch of whipped cream on top or a nice semi-sweet frosting and a ball of vanilla ice cream is just the perfect touch. **(Henry Irisson)**





receptions, it can be sweet or savory or both at the same time. The pure tradition is that we use pigeon for this recipe. It is a puff pastry cake, made with pastry sheets and stuffed with minced pigeon or chicken, before it is dusted with sugar and cinnamon. The stuffing is enclosed in several extremely fine layers that in Morocco is called warka or sheet of paper in Arabic.

The stuffing of the Pastilla contains poultry, beaten eggs, almonds, onions, sugar and spices, all delicately flavored with cinnamon. The sweet version is made with almonds and honey, and the brick leaves are fried for more crispness. We flavor the dough with orange blossoms. The brick sheets are filled with a milk cream and cornstarch. The combination of flavors is so different from what we know in other gastronomies. A little sweet, a little salty, a little spicy, a little crunchy, a little mellow ... what more would you ask for?

I hope this Moroccan specialty has awakened your taste buds! I hope COVID 19 will end before the end of the 2021 Odyssey program so I will be able to share this dish with you guys during the graduation ceremony. **(Souad Bidar)**

When we went to El Salvador, I got to see how they had little stands all over. My favorite dish is the pupusa. The pupusa is made of masa dough and filled with ingredients like cheese, pork, and beans. They are placed on a hot griddle to cook. Once they are on, they are flipped until both sides are golden brown. I always get just cheese, so I like to watch the cheese come out the sides and the strings that hang once you separate a piece. You have to eat with your hands; if not, you're not a true Salvadorian. **(Betsy Alfaro)**

Today I will introduce you to a specialty from my native country, the Moroccan Pastilla. First of all, Moroccan gastronomy is one of the most famous in the world. Rich in flavor and taste and expertly spicy, the diversity of Moroccan dishes is second to none in the world.

In 1492, during the fall of Al-Andalus, driven from Spain after the reconquest of Granada, the Moors took refuge in Morocco and brought with them their traditions and a multitude of recipes, including Pastilla. The Pastilla is a monument of Moroccan cuisine, synonymous with refinement and delicacy. Served at parties and







At Grandma's house, Grandpa made a big, well-done burger with all you can eat topping, lightly seasoned, big as your hand, full of juicy cheese of your choice. The bread was lightly grilled with ketchup and mustard. It was funny because when you tried to eat it, you couldn't fit it in your mouth. I have memories of cooking with Grandpa, aka Pops, who I will always remember and never forget. **(Yvonne Johnson)**

It was the summer of 2010. My family and I took a road trip to Mississippi to see my granddad's side of the family. I remember arriving there and instantly being greeted with love and hugs. The next morning, I woke up to the smell of breakfast being made. There were so many different choices, and everything was still hot and fresh off the stove. I'm not sure if it was just the food or the experience of being spoiled by family, but everything was so good—from the buttery biscuits, fluffy pancakes, cheesy eggs, and hash browns all the way to the crispy bacon. My favorite, of course, were the buttery grits with a dash of sugar for sweetness. For some reason, when I read the question about a food memory, this experience was the first to pop into my head. Although it was a simple breakfast, I can still feel the love that was put into the food that morning and how I enjoyed it with my family. **(Krystal Smith)**



At home in the kitchen on a Sunday with my family, what a joyful mood I was in, playing my gospel music. I hear the sound of pots and pans banging in the kitchen and know it's about to go down in here! The aroma and steam of soul food coming from the pressure cooker and stove are in the air. There's a tender roast with a fatty layer giving it the best flavor ever! Forkfuls of roast fall apart, shred by shred, as the juices run on the plate. The roast is topped with fresh carrots, green bell peppers, onions on top that burn your eyes, along with red potatoes that melt in your mouth with every bite. Collard greens simmer with the smoked turkey, the aroma sizzling from the pot. Mom is making her cornbread with her extra sweetness added—"Chile, where's the honey?" and "pass the real butter." Succulent Pot Roast, Southern Collard Greens, and Mama's Cornbread are what we had. **(Cashae Davis)**







Pho is a type of Vietnamese soup typically made from beef stock and spices to which noodles and thinly-sliced beef or chicken are added. One day I was running errands with Nary, the mother of my cousin's children who is of Cambodian ethnicity. She stopped by her mother's house. As we walked in, there was a very appetizing smell. Nary said to her mom, "Are you making Pho [clear, glassy-looking noodles]?" Her mother replied, "Yes, I am. Why don't you guys sit down and have some since it's done already." So we washed our hands and headed over to the table where bowls were already placed. I didn't know what it was and hadn't had it before, but it smelled so delicious that my stomach was yearning to taste it. I was a little nervous, but I had to try it. I fell in love with it. It had to be one of the best pastas I've ever had. I knew I wouldn't have it again anytime soon, but I would love to. **(Shiquita Woods)**

I'll never forget that moment. It was midday, and my mom and I were on the couch chilling watching TV. The weather was starting to get cold because of fall. All of a sudden, we started smelling food. We had heard of Mama Ann's Gumbo. It was the talk of the neighborhood. You could smell it a mile away even though I only lived downstairs.

One day she came downstairs and offered us something to eat: Gumbo. I never tried Gumbo, but from the way my mother jumped off the couch I was on board. So we went upstairs to Mama Ann's

house and let me tell you, before we hit the door I could smell a combination of spices and herbs that wouldn't leave my nose till this day. We headed upstairs. You could tell she was from the South by how she spoke and the way everything in her home was ginormous. I looked around astounded. First thing I said was "wow!" and she responded, "Everything is bigger in Texas."

So we sat down at the table and she went in the kitchen to scoop us up a couple bowls of gumbo. You read that right: bowls. There was so much stuff in that pot we needed two bowls. I didn't even know where to start. There was shrimp, crab legs, muscles, chicken, and rice, soaking in an abundance of herbs, spices, and broth. My first bite was warm and hearty. It's like I escaped all things and was in the moment. My mouth was bursting with different flavors.

I had never eaten seafood before, so I was hooked. My mouth never discovered such flavors, and that was the greatest sensation. It was flavorful and warm, but not too hot. It's like I had the right bowl of porridge. But when it came to me eating the crab leg, I was lost on how to get the meat out. Mama Ann yelled over, "You gotta suck it out! That's how we do it down south." Man, I can taste the Gumbo now. **(Brianna Johnson)**





While surfing the internet one day, I noticed a post my friend had put up. She was asking for restaurant recommendations for a delicious bowl of soup. I want to say the post said, “Who’s got the best soup in Madison?” I was immediately intrigued, as I myself am a lover of all soups, so I read some of the comments. One particular comment stuck out: it suggested to get the Kang Gai soup from Lao Laan Xang.

We arrived at the restaurant on a cool fall afternoon and were ready to be warmed by the delicious broth we were told so much about. We ordered ourselves a large soup, as it is available for two or four people, and MAN were we hungry! The waitress set a large pot at our table that had a candle underneath it to keep it hot. As I opened the lid to the pot, steam poured out, and I smelled citrus and spice. I poured myself a nice hot bowl and blew on my first spoonful. The explosion of flavor is not one to be reckoned with! Lemongrass, coconut milk, and aromatic Thai flavors filled my mouth. I was in heaven. My friend and I looked at each other in a silent nod of agreement that THIS is truly the best soup on earth, hands down. Pieces of sliced chicken floated at the top with scallions and mushrooms. We ate every last drop.

My friend and I still love to try different soups on our “soup dates,” but none come close to that fresh out of the flaming pot Kang Gai from Lao Laan Xang. **(Sarina Benford)**

About 19 years ago, I travelled to a beautiful, all-inclusive place called Puerto Vallarta. There were palm trees everywhere, water tinted many different colors, and people in the ocean swimming, riding wave runners, and sky gliding. The local people had different types of animals such as donkeys and iguanas. One typical morning I came down to have breakfast. There were sweet pineapples, kiwi, and nice plump strawberries. I put a lot of fruit on my plate. Then I came across the savory foods. I spotted what looked like onion rings, so

I piled my plate with them, with a nice side of ketchup. I sat by the nice in-ground pool and started to enjoy my good eats. I started to eat my onion rings when I noticed they were super chewy, so I thought, well, this is how Mexican onion rings are. I took a closer look at them and noticed tentacles. I went back to the servers and asked what these were. “Those are squid,” they stated. I laughed and said, “No wonder it was so chewy!”

**(Valeria Gordon)**







I ordered some tropical fruits from “Fruits and Roots,” an online tropical fruit store. It was an assorted sample basket. This basket came with multiple tropical fruits, and all were good. The fruit that truly stood out the most was the cacao. The outer shell looked kind of like a giant raisin. It had a dry, tough, rubbery outer skin. I had to cut or rather saw through it to get it in half. It was a slimy bulbous fruit with the texture of legit snot. I still could not help but wonder what curious person first ate this and then dug even deeper to find the brown gold of chocolate goodness within the seeds. It was just an ugly thing.

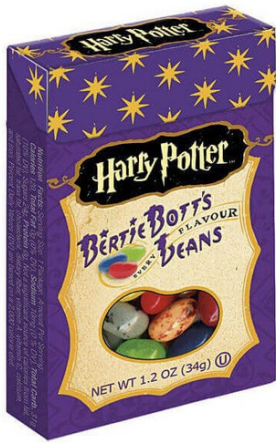
I had all my nieces over and I tried to bully them into eating it with me; I was low-key scared. It smelled of citrus but looked like a mucus-covered brain. We had to google a “how to” from YouTube just to figure out how to eat it and harvest the seeds within. Each side had multiple layers of these slimy nodules. You are supposed to pull out the nodules and suck the fruit (slime) away until you get to the brownish black seed within. I only got two out of the six kids to be brave enough to try some with me. It was a fun experience to see where chocolate comes from. The girls

were joking that it looked like a brain on boogers, which was not helping my visual experience of the fruit. Overall, it was light and tangy and actually really good. You had to be patient and suck on it, really tasting the sweetness as it melted away. You must be so patient to get the actual taste. It is not something you can chew fast and blindly pig out on. The only way to get to the chocolate seed is through that sweet slime. I just could not see myself wanting to put that thing in my mouth if someone had not known it was edible already. That is insane coming from me because I am a girl who cannot live without chocolate. **(Feather Lloyd)**

It is safe to say I have bad luck with food. I am a very picky eater, which is why I am hesitant to try new things. The very first and last time I tried La Bamba’s Mexican nachos was also the last time. As I cringed with every bite of hot, curdled sour cream that went in my mouth, my mom watched. I knew something was not right as the meat did not taste like beef, nor was it pleasant.

My mom said that if I did not eat all my food, I would have to go to bed early when we got home. There I was pretending to enjoy my food down to the very last bite, which is when I started feeling nauseous. I still remember what happened when we got back to the car. I began vomiting all over the parking lot. I felt so relieved when I finished, and my mom just kept apologizing for making me eat my food. **(Asia Pearson)**





When I was younger, I went to the show with my mom, cousin Kyle, and aunt Joi to see Harry Potter. While there we decided to try every flavor of jelly beans. The first one I tasted was blueberry. It tasted just like a real blueberry; it was delicious. The next one was dirt. It tasted exactly like dirt. I know

this because I fell in the grass once and got dirt and grass in my mouth. Then I tasted the nastiest thing I have ever tasted in my life: VOMIT! It was terrible. I bit into it and spit it out immediately. It tasted as if I had thrown up in my mouth. I wanted to cry.  
**(Sunni Walker)**

At a large Thanksgiving holiday family dinner gathering when I was six years old, I hesitantly and excitedly loaded up my plate full of strange new foods. Being cautious of what they would think of me, I avoided eye contact as I walked over and sat down at the small card table, surrounded by my new step-sisters and cousins. As I sat, I noticed that a few of them had the same long, beige wide noodles on their plate, sprinkled with hot sauce. I immediately stood back up, reached across the table, and grabbed the ketchup. As I poured ketchup over the shredded juicy beef stew with soft baby carrots and cubed potatoes, I also



continued to pour ketchup on the beige, wet, juice-covered, long, large noodle-looking stuff on my plate, and I could feel their eyes watching me. My stepsister Donna, older by three years, asked me why I was putting ketchup on my chitlins. I bravely responded, "cause I like ketchup and I put it on all my food." She asked me if I knew what chitlin's were and then told me it was pig guts, intestines. I told her I didn't believe her, thinking she was trying to trick me in front of everybody. She continued to talk about them—about how and why they had the stinky smell and how you had to wash them over and over again before you boil them to get the funky "pig s\*\*t" smell off them. When I still didn't believe her, she dared me to eat some. So I did.

In my determination to prove her wrong, I stabbed a piece of the beige, flat-looking noodle covered in ketchup and jammed it in my mouth. After three or four chews, my mouth dropped open and I didn't want to swallow. The icky, sharp, spoiled taste made my stomach feel queasy. When I looked down at the ketchup-covered chitlin's, all I could think of was blood-covered pig intestines.

**(Diane Walton)**

Something I will never forget is when I was forced into trying durian fruit. It wasn't the taste that stuck with me but the smell. The smell was one of those smells that is sooo bad that it makes you want to throw up right away. Durian smells like boiled eggs that were left in a hot car for weeks.

**(Erika Gonzalez)**







My favorite food is a turkey club sandwich from Riordan's on Quay Street in Galway, Ireland. It's not that turkey clubs are particularly interesting, or that this one stands out in any special way, but I have a special affection for it.

Tuesday is when I'd get my unemployment cheque. It would be the only part of the week when I'd "have money."

In my memory it's always raining there, but I suppose at times it wasn't. Galway is a medieval city with narrow streets that all wind down towards the ocean one way or another. The buildings are squeezed together. Rain slicks the cobbles. Riordan's is a cramped stone building with a low ceiling, but for just 5.50 Euro (about 6 dollars) I could have a club sandwich; that's real turkey, bacon, and cheese on wheat bread with fries and a drink.

Plus, on the wall there are quotes by different Irish writers, and I was able to impress my future wife by identifying the author of each quote without looking.

Afterwards, I'd take whatever book I was reading, go to the sweet shop and buy a bag of sweets, and take them to Neachtain's bar.

Neachtain's has tight passages, old wood,

old stone, candles, nautical maps, bookshelves, and good beer. I'd read my book, or I'd do some writing, and drink three pints of Galway Hooker beer. Then it was back out into the rain and homeward.

It was the best part of my week.  
**(Farren McDonald)**

Ever had a refreshing snack? Well, let's hop on a roller coaster to a garden snack that's so easy but mouth warming. It started about 17+ years ago in a small neighborhood in Milwaukee, WI. I was introduced to my grandmother's garden. We loved to pick food but not as much as we love to eat it. We took on the burden of growing cucumbers—not just little baby ones but huge, juicy, mouthwatering cucumbers. So many of the neighbors wanted in on what we were doing. You get a ripe cucumber to start with. Wash it really well, and chop the cucumber into about one-inch circle pieces. Drop the cucumbers in a bowl, add one cup of vinegar, a half cup of hot sauce, and a teaspoon of Lawry's Seasoning salt. Mix. Let it stand 24 hours. Now be prepared to be somewhere on a beach because this snack is so low-key, you'd think you're on a beach eating this fresh but slightly spicy snack.  
**(Burnett Reed)**





Every fall I would search the store for pomegranates. When I was a child, my mom would buy them. I remember being scared the first time she cut one open. I saw so many ruby red seeds and red juice dripping on the kitchen table like blood. I was scared to taste it, but once I filled my mouth with a handful of seeds, I fell in love. My mouth was filled with sweet tart taste, and each seed had so much juice and flavor that I could not stop eating them.

For many years most of my friends had no idea what they were; now 40 years later everyone is looking for them in the fall. What made the pomegranate popular was that it had a lot of antioxidants and this made it a popular fruit. The pomegranate was once a hidden gem is now one of the most popular fall fruits. **(Michelle McKoy)**

Fall is also known as pear season. Have you ever bit into a pear in the middle of pear season? A perfectly ripened Asian pear? You know when you pick it up it just feels right—not too hard, not too soft. At your first bite it's like you lose control of your mouth. You want to bite slowly into the pear to savor the river that pours into your mouth. The sweet delectable river runs into your mouth with a flavor you want to relish. After your first bite, you have to look at the pear as if this is your first time experiencing its greatness. The juices run down the sides of your mouth like a savage, yet before wiping your face you dive back in for another taste. Before you notice, the pear is gone and you are left with a decision—find a napkin and wipe your face, or get another pear. I'll take c, all of the above. **(Calvin Balentine)**



When I was a little girl, my mom would make this special combo for my brother and me as a late-night treat on the weekends while we would watch a movie together. It is one of my favorite memories as a child because my mom could take the bare minimum of things and make the best out of it due to the fact that we did not have a lot of money.

My mom would take the cheap biscuit dough that comes in the can that you would have to pull the paper tab on the side in order for it to pop open. Then she would cut holes out of the middle of them to make doughnuts and doughnut holes. We would then drop them in a deep fryer for maybe 30 seconds, just enough for them to expand and brown. You shake the grease off and pour them into an already prepared brown paper bag that has a mixture of cinnamon and sugar. The heat and small amount of grease on them would help coat the doughnuts with the cinnamon and sugar. She would then warm up milk and honey together and serve us the doughnuts with the milk.

I cherish the memory of these nights shared because it would be us three cuddled up to a movie chomping down those doughnuts and slurping up that milk while we would laugh and just love each other. In those moments, I felt the most love and connection. In those moments, our bond was indestructible. **(Jessica Jacobs)**



With marshmallow on top, Cool Whip, warm or cold, pie has nothing to do with this pie, unless we are using it to determine how much I'm willing to share. The radius of the deliciousness seems as though the taste it leaves on my tongue is never ending. The crust can be a little scorched because who wants the perfect dessert anyway? I don't want it so pretty that it'll be hard to slice. Make it messy, and make it sweet. I don't like the yams from a can. I appreciate self-peeled yams mashed up by loving hands. Oh my...sweet potato pie! It looks like pumpkin but it's not. Looks can be deceiving, but the sultry goodness of this dessert is not! **(Faleshuh Walker)**

Since I could remember, every Thanksgiving my Smith family would all get together at my grandparents' house and cook a big feast. Everything was made with love from scratch, so we would have to start preparing days before the big event. All the girls had to play a part in food prep. My grandfather was a firm believer that females belonged in the kitchen. I am a female, so of course I was in the kitchen.

The first day there was for baking the many different desserts. No running or bumping was allowed in the house. My grandmother didn't want her cakes to fall. My favorite cake she made was the delicious Coconut Pineapple cake. It's a two-layered white-frosted cake with pineapple between each layer, then covered in coconut. Day 2 was cleaning the funky chitterlings, one of my strange cravings around the holiday season. We then picked the greens, boiled meat, cut up the veggies, prepped bake macaroni, and baked the bread for dressing.

After pulling an all-nighter, we would all wake up Thanksgiving morning getting ready for the day, smelling nothing but soul. I walked down into the kitchen to find my grandmother and aunts putting in the final touches. I waited for my Auntie to bring her famous roast and to see what different girlfriends my uncles brought with them every year; we would eat, make jokes, and laugh.

Unfortunately, the family is no longer united ever since my grandmother passed. We try to put things together, but it just doesn't work because everyone is living their separate lives. Life is too short, and I pray we do better. **(Delisha Smith)**

Last Thanksgiving is the best like all the rest. I don't celebrate holidays, but this one I don't protest. The baked macaroni always smells so good that you can taste it. We all say our grace once we pick our eating spaces. When you put macaroni in your mouth, you will want seconds. The ham will have sweet pineapples on top; what a blessing. I love to put sweet cranberry sauce on top of my dressing. The turkey will have turkey gravy, and the cornbread will have honey. **(LaBresha Green)**

Every Thanksgiving, my family and I get together and have a big lunch together. We start cooking some food and pies the night before. I can smell the glazed honey ham topped with pineapples, the cinnamon from the sweet potato pies, even though I don't like eating them, the spices from the turkey in the oven, the stuffing hot and smelling so good that you'll have to have seconds of it, and the sweet aroma of apple pie. The day before Thanksgiving we have to preclean the chitlins, with the whole house not smelling good, but after they are cooked, I can't wait to eat them. Then there's the macaroni, so cheesy that when you put your spoon in it to get some, the cheese stretches--that's how cheesy it is. **(Anjelica Brown)**

