

ODYSSEY ORACLE

EMBARKING ON AN ODYSSEY



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Embarking on an Odyssey | 2 |
| Oracle Ovals | 6 |
| Connecting with <i>The Circuit</i> | 13 |
| Motivated by Malcolm X | 16 |
| Wandering with William Wordsworth | 21 |
| Noticing Nature | 24 |
| Alumni Corner | 29 |



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EMBARKING ON AN ODYSSEY

odyssey (ä-də-sē) n. an extended adventurous wandering; named after Odyssey, the second epic of Homer, a Greek poet of the 8th or 9th century B.C. who recounted the ten-year wanderings and adventures of Odysseus.



I believe that this class will be an epic journey for all of us, as a community and as individuals. I think the journey for me will be multifaceted, different challenges impacting different layers of my being. I think this class will be a beautiful fusion of academics, politics, history, and issues of the heart. An Odyssey, indeed!! **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**



This Odyssey will be such a great experience for me. I want to better myself as a person and as a mother/role model for my children. I want to successfully complete college and accomplish goals/skills that I know I have but may be hidden within myself. I want to learn new things that I never had the opportunity to learn. **(Amanda Bell)**



I believe it is called the Odyssey Project because it's a long journey and this is just the beginning of our journey; we were accepted into the program and now we are studying and learning, and there may be some misfortune and trials, but as a group we shall overcome. Our first class was very real, and it was interesting seeing all these new people and talking with a few. We each have started our journey, our long wandering, and I hope we make it through together. **(Brandyn Bess)**



The course is called the Odyssey Project because it will take us on an adventurous journey of learning through the books, stories, conversations, plays, poetry, and other writings. I challenge myself on this journey. I challenge

myself in this moment to use this Odyssey Project experience to open my mind to new things, experiences, opinions, and cultures. I challenge myself to step out of my comfort zones. I challenge myself to soak in every moment of power through education and experience that I can get through participating in the UW Odyssey Project. **(Ericka Booe)**



I think Odyssey . . . will be great practice; it's a project to test and see how you feel about future school. I think it's an odyssey for me because it's an epic start to get my foot in the door for adventures and a new start. **(Jermaine Booe)**



I believe this course is called Odyssey because it will be our first change of fortune and help us get to our first change. Well, it already kind of did, because Black people aren't expected to go above high school. This class will be an odyssey for me because it changes the way I would normally write to how I should, and it has put me further than high school. **(Capri Booker)**



It's an adventure we will take together to become better people and achieve things. Overall, it will be eventful as long as we make it that way. **(Kayanna Branch)**



It think it is called the Odyssey Project because it is an educational journey. For me, Odyssey is and will be a positive learning journey. Odyssey will make my journey turn into certificates and degrees that will better my future. **(Katrina Collins)**



I think the name of this course is called Odyssey because the meaning of the word is pretty much outlining our journey through the program. It's going to be full of adventure, and it's a course that will give us knowledge and understanding and experiences to take into the real world with us. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**



I believe the class is a journey; most of us are still figuring out what we want to do in life. By taking the class, this might expose us to new opportunities and career paths to help us find our calling. Just being a part of what this class has done for so many before, I know this will only push me to strive to become the best version of myself. I will have highs and lows, I'm sure, but I will finish this class. **(Ontario Frazier)**



I think the course is called Odyssey because it focuses on the art of learning, reading, and going on a journey. Odyssey is a journey for me, and it's a learning opportunity for me. Also, it's an open door for me as someone whose door has been closed for too long. **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**



Odyssey stands for journey, meaning this program can be a new educational path. To me, this means I get a second chance for an education. There's nothing more I crave than a good education and knowledge. Sometimes life happens and going to school can be hard. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**



I believe this course is called the Odyssey Project because it is an opportunity for a fresh start, a beginning step to something better in life, like a starting point. I think this class will be an Odyssey for me, going off the fact that I stopped

going to school and didn't really have a thought how to get started back up with schooling. Now, just from attending a class like Odyssey, I'm not only gaining knowledge but also getting back into school-mode, fixing my weaknesses when it comes to school, and even gaining credits towards my schooling. Even though I am nervous about this course, I think it will leave a great mark in my life and make it better. **(Talaisha Goodwan)**



I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because it's a journey of long wanderings for one's objective of furthering one's education. This course might be an odyssey for me because I am a CNA currently. I want to use this project as a vehicle in my passion to be a registered nurse. **(Cinderria Harwell)**



I think it's something new, a starter to a life-long journey. I'm hoping that this will be a great experience for the start of my adult life. **(Zaria Hunter)**





I think this course is called the Odyssey Project for the journey and adventure that we will have together and the transformation that it will have on all our lives. I think that this course might be an odyssey for me as I will be growing tremendously, both within my writing and personally. I think that this will be an adventure through the learning journey in which I will grow and transform throughout the year. **(Yael Jiménez)**



I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because it's a journey to get to a place in life that we all want to be (home) successful. This will be an Odyssey for me because I will start back reading and stimulating my mind, thinking outside the box, challenging myself to be great, and giving my all. **(Crystal Johnson)**



I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because we all as a group of students decided to take this journey through literacy to improve ourselves and our writing skills. We all knew that this class wasn't going to be easy, but we took the chance anyway because, in the end, we all want the class to be a stepping-stone to get us on the right path to our career choices. I personally chose to take this class because I've always had a difficult time with reading and writing because of dyslexia, so I want to take this course in order to challenge myself and improve myself through reading and writing. I know this journey is going to be hard for me, but I'm willing to take the risk, knowing that I will gain a great reward if I accomplish this course. **(Helena Lee)**



I believe the course is called the Odyssey Project because it goes after changes for each individual person. I believe that it will offer new perception for all and open new opportunities. I'm excited to see what new adventures await. **(Michelle Mack)**



Since it mentions "fortune," maybe it refers to being fortunate enough to be in a program like Odyssey. **(Mariam Maiga)**



I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because this is an eventful, adventurous journey learning education and about yourself. This class is an odyssey for me because it will not only educate me but also teach me routine study habits, organization, paying attention to details, and being a more critical thinker. **(Mashell McCarter)**



The name itself indicates the program will be interesting. For me, I could definitely use a change of fortune, and with the relationships I'm expecting to gain, it could easily be a long friendship/relationship. **(Reginald Moore)**



I think it's called the Odyssey Project because the Odyssey class is a journey itself, and at the end comes good fortune. It may be an odyssey for me because I know it's going to take blood, sweat, and tears (journey) to get to the end. **(LaRonda Morris)**



I think the course is called the Odyssey Project because it marks an event on a timeline where everything could change or the course of the future will be impacted because of the choice to go on this path.

This will be an odyssey for me because I know it's the first step into a new direction and state of mind. With the amount of energy I anticipate going into this, it will definitely bring on more opportunities, which will make my life more of an adventure. **(Will Nunn)**



I think it's called the Odyssey Project because of the journeys we will all endure during this process. I think the Odyssey Project will sharpen my skills and my love of literature and also help prepare me for the future.
(Cylinthia Olle)



As somebody who has consistently moved every season for three years now, the imagery of "a long wandering" invokes memories of my journey to Odyssey. From my limited experience with my peers, I can infer we all come from a legacy of wandering "marked by many changes of fortune."
(Benji Ramírez Gómez)



When you put "Project" after Odyssey, I delineate that the class has a project to do. In combination with Odyssey, meaning a long, eventful, and adventurous journey, the class has a project to do while on an adventurous journey. The Odyssey Project is definitely an odyssey for me because this is a chance for me to better myself,

not only in the near future, but to turn my brain back on and get my juices flowing again.
(Kimari Rogers)



I think that this course is called the Odyssey Project because it's seen as a new beginning that brings changes to student's lives. This class might be an odyssey for me. It will make me grow as student and as a person.
(Jessica Saldana Ortega)



I feel it is because this class is meant to be an adventurous journey for us that will stick with us for many years to come. This experience is supposed to be eventful to take our minds to different places so that they can continue to expand.
(Naquila Taylor)



We are embarking on a new journey in life by being in this program. It will be a new journey for me. We will learn new things about ourselves as we go through the program.
(Mechele Williams)



ORACLE OVATIONS

Students responded to the Welcome Oracle featuring letters to them from last year's class, a collage of photos of Odyssey alumni graduating from college or experiencing special moments, and alumni essays and poems such as Alice McDaniels' "We Ate Dog Food," Joe Robinson's "Don't Quit," Anthony Jefferson's "Odyssey Poem," Juanita Wilson's "I Love Odyssey," and Tosumba Welch's "I Love My Webster's."

Reading "We Ate Dog Food" actually made me feel proud of Alice. She had a beautiful blend of meekness, strength, and regality. The line "We ate dog food but were rich" hit me hard but was so profound. I know firsthand how you can be poor financially but rich culturally. She had a powerful sense of identity and confidence. The parents in "The Circuit" and Alice's parents sort of reminded me of each other in the sense that they were both dedicated workers and instilled a strong work ethic into their children, and the whole dynamic of "breaking the cycle" seemed to be present in both stories.

I really feel like this class will be a journey of the soul just as much as a journey of academics, that it will be a journey of the individual just as much as it is for the collective.

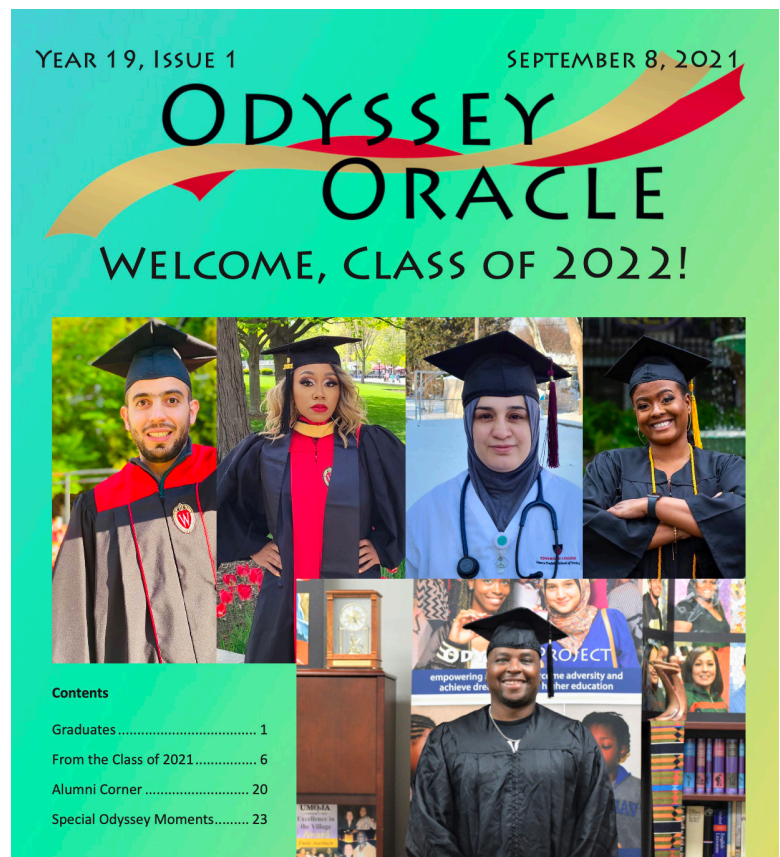
I believe my vantage point on life will be painted on the canvas of this class, that my perception will be broadened and deepened, that I will be challenged with deep issues of the heart, that we'll find unity in our differences. It will also show how the same struggles, plots, issues, and dramas that are presented today run a common thread all the way back to the past. As we move forward, we'll stand on common ground with the ones that went before us, as we also tread new waters. I'm excited!

(Jonathon Adeyanju)

Joe Robinson's story "Don't Quit" really hit home for me, like his line "When you get stuck in the middle of writing a paper or doing a project, don't quit." He has a lot of good points in the story, and it really hit home not to give up. I really loved reading

all the different classmates' stories and how many of them were nervous or were not sure how they would fit in, but in the end, we are all a family and are going through this journey together one step at a time.

I like how in the story "We Ate Dog Food," both of the writer's parents instilled in the kids that they should do the best at whatever they chose to do and that "'Can't' is not a word." I believe that we can do anything we set our minds to, and this is what I want to teach my daughter. Like Anthony Jefferson writes, "Odyssey is the pencil of life with which we can erase past regrets and rewrite our future." **(Brandyn Bess)**



After reading the Odyssey Oracle I felt confident that I could successfully complete the Odyssey Project. I read through story after story of words of encouragement to the upcoming Odyssey class. We were told over and over that this may not be easy but don't give up. We were reassured that the Odyssey staff is amazing and, as long as we share our truth in the situation, we'll be okay.

"We Ate Dog Food" reminds me that there are no parents that are perfect, but you do have to know how to read, or else a thing like this could happen. The father was uneducated and couldn't read and wound up feeding the children dog food. It could have been worse. He could have given one of the children the wrong medicine or the dose of medicine. It reminds me that parenting is not something you know naturally but it is a learned experience, and it is never too late to learn coming from an older Odyssey student.

Melissa Herriges wrote, "get ready for conversations that challenge what you think you know." Jessica Jacobs wrote, "be ready to see things from different perspectives. Be ready to challenge yourself and others as well." Farren McDonald wrote, "with that strength any year can be your year, and the future is up for grabs." All this advice from the last class makes me confident I will learn and experience a lot in the UW Odyssey Project. **(Ericka Booe)**



After reading everybody's story, I got a little different mindset, loosening up. I see I don't have to be so tight around everyone and can have fun doing it.

I felt as though some of the alumni were literally right next to me talking. I like how everyone can't stress enough how nice and understanding all the staff are. I love how everyone was talking about the homework and how they were saying don't give up because you're behind or late with homework. Just show up on time with an open mind and, most of all, have fun.

In a house with three other boys, my mom was a single parent. She moved us out here from Gary, IN for us to have a better education and opportunity; without that, there's no telling where we would be if we'd stayed in Gary. Mom always said try and better yourself.

COVID was not fun for anybody. It didn't help that I was diagnosed with pre-diabetes due to not having access to the gyms or to the basketball court. I kind of was forced to just eat and play video games, but I'm getting everything under control, eating better and working out more. **(Jermaine Booe)**

Reading the Oracle made me feel like I can come to any one of the Odyssey teachers when help is needed. No matter what we are going through,

someone will be there to help us. We are never on our own. "We Ate Dog Food" and "The Circuit" reminded me of each other because Alice's father had to sacrifice his education for younger siblings just like Roberto, so he never got the chance to read and write himself. From the Odyssey Oracle, I've learned never to be scared to ask for help; they will just about help with everything or give resources. **(Capri Booker)**

The reading gave me more hope. Sometimes I feel like I'm not good enough for certain things, like this program, for example, but I have to understand that I'm just enough for whatever I want to accomplish in life. I was chosen to be a part of this program for a reason. Everyone had good things to say, and it made a difference in their lives, so I know it will do the same and probably more for me. The funny but deep story "We Ate Dog Food" is like, you can have all the money in the world, but with no sense of education, how can you even be free? It makes me think about my own mother, who never finished school but always had money; we grew up spoiled. I wonder if she would have reached different goals if she had more education. **(Kayanna Branch)**

The reading made me feel very good, actually, to see a lot of these people that are very open and honest about their experience with Odyssey. It was refreshing, especially knowing they were able to accomplish this while being virtual. A lot of people struggle with the technological aspect of things, and knowing that not only are we able to get learning support, but you all go above and beyond to help us with issues in our lives.

There were a couple of people who explained issues they were having that they got help with, which makes me feel more reassured that I will have the support I need to succeed in the program.

"We Ate Dog Food" was a story that I really enjoyed. Coming from a family where both my mother and father got limited education (they both only finished with their high school diplomas), I felt I could relate to Alice that way somewhat. Another thing that was similar was that my mom worked more than my dad (given her also being very intelligent); she would always find work as a cleaner or housekeeper more quickly than my father. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**



Reading these recent alumni's stories, I feel eager to complete the class so I can share my story. With sharing similar backgrounds and traits as some, I have heard nothing but positive things about Odyssey, knowing students who have graduated. Odyssey can open many doors. The staff really love the students and become family. They will go above and beyond to help. I never could imagine me attending the UW, let alone just taking a course which is so much more; it's something my kids will see and open their eyes about college. With them being enrolled in Odyssey Junior, they will learn things I cannot teach. **(Ontario Frazier)**

Reading the messages the graduates from last year said about the program made me feel better. The graduates gave advice of not giving up, that I'm in good hands, and to count on the people who are in the program. I felt happy and hopefully this will let me onto the path where I will finish my studies.

"We Ate Dog Food" reminded me of "The Circuit" because it has parents who have to move around, have to move their children and move from school, or get them out of school to help with work. A family struggles, but they are moving forward. **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

Reading the Oracle from last year's class made me feel that I can do this. If they can all do it through a computer screen, I can accomplish this in-person. I can tell so far by all the reading we've done that they will all be something that we can relate to one way or another.

As far as what kind of stories I will write about for the Oracle, they will probably be about my journey in my career, and how I got into banking and finance for generational wealth. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

After I read the Oracle, a sentence that really popped out to me was in Alice's story "We Ate Dog Food" when she said her mother would say "'Can't' is not a word." It made me actually think about how many times I have told myself "I can't do it," but after putting the effort and knowledge I do have in it, I showed myself "I can do it."

Reading the Oracle and just being able to read not one but multiple people's points of view about the Odyssey Project gives me a feeling of hope. Most people's writing explained how the instructors believed in them more than they did themselves and that makes me feel that even when it seems hard, I won't be walking through it alone. It makes me happy to see what may come from this course and the help and motivation I will receive of not only my instructors but my peers as well.

My ideas on stories I might write this year are digging deep into where I come from, what I was offered growing up, and writing about how I have become a smart, independent, determined young woman who is determined to win.

(Talaisha Goodwan)

While reading the first Oracle, it reassured me. I needed to read the Oracle because I was so anxious about starting class with a three-year-old daughter. I have so many odds against me, and to know I'm not alone was so hopeful. The sentences that jumped out at me was that it's important to keep your mind open and your doubts behind you. I have so many doubts. The last time I was in school was five years ago. I wonder if I'm smart enough. I wonder if two and a half hours is enough time to teach me. Will I make it to graduation with a three-year-old?

"We Ate Dog Food" reminded me of "The Circuit" because they both had challenges with education and financial hardships. I learned that the Odyssey Project is the place for me to overcome the obstacles of finishing school. **(Cinderria Harwell)**

Early in the program, I started to fall short due to overworking for financial reasons and other reasons. My class visits and homework started to

slip, yet Emily reached out to me! This is just like I read from the majority of the statements: the team is so supportive and will help motivate you to keep going!

"We Ate Dog Food" kind of reminded me of being homeless, pulling foods together in order to eat or waiting for my next meal. Life can be tough, but you've got to keep pushing on. It seems in the story like when you're going through things, you can only do the best you can. It comes with a lot of sacrifices. **(Zaria Hunter)**

Reading the Odyssey Oracle made me feel great. It re-affirmed how wonderful of an opportunity this program is, and it made me feel proud to be a part of it. One thing that jumped out to me, and was continuously reiterated, was the notion of never giving up. Countless people told their hard experiences and life events that transpired throughout their time in the course. Even after all of that, they successfully managed to stick with it and subsequently see it to the end. In other words, they persevered, a message that was shared and echoed within last year's class letters.

Additionally, something else that popped out to me while reading was the importance of building a habit of writing consistently and iterating on making it better. The goal is not to be excellent right away, but to iterate to success. **(Yael Jiménez)**



Reading this made me feel so encouraged. A lot of them felt the way I feel, and it just takes a lot of worry from me just hearing their kind and positive words. What jumped out to me was how every one of them had nothing but positive remarks about the UW Odyssey Project, and that they all want to do better and excel for not only themselves, but their family.

I learned that the Odyssey Project helps people that want to go to college or want to contribute to their education. Odyssey helps get you back into the school mode. A few ideas I would want to share would be that I know how to write a sentence/paragraph again, and that I can help my daughter with her homework and know I'm telling her the correct answers. **(Crystal Johnson)**

When reading the Oracle, I felt like I was in a big support system. I felt like I was in something bigger than myself, and it gave me more motivation to complete the class and stay focused. Even though I've been going through a couple rough patches, this class is my way out of a dark hole of oppression and generational curses. **(Helena Lee)**

I really appreciated reading each and every one of the Odyssey Oracles. I felt inspired by many of them, and it really touched my spirit to see how many obstacles some had to face and overcome. Two of my personal favorites were by Yvonne Johnson and Farren McDonald. Yvonne's last paragraph really hit my heart. "The flower will grow, so the rain must fall. You got this, so all you need to be is the sun." Farren says, "It asks you to look inside yourself and find the answers that were always there." The "We Ate Dog Food" story of Alice was definitely one I laughed out loud at. Just hearing how much her parents had to work to provide and

make a living reminded me of "The Circuit." I can relate to the vicious cycle. I feel like we're very blessed to have class in person. I can't imagine being on the screen the whole semester.

I learned that Odyssey really pushes you to see things that you may not be able to. It helps you to grow from the inside out, pushing you out of your comfort zone and to be a better version of yourself. I think that I'm looking forward to writing more on the beautiful struggles in life. It will be amazing to see how this class transforms each and every one of us. I already catch myself in thought as I am reading through the poetry and biographies. I hope to inspire the generations behind and before us. I believe that, God willing, all things are possible. Allowing the words, thoughts, and emotions to flow from within, I want to be able to speak on fears and about amazing faith that conquers doubts. I've struggled with being disciplined in the past/present and procrastination. I want to stretch beyond myself and expand. I believe that is why I am here and what Odyssey will help me do. **(Michelle Mack)**



Reading Alice's story made me realize how grateful I am to be able to read. Something as simple as getting food at the grocery store can be hard. It relates to "The Circuit" because the boy couldn't really read at first.

From reading the Oracle, I've learned the Odyssey Project really cares about their students and it's like one big family! I hope the stories I write can encourage someone like me to join the program and better their future.

(Mariam Maiga)

Looking at the young men and women with their caps and gowns made me think and dream that this is going to be me soon. Wow, I know some of them and a small part of their story. Reading the articles reassured me I made the right decision and made me think there's still good people in the world.

The words that jump out to me and what I heard in every article was to keep pushing ahead. There's going to be obstacles; just keep coming back, don't give up. They went through COVID deaths, homelessness, and taking a class for the first time.

"We Ate Dog Food" reminded me of the story "The Circuit" when her dad had to be pulled from school because of crop season. We will write about ourselves and our opinions, and also write a welcome letter to the class of 2022-2023.

(Mashell McCarter)

According to the consensus, the key to the Odyssey Project is clearly DON'T QUIT. "We Ate Dog Food" and "The Circuit" were just examples of almost not knowing how unfortunate you are for a while, then realizing and being determined to rise above it.

(Reginald Moore)

The writing made me feel like I can succeed in this class – lots of encouragement. A sentence that jumped out at me was, "Stay focused, maintain positivity, and when you feel like class is rough, reach out for help and don't give up." (Anjelica Brown). In both stories, both parents moved/migrated. I can relate because both my parents moved from a small town to a bigger city. I learned that the Odyssey Project seems to be a great opportunity and opens many, many doors to a better education. Some ideas about stories I might write are poetry and maybe an autobiography.

(LaRonda Morris)

Most of the stories from the former students gave great encouragement and spoke on how nervous they were, or how rough it could get. They stressed the fact that we should ask questions and never feel like we can't. They all spoke of family, and how family was the atmosphere that was created in the classroom.

"We ate dog food but we are rich" was really similar to "The Circuit" because it talked of overcoming obstacles and finding the light in situations. It spoke about never giving up and that is powerful.

(Will Nunn)

Reading the Oracle made me get a feeling of reassurance. Upon reading different perspectives and situations, I felt like no matter the hurdle, I can complete this program.

Sentences that jumped out:

Yvonne Johnson: "If you ever feel like your voice is not being heard, know this is the time to speak easily."

Michelle McKoy:
"Relax, you're in good hands. The UW Odyssey staff is here to make sure you succeed."

I think COVID has impacted us all in many ways: rampant changes in everyday life, quarantine, not being able to see friends and family, etc. There is a support system with Odyssey. This program is built for success and advancement for people of all walks of life. **(Cylinthia Olle)**

One thing that really stuck out to me about the program was the internalization of our own capacities and potentials to be agents of change. Despite the constraints of Odyssey's alumni's lives, they persevered and finished this course, pandemic and all.

The combined hegemony of capitalism, racism, patriarchy, ableism, and the host of other oppressive, exclusionist force convinces us that we are lesser, inferior in our capabilities to care for others. Odyssey provided the avenue and toolkit for so many to become empowered in their own pursuit of truth. **(Benji Ramírez Gómez)**



From the Odyssey Oracle, from people's smiles, body language, and physical appearance, I could tell even though some struggles may be similar, there are people from all walks of life. When I look at each picture, then read the encouraging words, I think to myself, if they can do it, I most certainly can. Especially during the year of the Odyssey Project when COVID first started, that signified that this program will be involved to see their students succeed. One statement that drew my attention, quoted from Tisha Butler, "Don't give up; there were times I wanted to quit- I remember I was so behind in my classwork. I felt so defeated because this pandemic did a number on my family and me mentally. I had a conversation with Brian and told him what I was going through as a parent. Brian offered so many resources for my family and me." To me, this was the definition of a breakthrough. All odds were against her, especially because of COVID. In turn, I'm slowly reassuring myself and learning that I am right where I'm supposed to be at the right time. The Odyssey Project has surrounded me with nothing but positivity all around and successful resources. Thanks, Emily, for choosing me!

(Kimari Rogers)



The Odyssey Oracle reading made me feel happy and emotional at the same time because many of the stories were so inspiring. The sentences that jumped out at me were from the Alumni Corner. "When people tell you you are wasting your time don't quit." I feel I related so much to this particular sentence of his writing. I have been listening to this type of comment almost my whole life. Since I don't have the support of my family, I prefer to be apart from them because this type of comment hurts me. **(Jessica Saldana Ortega)**

Reading the Oracle unexpectedly made me emotional. I'm not sure if it was because I recognized a few faces or just reading the experience from people who made it to the end just made me feel proud and anxious for the day when it is our turn to welcome the class of next year and also to feel even more accomplished. I also felt a sense of relief and reassured from last year's class's words. "We Ate Dog Food" had similarity to me by just showing life's ups and downs; also, it had a lot of "self-taught" or "handmade" education readings as well. I have lots of ideas for future writings; the Oracle gave me motivation for deep thinking and expressive writing. **(Naquila Taylor)**

Reading this Oracle made me think that this program puts a large emphasis on togetherness, that all the students are taking a journey, a new journey. This point was also addressed in some of the student's blogs. They spoke of this being a journey and a family.

Kwan stated, "A journey where your skills and talents will be brought to light, along with your hunger for knowledge." This statement was very powerful to me because I crave knowledge. I think education is power. Henry said in his blog, "It had awakened something in me in regards to furthering my education." This statement just fit so well in regards to my life. I have been chasing the end of my education for years.

The two stories "The Circuit" and "We Ate Dog Food" both had a sense of strong families sticking together no matter what, a sense of extreme love and respect. **(Mechele Williams)**

CONNECTING WITH "THE CIRCUIT"

BY FRANCISCO JIMENEZ

I relate to the totality of the story. In a sense, we all go through circuits. Some of us are imprisoned by them, whether it be by fear, distress, necessity, or because we're self-medicating.

(Jonathon Adeyanju)

I can relate to Francisco and his family in this story a lot because as a kid and young adult, I moved a lot and went to many different schools. I had to learn to start over and accept the fact there may be times where I don't want to do something repeatedly, but I must deal with it and learn from my journey.

(Brandyn Bess)

What I learned from this story is I didn't know Mexican families struggled to this degree. Having to keep the kids from their education was a tough call, I'm sure, but they had to keep food on their table. They struggled with the instability of having to keep moving and having to look for short-term work.

(Ericka Booe)

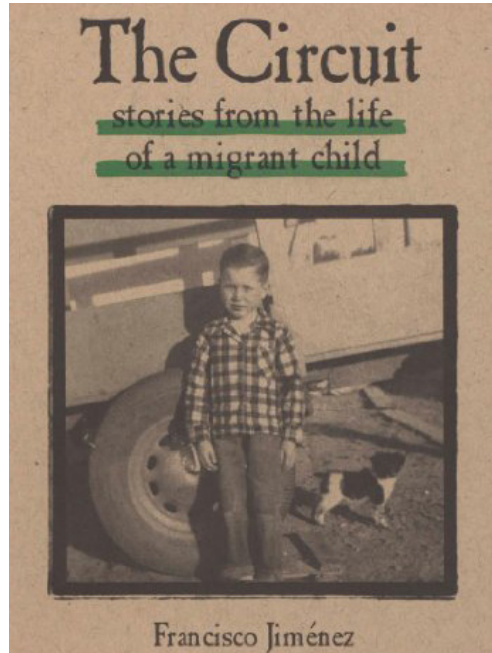
I relate the story to my life right now, going from job to job, not really sure if this place is long/short term – you may get comfortable some place, but don't get too comfortable because life happens.

(Jermaine Booe)

I can relate to the part where he got comfortable and came home to new news of packing and leaving with no warning. I have learned not everything is in your control, and I didn't want that to hurt me growing up.

(Capri Booker)

I relate to the end. I remember finally learning the bus route to my new house and meeting new



people at my school. One month in, our house caught on fire and we were forced to move. It played a big part in my childhood and put me in a dark place for a while.

(Kayanna Branch)

One thing I can learn and also relate to is having to take what you do have and appreciate it because things can always be worse. I can personally relate to having to move quite a bit and starting over. Although I may not have moved as much as Francisco did, I had to move during difficult times in my life.

This story made me appreciate

the fact that I actually got to grow up and live my life as a child, or as someone who could do things as simple as having fun and going to school and getting an education.

(Yasmine Dobbins)

Growing up, I didn't always have the right necessities and I was moving around in my middle school years. No matter what you go through in life at a young age, it can get better and greater things come after the struggle.

(Ontario Frazier)

I can relate to this story when it comes to not knowing English and feeling judged just because English is not your mother language. I can relate to Francisco in the way his parents tell him to work hard in everything he does.

(Erendira Giron Cruz)

What I can relate best to was the language barriers between my parents and the world. I remember being six to seven years old, having to translate important documents for my parents simply because they did not know English.

(Cynthia Gonzalez)



I can relate to the part of the story when he says, "I was so nervous and scared at the moment when everyone's eyes were on me that I wished I were with Papa and Robert." I can relate because I can be a total people person but when it comes to meeting new people or being introduced in front of a large group of people, I get the feeling of wishing this was not happening right now, or the feeling of a lot of anxiety from being so nervous.

(Talaisha Goodwan)

I can relate to speech being a barrier. When I spoke in front of people in high school, I got teased for being a nerd. I was talked about because I was the only one who knew how to pronounce big words, so I stopped raising my hand because I was afraid of being labelled a nerd. **(Cinderria Harwell)**

I relate to moving around a lot in order to become more stable. I moved from my original hometown to Madison, but in the long run it worked out, hence me being a part of the UW Odyssey Program. **(Zaria Hunter)**

I can relate very personally to this story as I am also an immigrant and come from a family of immigrants. I

can relate to the unstable work and lack of stability that accompanies it. It's hard to see that, time and time again, the victims of archaic immigration policies are often children; they are impacted the most in many cases. **(Yael Jiménez)**

I relate to this story personally by wanting to do something but I can't. **(Crystal Johnson)**

I can relate to feeling so anxious when reading in front of class because I would always mess up in front of everyone. Especially when I was in Sunday school, my grandma would tell me to speak up or read faster. This made me super self-conscious of my reading, so I stopped reading out loud and mainly read alone to myself. **(Helena Lee)**

I feel like I can relate to the feeling of being stuck like Francisco. I've experienced many challenges in my childhood/life also. Sometimes you replay the same cycles because you aren't sure of it or how to get out of it, or you're just simply in the middle of it. This is something along the lines of breaking generational curses. ☺ **(Michelle Mack)**

When I was younger, my family moved around a bit. I remember hating being the new kid and how that felt. **(Mariam Maiga)**



The part I can relate to is the family seems to be going in the same cycle year after year. For years, my life was a circuit until I decided to make changes, do differently, and make opportunities.

(Mashell McCarter)

I relate to all of it. I have chosen or been forced to uproot everything and change it all too many times to count. Very relatable. **(Reginald Moore)**

Let people speak their native language no matter how much you don't understand what they are saying. **(LaRonda Morris)**

I can relate to being the kid that moved around a lot, being in different schools, not necessarily fitting in but finding some kind of solace while I was there because of sports. Then, right when I start to settle and feel at home, we would be on the move again and I would have to start over.

(Will Nunn)

I can relate because being Black in America, it's a constant circuit of oppression, barriers, etc., all while we are expected to be an 'outstanding citizen' and achieve the 'American dream.'

(Cylinthia Olle)

My parents are migrants to this country. While my stint in farm work was shorter and less arduous than my mother's, I still connect empathetically with the family, as the legacy of braceros and migrant farm workers remains vividly present in modern day Wisconsin via dairy farm workers.

(Benji Ramírez Gómez)

I honestly cannot relate personally, but the lesson I learned from this story is to not take anything for granted, especially your education. **(Kimari Rogers)**



I can relate to his story because I'm an immigrant, and I can tell how difficult it is to go school when nobody in the classroom speaks my language. The same as him, I do remember how hard it is to try to communicate with others in English. However, I'm glad because I had the opportunity to go to school and learn, and today here I am in the Odyssey Project.

(Jessica Saldana Ortega)

Life always has its ups and downs, and we are not alone when we may sometimes feel like "it's only us" that bad things keep happening to. I can relate to feeling like I will finally see a "rainbow" at the end of a storm and then getting disappointed, but it's important to keep on going because you will never win if you quit.

(Naquila Taylor)

I relate to when Jimenez says, "That's why I think it's so important for all of us, as teachers, to value the child's native language." As Americans, we expect everyone to know English, yet in other countries, they are taught many languages. **(Mechele Williams)**

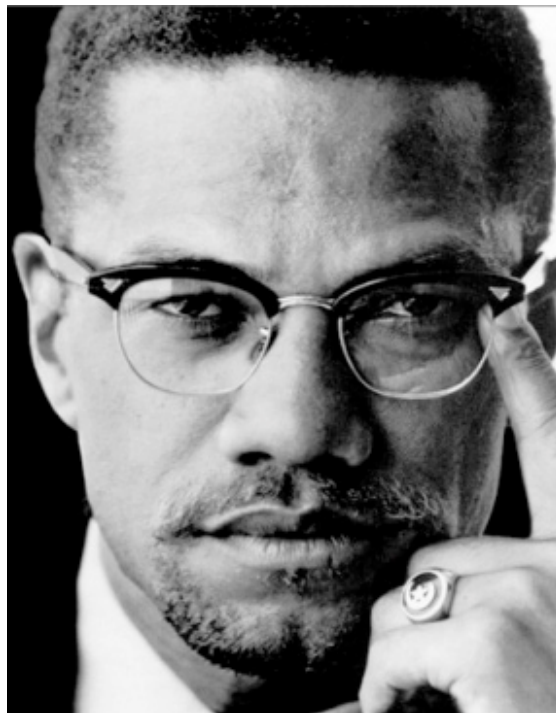


MOTIVATED BY MALCOLM X

Students read an excerpt from Malcolm X's Autobiography where he described his "homemade education." He became free in prison by teaching himself vocabulary through copying the entire dictionary and by making the world of books his alma mater.

I believe the meaning of a homemade education can be summed up in the question that Malcolm X was presented with when asked, "What's your alma mater?" and Malcolm X responded with, "Books." It's the notion of being educated outside of school, the notion that many arenas serve as a platform of education as school does. It reminds me of a quote that stated, "Honor facilitates the flow of life. When you honor someone, you get for free what they had to pay for." I subscribe to that strongly. The reason being that as we humble ourselves, we begin to recognize—honor—the many forms and packages that education is delivered in. You can't put education in the boxes of traditionalism illustrated by school curricula which may not be practical for everyday life. Information is everywhere and in everybody, and if we're honest, we've all had some homemade education. And lastly, a homemade education is not necessarily inferior to a scholastic education. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

After reading Malcolm X's piece "Homemade Education," I believe what he is saying is that you can educate yourself in many ways, not just in a classroom. He goes on a lot about how reading books in a setting where he is alone, he can open his mind more to different things, and is able to educate himself more by taking each page and each sentence and digesting it piece by piece. He wrote on his tablet in his time in prison, and day by day his mind grew, until in



time his mind became his own dictionary. I agree with Malcolm X in the fact that we can educate ourselves with our own mind, just by reading and exploring and figuring out things. With our own opinion and imagination, we can learn from life. **(Brandyn Bess)**

What Malcolm X means from the phrase "homemade education" is how he titles the way he educated himself in prison. He read and copied words. He read lots and lots of books. He compared his "homemade education" to a college education. His education happening in prison made it intensive versus a college education being distracting.

Malcolm X picked a positive activity to keep him engaged through his prison time. By educating himself and teaching others he was able to use his hobby beyond the bars to empower black people. He read about contributions that black people had to history, and how these things were not mentioned in school, and only white people's contributions were mentioned. He was able to point out how white people used African and Asian contributions for their gain. **(Ericka Booe)**

I think he means prison was almost the perfect place to learn—he had nothing but time to learn how to write and read. He had so much time; he sometimes studied for fifteen hours in a day. When you're going so hard with something for so long, you kind of lose sight of everything else, like tunnel-vision. **(Jermaine Booe)**

“Homemade Education” pertains to the time Malcolm spent inside of prison reading because he realized he knew nothing other than street language. His piece was motivational. It shows that you can motivate yourself further than you give yourself thought. **(Capri Booker)**

A homemade education is an education that is “self-taught” from studies, experience, and life. I feel like his definition or meaning of homemade study is something we all do every day but don’t notice. We could further our homemade education by doing things like he did. Take note from educated people around you and look up things you don’t understand. **(Kayanna Branch)**

A homemade education to me would describe the kind of self-preservation that Malcolm X had to have in order to educate himself during his time in prison. Already having a lot of obstacles in his life, he had such a strong desire to learn, spending more than twelve hours a day, each day, to study, read, or copy words from the dictionary. His dedication really shows when he finds a way to read despite how early “lights out” came, and continuing to read by the glow that the corridor light would cast into his room, and even pretending to be asleep when guards did their rounds. I just know how hard it is for black men to be looked at as being educated, and I can only imagine how hard it really was back then. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**

Being a black male having small troubles in my teens and on the brink of dropping out of school, there were things my teachers could not teach me. So by doing so, I developed similar strategies to help myself learn. Many family members of mine did not complete high school, some still to this day cannot read, only using the basic words. Many blacks face this problem today for whatever reason, and face the decision to teach themselves, or simply lack the skill of reading. **(Ontario Frazier)**

A “Homemade Education” means that when Malcolm was in jail, he took it into his own hands to learn and educate himself. Malcolm would go to the library and stay late just to read. Educating himself was important to Malcolm and helping his



people. A “Homemade Education” is when you take it into your own hands to educate and better yourself in this world.

I’m very impressed that Malcolm took it to himself to learn and teach himself. Learning about the different philosophies and learnings, he discovered his own views. I love that Malcolm went from one of the low points of his life and learned and educated himself, and in today’s society, become a figure that people look up to or get inspiration from. **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

A homemade education means he taught himself how to read. He would read the dictionary and copy word-for-word to better understand words, and that’s how he fell in love with reading. Reading was his happy place when he was in prison. It made things a little easier knowing that with just opening a book, he could be in a different world.

My personal response to the reading was how amazing just the act of reading can teach you so much. When I was younger I HATED reading, mainly because what I was forced to read were things I was just not interested in. Once I was able to make my reading choices, I started to like reading, especially history books, nonfiction books, and current events—things that I know are real; I do not like fiction books at all. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

When Malcom X uses the phrase “homemade education,” the meaning behind it is that Malcolm X wasn’t on a great track in life, but he took the time to use the things he was offered and created his own motivation to extend his education by teaching himself and becoming more aware of the world around him.

My personal opinion about this piece is that it describes the process of not allowing your current life situations to be your excuse of not improving yourself. When you want to make it in life, your greatest motivation is yourself and allowing yourself to put a goal in front of you and using the resources that are there for you.

(Talaisha Goodwan)

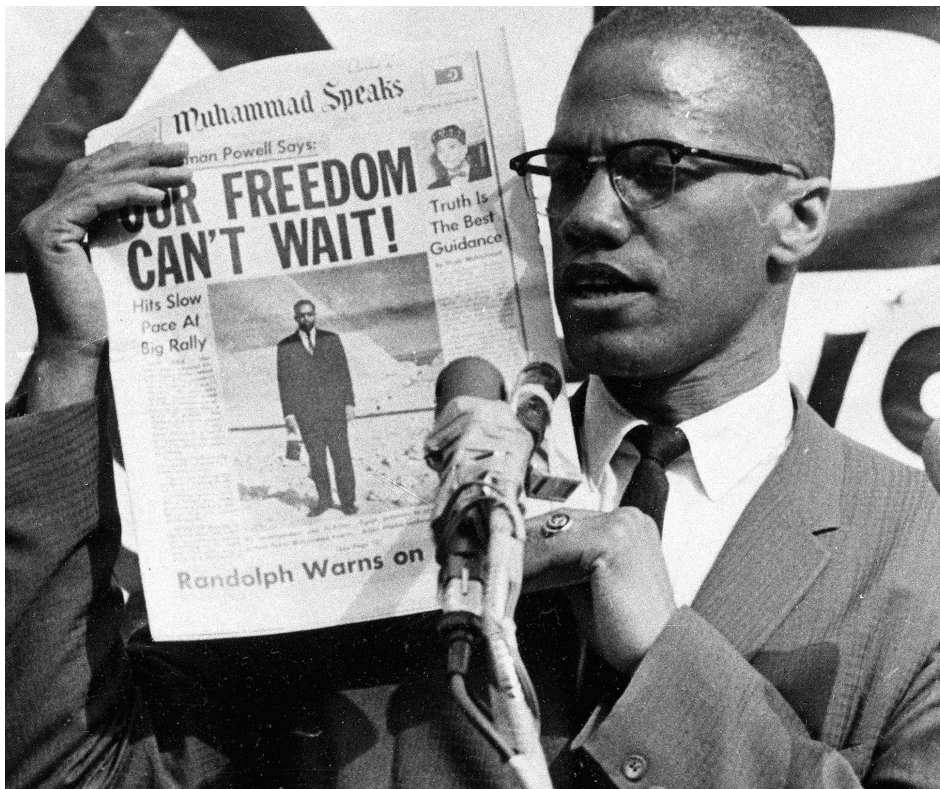
Although having an eighth-grade education, he was very articulate with his words. On the other hand, he wanted to transition his words to paper, so he picked up a dictionary and taught himself. My personal response to his piece is that I think it’s great to educate yourself. Due to Malcolm X educating himself, it taught me that if you don’t care enough to educate yourself, how can you expect somebody else to? **(Cinderria Harwell)**

I think that what Malcolm X means by the phrase of “homemade education” is having to educate himself from lack of alternatives. I find it analogous to homemade food, where the creation, formulation, and execution is done by oneself. As his homemade education, he took it upon himself and into his own hands to educate himself while incarcerated. To do this, he read while in prison and tried to enlighten himself through reading. What I like about this story is that even after a lack of resources, he still took it upon himself to improve, to be better, quite literally- self-made. Even after the hardships, after incarceration, he persevered and overcame against all odds to become the person we remember today. **(Yael Jimenez)**

What Malcolm X means by the phrase homemade education is that with only an eighth-grade education, you can still learn and grow yourself. Malcolm X wanted to write a letter to Elijah Muhammad but didn’t want to use slang and come off as not articulate and functional, so Malcolm X’s homemade education was to read and write the dictionary. By reading the dictionary, he learned there’s so many words and words he didn’t know, and then he decided to write the dictionary to help with his penmanship.

I think everybody learns in their own way, and if you really want to learn to better yourself, you’ll find ways to do it, and that will bring new goals and ideas. **(Crystal Johnson)**

To have a homegrown education means that you’re taking the time to learn new things in your free time. Malcolm X had a lot of free time because he was incarcerated. He also had the willingness to learn because he was motivated to be something more than he was. He had the willingness and the dedication to grow as person through reading. **(Helena Lee)**



I believe that what Malcolm X was emphasizing is that you can learn whatever you want to learn when you put in the effort. He was curious enough to want to learn how to read. He slowly taught himself to read by starting with words in a dictionary. He then progressed into reading full books, which is super inspiring. I feel like we constantly have to thirst after wanting to learn more to grow and gain further understanding in things. **(Michelle Mack)**

I believe when he said “homemade education” he was referring to the fact that he really taught himself what he knows by reading books while he was in jail. He didn’t go to college or university. Everything was “home” taught. **(Mariam Maiga)**

A homemade education is Malcolm teaching and educating himself in and out of prison, learning his weaknesses and correcting them, like writing and learning new words by copying the dictionary pages. He read books about philosophy, learned his history by learning about black history, and wrote Elijah Muhammad a letter every day and learned from him. He also researched anything he was curious about.

I think his story is amazing; it’s about a black man going to jail and not letting prison define who he is. Malcolm X went to jail, rehabilitated himself, and reinvented himself into something not the norm. **(Mashell McCarter)**

In his opinion, a homemade education was more of a self-education versus a school system. I find it amazing to imagine learning all words in alphabetical order. Learning an aardvark and an anvil on the same day must be a mental joyride. Maybe that’s an alternative way to learn; a page per day is borderline genius, and explains why Malcolm’s vocabulary was so eloquent at all times. **(Reginald Moore)**

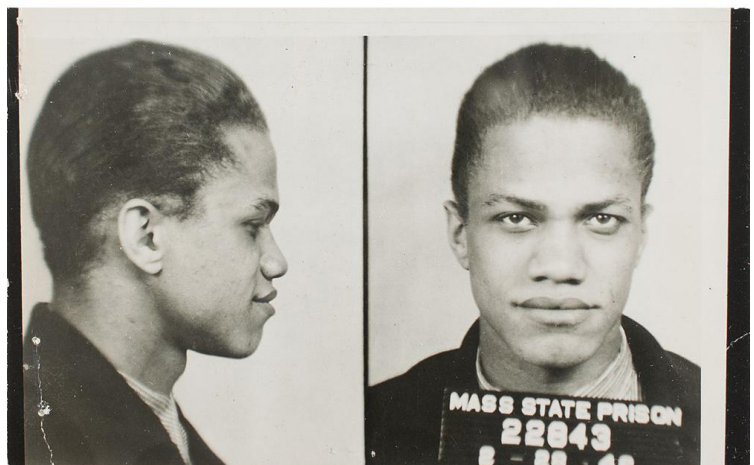
I think he means that basically, he wants to learn things his own way at his own pace. I’m the same way; if there’s a way that I could learn new things my “homemade” way, I’d probably be a genius. The books kept his mind

off of being locked up. That’s why he felt like he was “free.” **(LaRonda Morris)**

He explained that in his time in prison, he realized he could not articulate on paper as well as he could in the street; his reading comprehension was absent. In prison, he realized this as a weakness about himself and began to get motivated to strengthen those skills so he could better communicate and understand. He was motivated by one phrase that Elijah Mohammed said that sparked the journey that Malcolm went on while in prison. He wanted to become more articulate and to be able to understand the world around him in actuality, not emulating what he saw.

From this piece, I feel like “Homemade Education” means one’s motivated self-journey to gain understanding. I think it’s valid in my life and it’s valid today still in 2021, especially for the black man. We have to understand ourselves and where we want to go. **(Will Nunn)**

What I think he means by “Homemade Education” – I believe the gist of what he’s saying is, leave behind what’s in front of you and dig deeper. Practice your newly learned skills and apply them to learn more. Don’t just view the surface of things; actually take the time to learn and protect it. Educate and challenge your own mind and opinions. I personally like Malcolm’s logic and points of view. We are much alike; we both had surface knowledge until we challenged the unknown. **(Cylinthia Olle)**



Once Malcolm X began to read, he never stopped. "The ability to read awoke inside [him] some long dormant craving to be mentally alive."

His education was homemade because his curiosity was not sated by an alma mater, if not his own drive to "help the black man."

(Benji Ramirez Gomez)

When you say homemade education, I think of the struggles Malcolm went through to teach himself. There were no lectures, guidance, tutors, or homework to work on. In a sense, he had his own system and strategy in the way he taught himself. That's the definition of a homemade education, in my eyes and according to Malcolm X. My personal response to his piece is that when faced with a hardship, whatever that outlet is, make the best of it. **(Kimari Rogers)**

"Homemade Education" means that he had to create his own work or words because he didn't finish school; he went to school but only until eighth grade. He couldn't even write. He says "homemade education" because he has to look and find the meaning of the words in the dictionary

that he compared to a miniature encyclopedia.

My personal response is that sometimes we don't have support so we have to create our own path. Sometimes it is because of our bad choices or just because of the support system. I feel I identify with him because I did create my own path.

(Jessica Saldana Ortega)

At that time, he did not have the same resources to learn. Most of his "skills" were self-taught by learning very hard lessons, such as going to jail. Having to learn as a black man, his resources were very limited, so his "homemade" education means "no real resources" to learn. He had to go off of life experiences or find "free hand" ways to learn. Oftentimes, lessons are learned through hard times and tougher situations. **(Naquila Taylor)**

He gained his education himself. I can relate to not being able to, or not having the ability to express yourself in your writing as you would like. It shows how in different situations and environments, your ability will be different. It depends on the access to materials, your time management, and your learning ability. **(Mechele Williams)**



WANDERING WITH WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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

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

While I read Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," there were a couple of things that seemed clear to me. In the first stanza, I can imagine him strolling through the fields. As he marvels at the beautiful daffodils, he doesn't realize just how much joy that experience gave him, while in the second stanza, we read about him thinking back to his time in the "vales and hills" while he watched the daffodils.

His heart fills with pleasure as he lies on his couch because he remembers the time where he danced "with the daffodils."

More broadly, I think he was just so happy to have had that experience. He had no clue at the time that it would leave such a big, positive impression on him.
(Yael Jiménez)

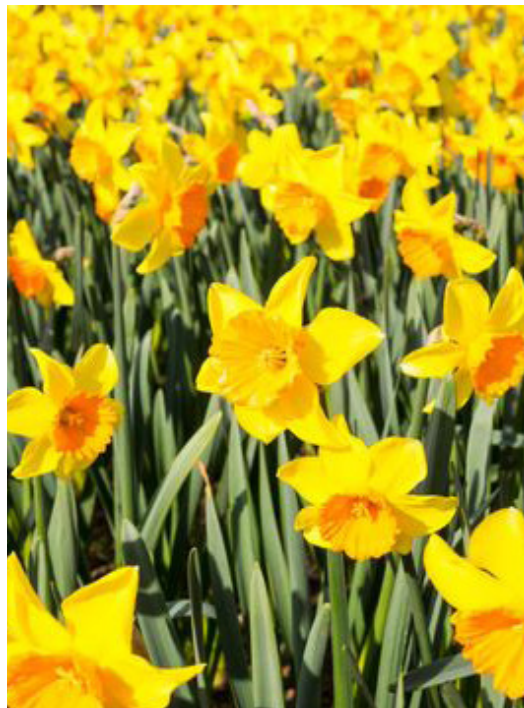
What I understood from the poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" was that he was maybe sad or lonely. He says "wandered lonely as a cloud," and when he noticed the daffodils, he noticed a beauty in nature he maybe didn't see

before. I can compare this to how my life was before having my child, with no purpose, but now that she's here, I have everything I thought I couldn't have.
(Cynthia Gonzalez)

It was clear that he was by himself, and it was also clear that something small could amaze him. I was able to make the idea of peace and quiet, which I only get when I'm asleep. **(Cinderria Harwell)**

The poem "I wandered lonely as a cloud" seems almost freeing to me in a way because it sounds like this person feels alone all the time and just watches others enjoy life, or just has less worries, just to feel like they can't do it. However, it seems like this one time, they let go of everything and joined everyone else being free and happy. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**

To me, he seems very sad, like he's lost. It seems as though he's searching for clarity in life. I know that feeling. I, myself, have dealt with depression. Depression can consume you and take all you have.
(Cynthia Olle)



It seemed clear that he was at peace and wanted to seize that moment. I didn't find much about it confusing; he seemed to be reminiscing about a time where he was happy and peaceful.
(Naquila Taylor)

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" – He sounds so free, not a care in the world, taking in every little detail as being a cloud. It was like he was day dreaming, as if he was a cloud. I could see and feel his journey, seeing all that he saw. **(Mechele Williams)**

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

"My Heart Leaps Up" was short but potent. It's a reminder to absorb and take in beauties like rainbows EVERY TIME. If you get to the point where you don't ALWAYS marvel at rainbows, you're too far gone away from what man is supposed to appreciate.
(Reginald Moore)

I can feel how the poet feels in "My Heart Leaps Up." As kids or adults, when we see a rainbow in a sky, we feel interested and amazed by it. I can feel the image of the rainbow, and how I would feel looking at it in the sky. Old or young, it does not matter; we are still mystified by the sight. **(Brandyn Bess)**

What seemed clear to me was that he enjoyed the rainbow so much that it gave him reason to live and keep moving through life. He felt like targeting the rainbow; it meant life was worth living. **(Zaria Hunter)**

The rainbow in the sky represents learning a variety of ways to think. When the heart sees a rainbow in the sky, it wakes up. Is he saying that his life began when he first saw the rainbow in the sky, or is it saying his life begins every time he sees the rainbow in the sky?

"So is it now I am a man": learning is growth. "So be it when I shall grow old or let me die": he wants to continue to learn and if not then doesn't want to live anymore.
(Ericka Booe)

"My Heart Leaps Up" – This poem strikes me that he is tall, that he feels like he is close to the sky and can reach a rainbow. He's super excited when he sees a rainbow. When he was born, he liked rainbows; all the beautiful colors make him feel joyful.

He's excited to see a rainbow (I used to feel like that) because you don't get to see a rainbow often, but when you do, it's lovely, with all the colors across the sky. There probably was a rainbow in the sky when he was born to celebrate him. How is it "now I am a man"? . . . Did he grow out of the excitement of seeing a rainbow as he got older? **(Crystal Johnson)**

Some of the wording in "My Heart Leaps Up" made me wonder what William Wordsworth was anticipating. Is he insinuating that he is fine with death or life? I am definitely appreciative of these poems and the reminder to stay present in spirit.
(Michelle Mack)



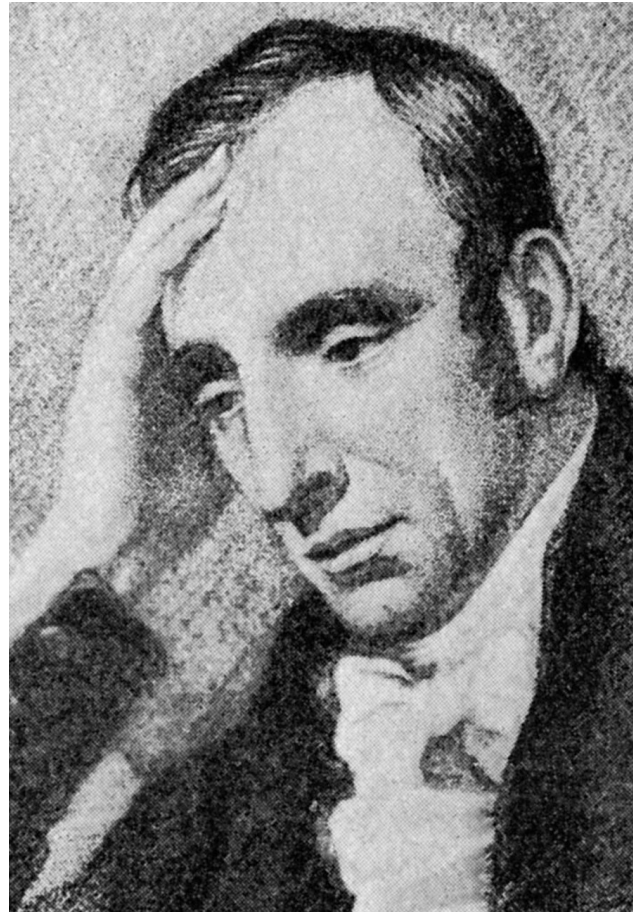
"To My Sister"

*It is the first mild day of March;
Each minute sweeter than before,
The redbreast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door. . . .*

My Sister!come forth and feel the sun . . .

*Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth:
It is the hour of feeling. . . .*

In the poem "To My Sister" it seems William Wordsworth is writing about the start of each day. He seems to be explaining the process of starting your day on a good foot, of taking in the things around you as a blessing of seeing a new day. Allowing yourself to understand each day is a way of creating a better spirit for yourself. I think an image from this poem I can take into my life is to take each day you're able to enjoy the weather as a blessing because that one moment gives us something to look forward to, hoping to feel that weather again. **(Talaisha Goodwan)**



One thing that was clear is he believed nature to be majestic and divine, and that a divorce from nature was akin to a divorce of sort from the body. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

What seems evidently clear in this poem is that he was having a beautiful, relaxing day with his sister. The only thing that's confusing about this poem is that the writer directed the audience to nature, then abruptly flipped the poem for the second half and made it about his sister. I can relate to this poem because I really do love my only sister. **(Kimari Rogers)**

NOTICING NATURE



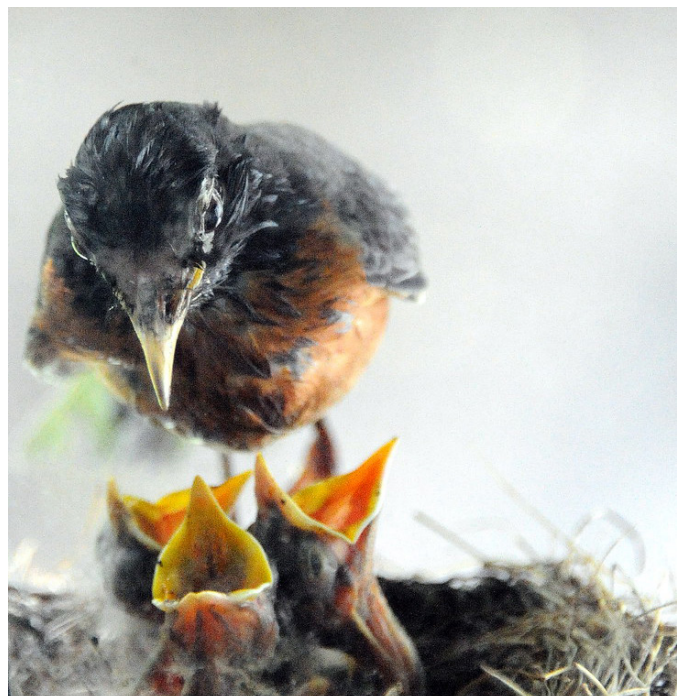
I also believe [like Wordsworth] that nature is divine, not in the sense that nature is conscious or a spiritual entity, but in the sense that nature to me is the fingerprints of God, a beautiful tapestry that he has woven. I believe that when you see the beautiful intent of it all, you become more conscious of the beautiful intent of one's own creation, that to look upon a star, or to listen to the cadence of a waterfall, is to come alive to one's own sense of purpose. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

Years ago, my mother, brother, and I took a trip to visit these houses that were built within the earth. It was such an experience. I felt as I was lying in the bed that I was one with the earth. There was a nature reserve outside also, with lots of trails and wildlife such as birds, wolves, and others. There were so many different plants and trees galore. One night, my brother and I were drinking Summer Shandies, a lemon shandy, my first time having them. The moon was a full moon, so bright, and it felt so close that you could reach out and touch it almost. The wolves were howling so loudly it felt like they could creep up behind you; it was such a beautiful night. **(Brandyn Bess)**

As I sat in my van waiting on the washing machine cycles to end so I could get my clothes in the dryer and be done with my dirty laundry, I could hear this loud squeaky noise. My eyes caught a grayish color on the belly with a black coat on its back, a bird sitting on a white gutter pipe on the roof of the laundromat. The squeaky sound was coming from the bird.

The bird jumped down about two to four inches to a different area of the white gutter pipe that had a grassy-looking nest with tiny white dots in it, sitting right on an area of the white gutter pipe that curved and was up against the red brick wall of the laundromat.

Suddenly, I could see two small, sharp-looking beaks leaning upwards. The bird that was making the noise then leaned into one of the small beaks and placed something from its beak into the small and sharp-looking bird beak. It then placed something from its beak into the other small and sharp-looking beak. The bird then flew away. I'm a nurturer, so it was nature providing nurture and it was beautiful. **(Ericka Boeey)**



My body fills up with joy on March 20th. Why, you may ask? For those who may not know, that's the first day of spring when it's not too hot or too cold, just the perfect mix of the sun and clouds. Today makes a great day to be in the park shooting hoops. The wind is singing, not too hard or too soft, just loud enough not to blow the ball away when I'm shooting it. What a great day it is to play outside. **(Jermaine Booe)**

I recall one of the weekends this summer when my boyfriend and I took my daughter to the park to ride her scooter. One of our favorite parks to go to is Tenney Park; it's one of my daughter's favorite parks because she loves to walk over that bridge. Although the smell was borderline putrid and the water was infested with dull green algae and lily pads, she enjoyed the thrill of the breeze in her face.

My daughter not only loved playing at the park, but she was an observant little human as well. She stopped to watch the bugs trotting in the cement and screamed as the bees buzzed by. The day was very rewarding as we took a break to rest in the shade a tree was nice enough to provide for us. As she stopped to catch her breath and wipe the sweat from under her helmet, she enjoyed a nice refreshing drink of some ice-cold water. Life was good. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**



While I was walking and feeling hundreds of tiny balls going through my toes, the sand looked beautiful next to the blue sea. I could feel my feet getting hot like I was stepping on a hot stove. I looked at the blue ocean with white foam next to where the blue ocean met the sand. Looking at the ocean and not seeing any ending, I saw that the ocean was never-ending water. **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

It was July of 2014. I was seventeen years old when I saw the ocean for the first time. The location was South Beach, Florida; it was at least 98 degrees but felt way over 105. The sand was so white and hot. The closer I got to the shore, the more the sound felt heavy, like quicksand. The ocean made a crashing sound; it smelled like seaweed. It smelled like peace. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

After a long day of work, driving home in the rain, I see the windows begin to look foggy, the rain hitting my car as if there are rocks being thrown at me. I start to think how low the temperature must be outside of my warm SUV that has heat that blazes like the flames from a lighter. Then I step outside my car, barely closing my door when the feeling hits. As the rain droplets hit my jacket one by one, my body temperature remains the same; the cold I thought would be outside my car isn't there. I find myself sitting outside my car fifteen minutes later, enjoying the rain.

Instead of running to find shelter I sit there with each droplet of water that falls from the large, dark clouds that cover the sun making time seem as if it is late at night at only two o'clock in the afternoon; it feels like a relief. The droplets hit the ground, creating a small stream of water that flows down to the gutter that's filled with trash from the neighborhood kids; they then become faster and faster, then eventually grow hard to the drop, but it doesn't matter.

After thirty minutes or so of taking in the water that nature provides from the sky, I realize that nothing that occurred that day at work mattered. I begin to smile as I walk inside dripping, as if I just took a swim in all those clothes, but who cares? I was smiling. **(Talaisha Goodwan)**

When I go to the park with my daughter, I can imagine the grass being taller than the sky. The small lake at the park, turning from a lake to a huge water tornado, picks us up. The water tornado then takes us to a different town where we are fictional characters that have a perfect life. We then stay there and live happily ever after. The breeze on my cheeks wakes me up, and I gather my daughter and myself up and return home. **(Cinderria Harwell)**

Blissful Birthday Bonanza

It was a soft spring in Miami. You could feel the swift, chilled breezes that still held a strong warmth during the nightlife. The fluorescent lights beaming off the still shore waters was one of the sweetest sights. Spring breakers were making lots of memories and wild nights, loud noises to showcase the many flights in and out of the city. I can still smell the salt water in my hair and feel the rocky sand beneath my feet in the sweet Miami heat. **(Zaria Hunter)**

As I looked down at my feet, I could see the hard, jagged, brown rocks that lay before me. Towering over me were these luscious green pines, whose powerful trunks stood proudly as their peaks reached for the sky above. A couple of my friends and I were taking a hike through the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. We stood there, trying to take in the roaring mountains. As we looked up, the ginormous mountain could be seen piercing the sky, its peaks being eclipsed by the white foamy clouds that drifted with the wind.

How spectacular, I thought to myself. **(Yael Jiménez)**

I remember as a kid lying in the fresh-cut grass in our backyard. No worries, no drama, no cares—I was just pure carefree. I smelled the grass, and the air blew across my face and through my hair as I looked up to the sky, pointing at clouds with my sister and cousins. A fly may have flown on me once or twice, but I just swatted it away and continued lying there, being lazy, and calling out what the clouds looked like. Those carefree days are ones worth going back to because I'm not lying in grass now. I wouldn't be able to get up. 😊 **(Crystal Johnson)**

We sat on our porch watching leaves blow and seeing yellow leaves falling from the trees rapidly, almost as if they were racing. Chipmunks compete over fallen fruits as they prepare for cold weather on the way. She rubs her arms to combat the coldness and asks me, have I got a new winter coat yet? **(Reginald Moore)**





As I looked up from my camera into nature's picture through my eyes, the brightness captured me as it reflected off the flowing water. As I looked up into the baby blue sky, it encircled me and gathered everything into a vision of beautiful brightness. **(Kimari Rogers)**

I went to California and walked the beach. I felt the nice breeze, warmth of the sun, and warmth of the sand on my feet. You can hear the waves in the ocean and you can smell the fresh ocean water. The pier was near and you can smell the hot Polishes the people were selling walking down

the beach strip. It felt happy; it was relaxing. I felt I was at home, one I had been looking for. **(Naquila Taylor)**

Standing on my porch in the rain

I quiver slightly as I feel tingling going up my spine
While crisp air's filling my lungs
Small dewdrops start to pulsate on my face
Trickling down my body
I sense a puddle enclosing my feet
With a slight chill, I start to fall
The wetness that has enclosed around my body
Bringing me the feeling of being subdued
Becoming one with nature **(Mechele Williams)**



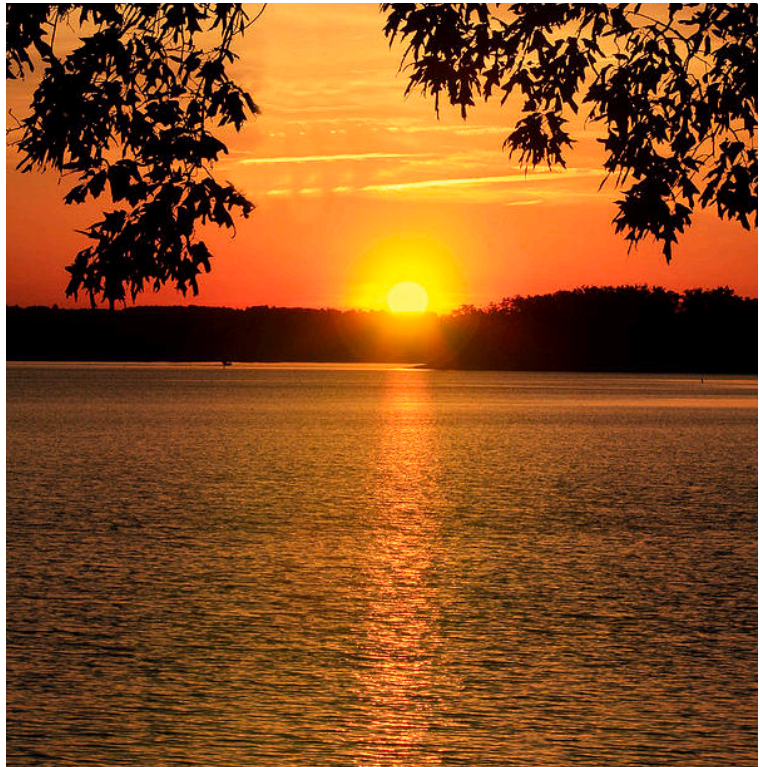
When I was a kid, every summer we'd go to my great grandparents. This was the closest I had to nature because it was farm area, mostly. I just remember running barefoot on the pathways, not caring about what's on the ground. I remember the smell of grass, cow manure, pigs, and chickens. I remember the fresh breakfast my great-grandma made us with the freshest egg, herbs, and meats. The best part was watching the sun leave the sky and invite the beautiful moon out so we can play until we couldn't. **(Cylinthia Olle)**

In Verona, my mother and I went for a harmonious, peaceful, light-capturing walk. As we were walking, I could feel a slight breeze that was subtle and gentle upon my skin. While walking, I didn't really feel like I was exercising; I felt light as a feather and as if I were walking on air.

When we finally reached the park, we walked to the center of a small bridge and decided to capture the moment by taking pictures. The first thing I saw in the picture with my eyes was the brightness from the sun, which filled our hearts with happiness, joy, and enlightenment, according to the smiles on our faces. In the background, the multi-colored flowers were like a splash of color in a painted masterpiece in the picture. Also, in the picture, the small flow of water under the bridge complemented the many kinds of flowers surrounding it.

As my son and I arrive at the playground, many others are gathered here and there.
The cool breeze blows and the trees follow its rhythm.
The children are running, laughing, and climbing on structures with special design.
A middle-aged man passes by on his bicycle and follows the graveled path.
There are sea gulls in the blue, clouded sky and a mother duck with her flock strolling in the green grass.
I sit on the wooden bench and gaze around, feeling my chest, inhaling the fresh, cool air.
The sun seems to be peeking through the clouds and is sending light beams through the sky.
There are boats of many different kinds making a float across the wavy blue water.
Families and friends assemble to consume their evening feast.
The night is yet young, and the smell of burnt tree limbs fills the air.
Sunset awaits and the college students frolic as they pass the volleyball.
Summer days are soon to be gone, darkness will become like a shadow,
and daytime a friend that we miss. So enjoy each day as it comes,
Before you know it, the days will be pictures in a frame, a vast memory. **(Michelle Mack)**

Hot high beaming sun
Salty sweat tears in my eyes
Making a burning sensation
High white clouds forming in the sky
Sunrays clear as the cool muddy lake.
Birds chirping in the background.
Beautiful sunset. **(LaRonda Morris)**



ALUMNI CORNER

MEET HEZOUWE WALADA

In this article entitled “Student’s remarkable journey to starting his undergraduate degree at age 28, living his dream” for UW News on September 9, 2020, Lisa Bauer tells the story of Odyssey graduate Hezouwe Walada

In his village of Koumea in Togo, Africa, 8-year-old Hezouwe Walada watched nearly half of his community—including three of his young cousins—die of malaria in early 2000. He decided then and there he wanted to become a doctor.

But his dream seemed unattainable—his family was poor, the nearest school was far from his village and he didn’t even have shoes.

After 20 years, nearly 6,000 miles and a host of trials and tribulations, Walada started at the University of Wisconsin–Madison as a first-year student majoring in biochemistry this fall, with plans to eventually go to medical school.



“Everything is possible if you are willing to work hard and sacrifice,” says Walada, a graduate of both the UW Odyssey Project and Badger Ready. “All you have to do is believe and keep asking questions.”

From Togo to Madison

As a young child, when Walada made up his mind that he wanted to someday study medicine, he asked his father if he could attend school. He could, his father said, but not before he did morning chores. So Walada woke up 3 a.m., worked on the farm for three hours, walked 15 miles to school then walked 15 miles home at the end of the day.

“When I finished my chores, I started running to school,” he says. “I just really wanted to be a doctor and help people in my village and around the world.”

Walada studied hard and got admitted to one of the best high schools in Togo. He moved away from home and all he ever knew.

“I felt different because all my classmates had nice clothes, nice shoes and money,” he says. “I came there with two shirts, three shorts and one pair of shoes. Even though I was at the top of the class, I felt like I didn’t belong there. I was always sad because I didn’t have anything.”

But Walada persevered and eventually won a visa to go to the U.S. At age 17, he left his country for the first time, alone.

“I was terrified, but I kept reminding myself of my dream,” he says. “I knew people needed me to become a doctor. I will never forget the suffering I saw in my village. I still have flashbacks today.”

In 2009, Walada made it to Madison. Years before, he’d heard a teacher say that the University of Wisconsin–Madison was a prestigious institution. He did research online and decided to set his sights on becoming a Badger.

But his dream was delayed 10 more years.

Lacking resources and knowing very little English, Walada struggled in Wisconsin. He enrolled at Madison College, but without a stable home or sometimes even food to eat, his education stalled. He started “working like crazy”—mainly as a caregiver—to earn and save money. He met his wife, settled down and they had a daughter.

Walada began to wonder if he could ever return to his dream of becoming a physician, but he refused to give up. Then, someone told him about the Odyssey Project.



Continuing his odyssey

In 2017, Walada applied to the UW Odyssey Project, a six-credit English literature course that helps low-income adults get a jump start at earning college degrees. Odyssey became Walada’s reentry into living his dream.

“When I learned that I got into Odyssey, I was so happy,” he says. “Odyssey gave me friends, taught me how to be confident and showed me I can defy the odds and make my dream come true. I needed Odyssey to become the person that I am today.”

Through reading, writing about and engaging in lively discussions of Emily Dickinson, Martin Luther King Jr, Walt

Whitman, Shakespeare, Lorraine Hansberry and more, Walada found his own voice and found another family in his fellow Odyssey classmates. He heard stories that sounded similar to his own, learned more about slavery and was inspired to fight against injustice and for equality in the U.S. He shared stories from his culture and home country.

“Odyssey was my family, not just school. Everyone was so welcoming, and I felt that I wasn’t alone anymore,” he says. “Odyssey really taught me about life, about ambition and about how to gain confidence to be what I want to be.”



Walada then found another opportunity to keep making progress toward his dream: the Badger Ready program.

Getting Badger ready

In 2019, Walada entered the Badger Ready program, which helps adult students make the transition to college by supporting them through tailored UW–Madison coursework. As a University Special student, and scholarship recipient, Walada, who speaks seven languages, immersed himself in an English 100 class first semester.

“I was so excited that I was finally here, I went to the classroom the night before class and picked out where I wanted to sit,” he says. “I sat there alone in the classroom and thanked God for this opportunity and this journey.”

Second semester as a Badger Ready student, Walada took Biology 130. He was devastated when he got a 50 percent on his first exam. But his Badger Ready advisor encouraged him to ask questions and visit the professor during office hours. He did—after every lecture—and came out of the class with an A.

Walada successfully completed his program requirements in three semesters and was ready to apply as a transfer student to UW–Madison for fall 2020.



"I'm on a mission here in the U.S.," he says, adding that he does see the injustice in America and vows to work against it. "This is a great country, and if I have an opportunity, I will take it. I want to give something back to this country, to Africa, to the world."

Closer to a dream come true

As a newly admitted transfer student amid an unstable time, Walada is now an undergraduate majoring in biochemistry with a pre-health focus.

"I am ready," he says, adding that he's been studying all summer to prepare for the classes he is taking this fall. "I can't believe this dream is coming true."

After his undergraduate studies, Walada wants to attend UW–Madison' School of Medicine and Public Health to study cardiology.

Where does he see himself in another 20 years? His dreams remain big and judging by his path so far, anything is possible: "I hope to help my country make changes to the medical system, maybe I would help other communities around the world, too, through Doctors without Borders."

In the meantime, Walada plans to enjoy his time at UW–Madison, getting involved in a pre-health group, social justice organizations and with the Black community. He wants to relish his achievements, continue to work hard and pay it forward.

"You cannot understand how thrilled that I am to be a student here," he says. "My advice to people fighting for their dreams is believe in yourself. Seize opportunities. Fight for your moment because it is going to come for you."

