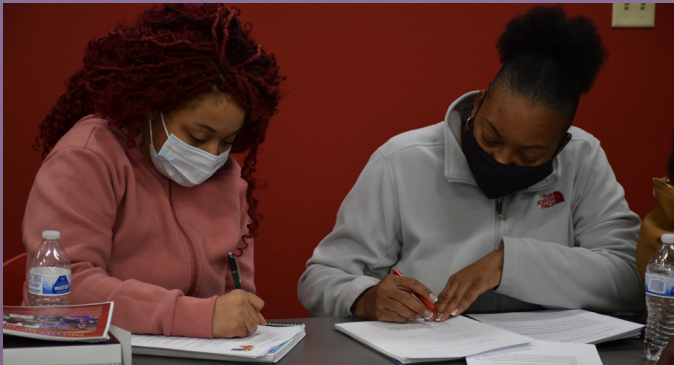


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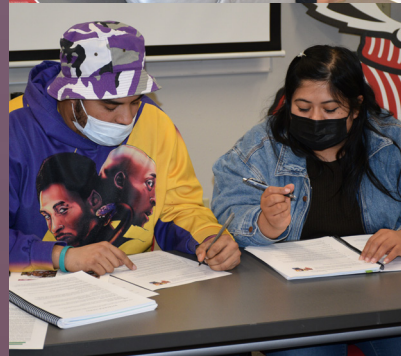
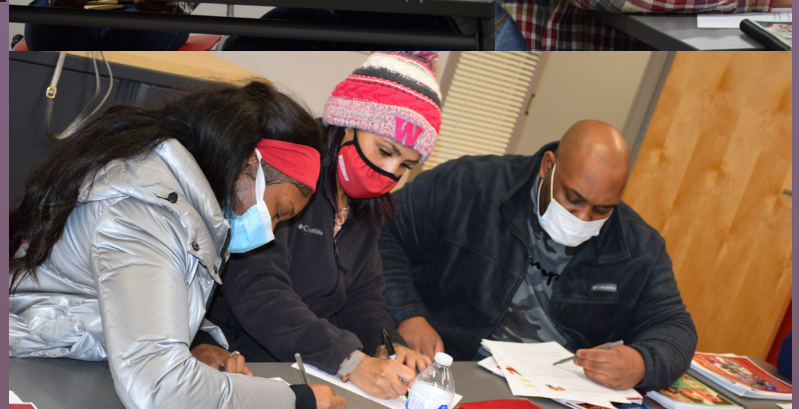
ORACLE

MUSINGS, METAPHORS, AND MOMENTS



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ENCOUNTERING PREJUDICE

prejudice: an unfair feeling of dislike for a person or group because of race, sex, religion, etc.; a preconceived, irrational judgment or opinion (pre-judging)

Odyssey students wrote about a time they experienced, witnessed, or practiced prejudice.



We had just finished grocery shopping but, ironically, we were starving. Fortunately, the parking lot we were sitting in was surrounded with prospects to eat from. Immediately, my eccentric brother settled on the café adjacent to where we parked.

Not my first choice to eat, but I was starving and these sentiments were echoed when my brother's girlfriend yelled, "Hurry up!" This seemed to galvanize us, so my brother and I proceeded to walk up to the café entrance. As we did so, I noticed a white lady with a name tag hurriedly jump out of her seat as she noticed us and rush to the door. She made it to the door a second before we did and promptly said, "The store is closed." We felt like idiots for not noticing the sign on the door that said closed. As we turned around and walked several feet away from the store, we noticed two groups of people walk past us, headed for the same café! We turned around to tell them it was closed to save them some time, but we were horrified when one of the people in the group opened the door and everyone walked in.

With disbelieving faces, my brother and I walked up to the café door, and it seemed like we saw the store clearly for the first time. For one, there was no "closed" sign on the door nor anywhere else. Secondly, there were people now entering and leaving the café as we watched. The café was open, yet my brother and I were cut off. Rage filled both of us, but we trusted our better judgment and walked away. Besides, McDonald's was right around the corner... and they served everybody. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

In 2014 while working at Panera Bread, I had a manager who would always make my work day



difficult. I felt as though I would be the only one performing multiple job duties while others watched. Although I showed them that I could multi-task and get things done in a timely manner, I felt as though I was being treated as a slave. I was

the only African American girl working the early morning shift, and I always overworked myself, but I felt like I accomplished a lot and learned about how people treat African Americans versus Caucasians and people from other races.

I experienced prejudice multiple times in my life, but I am still standing strong today as a Black woman. I refuse to let anyone judge me or bring me down. You can't control the way some people are. I just have to keep being the best me and NEVER GIVE UP!! I was never the type to play parts in moments of prejudice because who am I to judge anyone? I just like to love and accept people for who they are, no matter their background or race!! **(Amanda Bell)**



Nighttime driving with my best friend, a little intoxicated, but not enough where we are not in control. My friend is driving and I'm in the passenger seat relaxing; he sparks up a cigarette and speeds up from 30 mph to about 45 mph. I notice the shift in

speed, and I look at him and tell him to slow down, there is no need to speed. He does not listen. As we are passing the bend going into Middleton, I look to the right, and there is a cop posted in the lot. My friend does not see the cop and maintains his fast speed, which now is about 50 mph; the speed limit on the street is 30 mph. Instantly, the



cop flashes his light as we pass him and pulls out to follow us. My friend panics and throws out a joint we had just rolled up and hit a few times. Scared, he pulls over into a parking lot and sits there, afraid that he might be going to jail tonight. He was speeding, and we are under the influence of both alcohol and weed.

The cop comes to the car, asks for my friend's license and registration, and asks my friend why he was speeding. My friend gives him his information and tells the cop he was speeding because he was on his way to drop off baby supplies to the mother of his child because his baby was sick. As I am sitting there in the passenger seat, the cop's partner is questioning me about the smell of weed and asks me if there are any drug-related items or product in the car. I tell him we have a small amount of weed on us and I have a pipe, which I use to hit the weed. The cop takes the pipe from my hand then turns and asks me, "Is this a crack pipe?" After I told the cop the pipe was used for weed, is he automatically going to assume I smoke crack?

I felt ashamed and angered and told him, "I just told you—it's for weed." After they told me they must take me to their car and place me in handcuffs so they can search the car, I asked, "Am I in trouble? I am the passenger, I did nothing wrong, so why must I be placed in handcuffs and put in the car?" They told me it's for their safety. I felt

angered beyond belief that I am subjected to being placed in handcuffs and put in the back of a police car for the first time.

After the cops searched the car and found everything they needed to find, they gave my friend a field sobriety test, which he passed even though he should have failed, and they did not give him a breathalyzer test, which he would have failed. They told us to sit in the car and wait. After seeing they took all my stuff and left my friend's weed pen in the middle console, I felt annoyed because all my stuff was taken, but my friend, who was driving, had his stuff left alone. [I am mixed; my friend is white.] The cop came back to the door and told my friend he was going to be given a warning and to slow down, but he would not be receiving a ticket. I felt angered and annoyed a little because I felt if I was driving the car, the situation would have been totally different. **(Brandyn Bess)**



I witnessed prejudice, or prejudging, during a court proceeding. I accompanied my niece, who is black, to court for an eviction. She was roommates with a friend who happened to be white. The prosecutor came out of the courtroom where everyone was sitting and asked the white roommate to come into the courtroom. The white roommate followed the lady into the court room. My niece and the roommate were both listed on the summons.

The roommate left the courtroom about five minutes later and left the court building. My niece went up to the lady who came out of the court room and got the roommate. "Why didn't anyone come get me?" she asked. The lady wouldn't even answer. My niece continued to ask her questions about why no one came and got her, and the lady went and told the security that my niece was being disruptive. Security escorted my niece from the building. My niece also had a judgment against her that she showed up to fight but was not granted the ability to fight because she was looked over. **(Ericka Booe)**



I remember back in 2010, my eighth-grade year, we were going on a field trip that morning. It was the beginning of the year. We did this trip every year in middle school. Where we were going was downtown Madison, and we had to catch the bus, the #11. So we caught the bus downtown and stopped by a few stores on the way to the museum.

One of the stores we stopped by was a music store, but not any music store: it was a punk, rock, and metal store. I'm just looking around, minding my own business, and a classmate came up to me and said, "This is not your type of store, and you should leave." Now mind, this guy and I never had a problem. I was confused and upset, but I never said anything to anyone, not to the teacher or my friends. I just kept it to myself. **(Jermaine Booe)**



On April 4th, 2018, my son's life changed forever. He was abused by the man who was supposed to protect him, his father. Off back then, everyone assumed I was a horrible mother because I should have seen signs of abuse, although Jamarion's father never

once laid a hand on him in front of me, or better yet on me! We also had to see Jamarion's primary care doctor in clinic! I had an NFP nurse and a Rise nurse coming inside the household almost weekly. None of the three had seen any signs of abuse. They'd seen a happy growing healthy baby boy. They also assumed I had something to do with what happened although I was at work.

Everyone came up to the hospital not to support or be there, but to get information and spread it on social media. Jamarion was on a breathing machine because he was in a medically-induced coma because of a brain bleed; for days, the doctors played with the machine to see what he could and couldn't tolerate. Everyone heard I was taking him off the breathing machine to kill him, not at all knowing that Jamarion had been off the

machine for 10+ hours and wasn't showing any signs of decline, so at that point I felt it was up to him. That's not me killing him because killing him would be not feeding him like they were trying to do when we took the breathing machine out. Because Jamarion's brain wasn't telling him to eat, they decided to tell me that means he doesn't need to eat, basically making it seem like I would be force-feeding him. Social media judges you off anything without inside information from someone it happened to. Imagine a headline saying "6-month-old abused by father." Without a doubt, people are going to say, where was the mother? Why wasn't she there? How didn't she know? They forget that that child was with his parent, the other adult who was supposed to take care of him. **(Capri Booker)**



One time, I was shopping in Old Navy with two of my friends. One of the workers followed us around for about five minutes and then asked us to leave, saying we took a jacket from their store a couple days ago. We laughed because my friend and I hadn't been shopping in months. I reminded her it wasn't us; she countered to say if we didn't leave, she would call the police. It made me so angry inside. Was she saying this because we were black, or did she really think we were the girls that took the jacket? I left and promised myself to never, ever shop at that store again. **(Kayanna Branch)**



My cousin and I were walking to the store and were crossing the street. A pick-up truck with big tires drove in front of us, and a white guy leaned out and yelled, "Go back home, N@*@@*!!" We were shocked. I was scared because we were in the street by

ourselves, alone, not knowing if he was going to come back. We couldn't believe it. I was in Marion, Indiana at the time. I will always remember what happened, how hurtful it was, and how it made me feel. **(Katrina Collins)**



Shortly after I moved back to Wisconsin, I moved to Brooklyn—a very small town about five minutes from Oregon, which I now realize was one of the worst decisions coming back. At the time, I was working at the casino in Madison, so on my drive home I would drive

through Oregon to get to Brooklyn instead of taking the terrifying, poorly lit backroads that I took in the daytime. I never fully felt welcome driving through it, but I figured it wouldn't be such a big deal. I stopped at the gas station to get gas, mainly because I didn't notice prior to leaving Madison that my gas light was on and I always hate driving in the winter like that.

I leave the gas station and I have a bad feeling in my gut. Less than a minute later, I am pulled over—it's like the car came out of nowhere. Immediately, I am gathering my documents for the officer, but to my surprise the officer's first concern was not whether I was a licensed driver.

"What are you doing around here?" was the question I heard leave the officer's mouth. "I'm on my way home. I work in Madison and I stay in Brooklyn," I say. I also begin to ask him why I had been pulled over and he says, "One of your headlights is out." Now I begin to get frustrated; one, because I knew for a fact that the officer was lying—I had just gotten gas, I would have noticed one light being out, it's almost midnight. I then proceed to ask him if I can step out so he can point out the light he was talking about. He simply responds, "For my safety, it's best if you remain in your vehicle." And... "You say you live in Brooklyn? I'll let you off with a warning if you promise you're headed straight home." And soon after, he walks away. Not once did he ask for my license, registration, or proof of insurance. After he leaves, I pull off to a nearby street to examine my car, and there was nothing wrong with the lights at all. I'm thankful I can go home without a ticket (even though he had no reason for bothering me), but I'm also mad that I'm always seen as a "threat" just because of the color of my skin. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**



In 2017, I was working at a facility that needed help in housekeeping badly. When I got hired, there were only two cleaning staff members, so I made the third for a fifty-bed hospital. Upon hire, I was told if my performance was good, the manager position could be

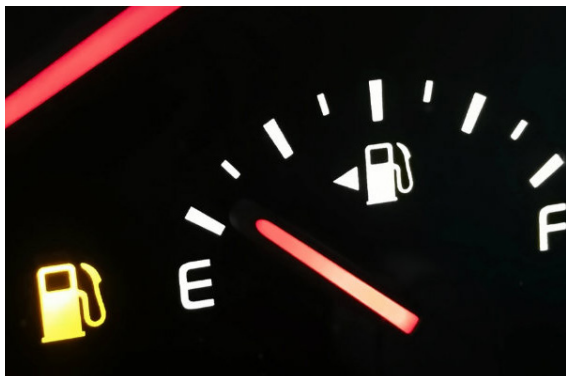
discussed after my probation period. Also, there was no housekeeping manager. The facility went from receiving a large number of complaints to under ten, and those few were about small things that would not be an issue if we had more staff.

Upon the arrival of my 90-day review, I received praise from nurses, doctors, and other staff on how hard I cleaned around the facility. I asked about the manager position. I was given the run around. We still did not have a manager, even though I was doing all the duties in the role, such as ordering and scheduling, I had the experience but lacked the college degree and skin color.

This continued for another few months. We finally got a few temp workers from a company, but I still ended up working overtime on days off and staying longer shifts, all while I kept asking and had recommendation letters from staff. They ended up hiring a white male with a degree, with no experience in housekeeping or cleaning knowledge. I had to train him in making beds, ordering cleaning supplies and linen. I never really felt more upset. He ended up being lazy. He would just sit in the office listening to sports radio.

My attitude changed towards the higher ups and whole HR staff. I slowly started separating myself, not going above and beyond. If staff throughout the facility needed something, I would tell them to

tell Brian and where they could find him. I stayed for about two months after he was hired and left because I wasn't the right choice due to a piece of unique paper and my skin not being white, not because I did not have the skills or knowledge. **(Ontario Frazier)**





When I was younger and I just arrived to the USA, I remember I wanted to be friends with a group of American girls. I remember I wanted to play at the playground, and I remember clearly that they didn't want to touch me for a high five, speak to me, or even look at

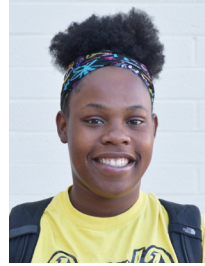
me. I know my English was not the best, but I know my hand was not dirty and I didn't look weird. My head and my stomach felt hurt, like someone knocked my head and punched my stomach so hard. I remember I wanted the ground to swallow me so I didn't have to be there with them again.

(Errendira Giron Cruz)



My first serving job I encountered a lot of prejudice. There would be times where I would be serving with seven or eight girls, mostly white. I was the only minority besides a few cooks. I would witness

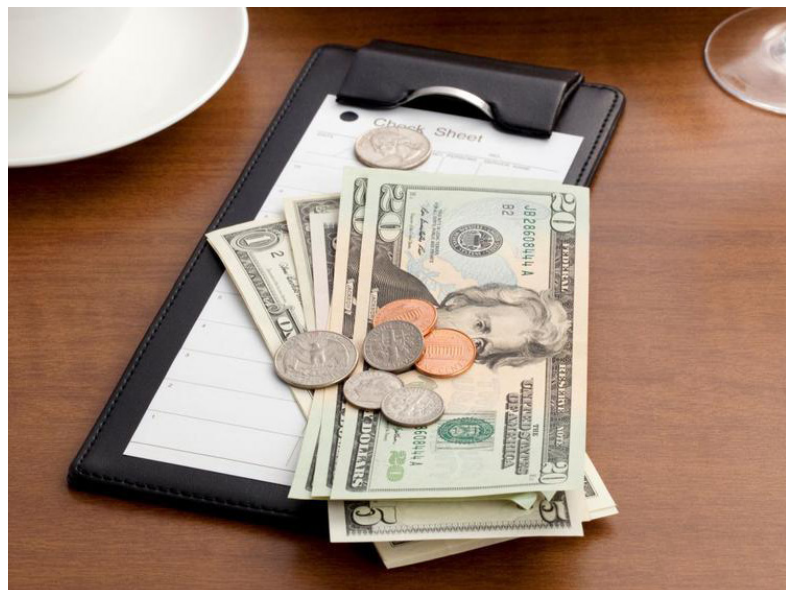
the servers seeing people that weren't white, and they would refuse to take them, simply because they thought they wouldn't tip. I took all the tables I could get, and more often than not, the tables they didn't want were my best tips of the night. Never judge a book by its cover... looks can be deceiving. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**



It was the middle of my sophomore year of high school. I was doing great in the classes I took in the first semester and needed to get myself focused on school, so I decided to push myself harder and apply for AP English. I wasn't just a child who focused on school 100% of the time. It was mid-January and I already had 6 suspensions, 15 absences and over 3 dozen tardies.

On my first day of AP English, I was excited more than ever at the fact of pushing myself harder. That all changed when my AP English teacher said, "Talaisha Goodman." As I looked back, he waved for me to join him in the hallway. I was then asked, "Are you sure you're in the right class? Can I see your schedule?" After showing him my newly updated schedule, I pointed to "Talaisha Goodwan," the name that stood out from the beginning because there was a big black circle around it with a question mark next to it.

I was welcomed with a smirk. As class went on, he stated in front of the entire class, "I hope you can stay caught up, Ms. Goodwan, I don't see you in class often." The entire class turned towards me and glanced with suspicion. Many continued that same glance throughout the course. I completed my AP English course, passing with a high C. To me that's a proud moment. **(Talaisha Goodwan)**





I experienced prejudice when I was in school. I was judged by my skin color by my own race. When it was Black History Month, I was not allowed to get angry about any racial injustice. I was called an Oreo. Often my peers would say, “what are you complaining for? Ain’t you

half white?” I would stand up to talk about my book report on Martin Luther King. Before I said anything, my classmate would laugh and say, “why are you complaining? You were a house N***** while I [the one bullying me] was the one out there on the field.” When I would walk down the hall, I had long black hair with a relaxer, of course. The girls’ boyfriends would look and would call me names like “mulatto! Mutt!” I would yell, “My parents are black! Leave me alone!” . . .

Another encounter with prejudice was at the end of 2020. There were a lot of white cops killing black, innocent, unarmed people, so there were marches going on everywhere. I took my daughter downtown. It was a peaceful march. When it turned dark, the police used tear gas and beat innocent bystanders. By then, I was at home holding onto my phone, watching Facebook live, praying that change was coming. I was happy we left before we were another statistic, but I was disappointed because the souls of the dead victims haunted me in my sleep. It wasn’t like a ghost. It was me in the dream bleeding out on the ground, screaming, crying, wondering what I did wrong. **(Cinderria Harwell)**



I remember going over hair types in my sixth-grade science class. Why this was a part of the curriculum, I don’t know. However, they went to straight and orange; however, when we got to black hair, they described it as “coarse hair.” Not only could I think of a million more positive ways

to describe our hair, but a girl pointed to my hair. For the remainder of class, it turned into a petting zoo with my hair—unsolicited, at that! That was the strangest thing I’ve ever experienced in public school, especially coming from predominantly black schools, to now being the only black girl in class! It was very inappropriate! **(Zaria Hunter)**



It was a cold spring afternoon. The wet concrete could be smelled in the air. It was the spring of 2016. President Obama was preparing to leave office. I was sitting cozily in my parents’ house, watching the news on my phone. At this time, there was still a lot of hope. I remember

seeing many of the candidates’ faces and they reminded me of my elementary school, filled with diversity. Unfortunately, one voice boomed above all others--a voice that did not echo kind words; one that echoed hate and messaging reminiscent of a late Confederate. Not only was it hateful, but it was provocative. I remember thinking to myself, how can someone that educated and that wealthy say such ignorant statements? To not paraphrase, this is what came out of his mouth- verbatim- “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with them. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.” What I find stranger still is that statements like these became commonplace, became the norm. I remember being so appalled by these statements and almost heaving a sigh of relief because at that moment I thought, nobody is going to want to elect this lunatic. Wherever their ideologies lie, they aren’t going to want to elect someone who speaks like this. To my dismay, this was the exact opposite reaction. His inflammatory comments somehow made people think they had permission now to speak that way in public. I went from experiencing and hearing statements like these as a rarity to not even batting an eye because I became so accustomed to it. **(Yael Jimenez)**





Prejudice comes in all shapes and sizes, ages, grades, cultures, and sex. Prejudice is everywhere: work, home, school, the grocery store—everywhere. Sometimes you may not know who is prejudiced.

Someone can be prejudiced and not know it.

I was at Hobby Lobby. I was shopping for t-shirts and items to start my own t-shirt business. I wanted to do a dry run on some cheap shirts and supplies at Hobby Lobby. I walked in behind a white lady. She was greeted and I wasn't, but it was okay. I kept going to look for items I wanted. I got a cart and filled it up. I guess I had too much stuff because one of the workers started following me around the store. She asked if I needed help; I said no and kept walking. She kept following me until I made it to the cashier. I asked the cashier why she was following me. She walked away. I asked her why she was following. I don't have to steal. She claimed that wasn't it. I paid for my stuff and never went back again. **(Crystal Johnson)**



When I was in my freshman year of high school, I was with a group during the lunch period, in our little circle, just talking about our days. As laughter filled our circle, I felt an overwhelming, gloomy stare across the room. I looked over my friend to notice two police

officers staring at me. We made eye contact, and the other officer looked at me, whispering, "That's her." They then proceeded to come over and grab me by the arm, saying that they insisted on talking to me. I asked if something was wrong and before I knew it, I was being thrown in a chair and asked this question: "What were you and Jouon doing Saturday with the water bottles and condoms?"

I had a look of confusion on my face because I never went to the store without my grandma. On Saturday, I was at home watching T.V. while working on my homework. I told them that I had no idea what they were talking about, but the officer



proceeded to say that she had me on camera. I told her I had no clue what's going on, and she proceeded to say, "Don't act dumb, Ariana, we have you on camera." "Ariana?! That's not my name. My name is Helena." I told them it was all a misunderstanding, but the police officer had her mind set it was me. She thought I was a girl who had gone into Target and stole. The whole time she called me a liar and said I was going to jail. The only thing that saved me was my school ID and my grandma's word. But in the end, as soon as everything was over, she still told me "I have you on camera." **(Helena Lee)**



It was about 4:30 PM one afternoon when I was driving home from work. I decided that I wanted to pull over and get some fresh air. I pulled into the Badger Middle School parking lot, got out, and walked to the front of my car. It was a nice summer day and

the sun was shining on my face. As I stood there, I watched the traffic pass by. It was a busy time of the day. As I looked across the park area, a grey compact car was driving by. A man in the passenger seat of this car was starting to yell things out the window. At first glance, I didn't recognize who he was yelling at. Then, before I could recollect what was really happening, I heard, "You pathetic nasty bitch." The man was so aggressive and adamant in making me feel belittled.

I tried not to take it personally. During that time, it was when the election had been finalized, and there was so much animosity in the air. It was one of the many times where I felt the coldness that contrast propels. **(Michelle Mack)**



The first example I can think of is when I worked at a nursing home and came across a man named Terry. I think going in, I didn't expect to connect with anyone there the way we did. I assumed he was just old and grumpy. He was mean and everyone warned

you about him before you encountered him. Based off that, I initially didn't connect with him, not on purpose, but just based on what I heard about him.

One day, his wife came to eat dinner with him and before she left, we started talking. It came out that he was a doctor, a brain surgeon at that! It was so crazy to me because this obviously super smart man had a lot I didn't know about him, nor had previously tried to know. After she left, I started reading his "About My Life" binder and I was amazed! I couldn't wait to ask him questions.

(Mariam Maiga)



I witnessed prejudice in the town of Mount Horeb when my son was jumped on by a group of white men at a town fair. His ribs were bruised and he was badly hurt. They called him names. I thought it was okay to let my son go to a town fair with friends at

the age of twelve. I was wrong.

(Mashell McCarter)



When trying to rent a place, I met a prospective landlord. Because I was running very late, to ensure I'd be on time, I didn't get dressed up and instead pulled up wearing grey sweats and a comfortable pullover hoodie.

The landlord seemed to think I had criminal plans for his apartment. After it was over, I told the landlord I had to travel to a book release. This led to me revealing I was many times published, and there was a complete change in the landlord's demeanor. Now she saw me as an asset and not a threat, regardless of the attire I had on.

Another time I experienced prejudice was at Beloit Library when they had a seminar for local authors. I heard about it from a friend of mine whose dad worked at the library. I was offended, but I still wanted to represent. I made a few calls and was added.

When the seminar begins, I show up to the library and make my way to the room. We are to mingle and set up our books. Stepping in the room, I'm the only black guy. Cool. The other writers are cool but they keep referring to my books as "urban novels." The way they referred to them was as if they were second class books. I felt like they thought I was the one and only black guy that was smart, and it made me feel like a token.

(Reginald Moore)





My two sisters and I were at Walmart doing some shopping. While we were shopping, we noticed one of the workers was kind of following us. We didn't think too much of it so we kept shopping. We went to a different part of the store and noticed the same worker. By this time, it was very obvious that she was following us. We then asked her if there was a problem and why she was again where we were. She said she was just doing her job. We asked her if it's her job to follow people around the store. She said she wasn't following us, but we definitely felt like she was because we'd seen her watching us like we were going to steal things out of the store. It was the most uncomfortable feeling ever. It was like we were put on the spot for no reason at

Another example was from about five years ago. I was at work and we were having a BBQ. Everything was great until a disagreement occurred and one of my co-workers told me that I needed to go back to Africa. I asked her, "How can I go back to a place I've never been to before?" She told me, "You know exactly what I mean." Since I was in charge, I had to write her up because at that moment, I didn't know how to act or react to what was just told to me. I've never experienced any such thing before, and she was dead wrong for what she said.

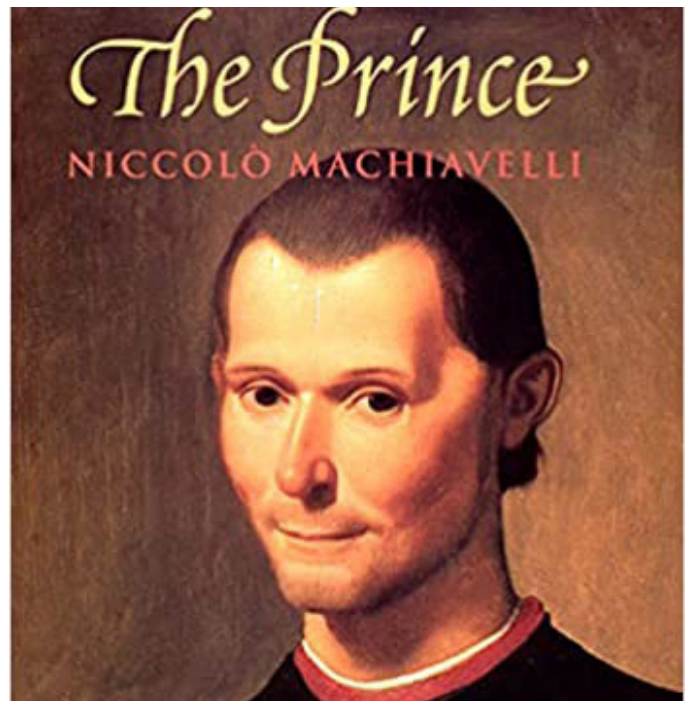
(LaRonda Morris)



When I was in tenth grade, I was kicked out of history class. I was kicked out of class for knowing something. I was kicked out of class for knowing the right answer. I was kicked out of class because I was stereotyped because I was the only black kid in class. My teacher did

not expect me to know the answer. That made her mad for some reason that I knew the answer.

She asked, "What was the name of the book about power and how to keep it?" The whole class looked around clueless; no one knew the answer. I raised my hand. My teacher looked past me twice as she scanned the room for someone else to answer. "OK, Will, since you are the only one with your hand up,



you can try to answer this," she said sarcastically.

"Okay," I said. "It's called *The Prince* by Machiavelli." She paused for a second.

"Yes, that's actually correct. How did you know that?"

"I read it. I do know how to read, just in case you didn't know," I said back.

"Remove yourself from my class. Your attitude will not be tolerated."

I left the class and was kicked out. I was kicked out for knowing the right answer. I had to retake the class in summer school.

Was I not supposed to know the answer?
(Will Nunn)



We all know racism. There isn't just one specific account I can take you to. But we all know it, sense it, see it. Some of us choose the "sweep under the rug" angle. Some don't know. Some don't want to know. The best part is we have ALL been prejudiced, whether we know it or

not. **(Cylinthia Olle)**



When I was applying for colleges during my senior year of high school, I called the UW-Eau Claire office of financial aid looking for some help filling out the FAFSA. The form asked for my parents' social security number, a privilege they do not have on account of their immigration status. The lady on the other side heard my predicament, immediately in her mind saw the word "illegal" flashing in urgent, bright red, and responded, "I don't think you qualify for financial aid."

I took a deep breath as my blood began to boil. I calmly thanked the lady for her time and hung up.
(Benji Ramirez Gomez)



I remember some time ago, it was a beautiful summer day. My grandmother and I were sitting on her top porch. We talked about life events and, all of a sudden, she paused and looked at me with a serious look in her eyes and said that my cousin was in jail. As I sat there in shock, still lost in the pause in between us after the horrible news, I asked her why he was in jail. She said his mother said he was racially profiled. The only thing I hoped in my mind and heart was that they let him go and realize that they have the wrong person. After all, my cousin was innocent.
(Kimari Rogers)



A time when I encountered and witnessed a prejudice was when I was working as a server in a restaurant. I was serving the family; I was doing my job, bringing them water and the food. After that, my job requires that I ask them if they need or if I can bring something else. I did it about three times. After that, my manager told me, "Don't spend so much time at that table. They're not gonna leave any tip, look at them."
(Jessica Saldana Ortega)

Recently, my boyfriend and I walked in a bar that we felt would be nice and low key. We walked in and



noticed that almost everyone was blatantly staring at us. We looked around and also noticed that no one was our skin color. Trying not to assume, we ordered a drink. I asked the bartender what a certain drink was made of and what the ingredients were, and she rudely responded, "Exactly what it sounds like."

We went ahead and finished ordering our drinks; we drank them as fast as we could (just to be nice). Then we left because the atmosphere was so uncomfortable. We both couldn't believe that there are still people and places like that, but unfortunately there are. In return, we made sure to leave tips at restaurants or outings, just to make sure we don't display the characteristics they (the prejudiced) try to box us in. **(Naquila Taylor)**



What is your race, black or white? For many years, this question has been asked on school applications, job applications, and surveys. I'm 46 years old and just a few years ago, I started seeing the choice to pick biracial, other, or the option to pick more than one race. Why did it take so long to put these options out there? Why do I have to narrow myself? I know my options have changed, but I would rather not have to even answer the question. Can't I just be human? As the one who is filling out the school application, job application, and surveys because I need to apply, does my race change the fact that I need their assistance? I do wonder when the day will come and I don't have to choose what COLOR I am. May my children be here to see the day NOBODY has to choose. **(Mechele Williams)**



FINDING PLATO'S CAVE TODAY

After reading Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" from The Republic, students described caves in their own lives.



When I look back at my life, I realize I've traveled through many caves. Some I've stayed in longer than others, but the cave that stands out as most prominent in my memory is the cave of "possibility."

During childhood and my adolescent years, I allowed people to define my concept of what's possible. The two types of people I allowed to do this were: people who came from walks of life similar to mine and shared the same experiences; and, ironically, people who were doing the very things I thought were impossible. This experience affected my ability to assimilate information in such a way that I often reinforced the very beliefs that imprisoned my perception. My desires, musings, and thirst transcended my experience, but my paradigm slayed the convictions to act upon them.

(Jonathon Adeyanju)



No one would have known because the bruises were covered with long sleeves and smiles. We were the "perfect couple." You weren't always like this. You were kind and loving. You gave me butterflies, but soon after, your words didn't match your actions. Soon "I love you" and "I miss you" turned to "f**k you" and "I hated you, I hope you die." Your words cut me deeper than you could imagine. I lost myself trying to change everything about myself.

"Bitch" became a word I got used to. I know you who are reading this are thinking, "Why stay so long?" and it's simple. It's not easy leaving after seven years. All the history, all the birthdays, holidays, all of the memories, you were like a drug, and, just like an addict, I needed rehab. My heart had withdrawals of you, but my body and mind were rehabilitating from your abuse.

To my first love, you taught me what I do and don't want in a man. **(Anonymous)**



From birth until age 30, I felt I was living in a cave. I was born and raised in Gary, IN. In my era, the city was close to being declared a ghost town. There were no jobs. No one around me graduated high school with expectations of going to

college. If you were lucky enough to graduate high school, you would be thinking of where you might get a job. The economy was in horrible shape in Gary, IN.

In 1999, I had three sons to take care of. My oldest brother was released from prison after completing eight years. He got out and saw there was still nothing good going on in Gary, so he moved to Madison, WI. His kids and their mother were living in Madison at the time, and their family had gotten back together. He slowly moved our entire family to Madison within two years, with myself and my twin being the last to move to Madison. I arrived 7/3/1999, just in time for the Rhythm and Booms event, and they just so happened to live right by the event.

I quickly got jobs and housing. I quickly lost jobs and housing. I was ready for change, but I hadn't gotten rid of the Gary, IN mentality. I needed to grow up a little more. As I accomplished and suffered, then accomplished and suffered, I also was learning. I was learning a new way of life and a new way to live, and I liked the new way. I suffered and learned from my mistakes. Those mistakes went away. I was empowered through my accomplishments. That empowerment feels so good. Moving out of my environment opened my eyes to the new way of living and made me want more for myself.

My mind was the cave; my environment was the chains. My brother and I moving out of my environment represents the escaped prisoner. What I did, learning from mistakes and choosing to educate myself in Madison, represents me "getting out of the cave." **(Ericka Booley)**



When everything went down with my son in the hospital [having been abused by his father], everyone was expecting me to want James dead or still stay engaged and forget what he did. I remind you I personally knew James and how he took care of Jamarion. I never wanted him dead based off the James I knew; I just wanted him to have to deal with what he did. I was seeing the James I knew just 12 hours before. It doesn't matter if he was a good father before; it matters that he isn't now and is no longer a father after what he did to his own flesh and blood.

As of today, though, I don't want him dead. I speak to him but only for the fact that Jamarion may one day want to speak to him and ask him questions himself. I don't want to rob my son of ever being able to ask him anything in the future. So, for a while I was still seeing James as someone who was once my best friend and an amazing father to our child, so I was stuck on that and shocked. I knew the new information was correct and understood everything, but in shock, I still had no time to process. The shadow on the cave wall was my memory of James, which wasn't true anymore, and the sun was who he became that day. **(Capri Booker)**



I think I feel like I am stuck at my job. That is my cave. I feel like I can't go anywhere else because of my age. I just put up with what the staff does. I just deal with what I am used to. I don't do change well. **(Katrina Collins)**



I have fought depression and anxiety within myself. In 2009, my best friend took his life, so after his death I was in the dark for a very long time. I drank for three years straight, seven days out of the week, 365 days a year, which only trapped me in the "cave" even more. I would wake up and take a drink of alcohol or beer before breakfast or brushing my teeth; it became my favorite thing to

do. Some days, I would drink on the job or before; life was a party. It helped me escape everything around me if something bad happened. "Oh well, I'm lit already, so it can't get any worse." I was numb.

This lasted for three years straight, up until Christmas 2011. I wake up to a sharp pain in my stomach. I cannot get out of bed or sit up. This lasts the majority of the day, just to the point when I'm in such a great amount of pain that I decide to be taken to Meriter Hospital ER to be examined.

I have a CT scan done; this is the day everything hit home for me. I had burned a dime-sized hole in my intestines which came from heavy drinking with nothing in my stomach, so I had to stop drinking for a short time period. It lasted for about two months, so February of 2012 I went out drinking and was in a car wreck, which was not major, but knowing my daughter was going to be born the following month broke me for the better.

That accident broke the chains and helped me escape the dark cave I was stuck in for three years prior. I had a lot to lose. If I did not change, I would have missed the birth of Lysis, my firstborn child, and my two other kids. She saved my life.



Losing my friend has still changed me because I don't get close to people or have friends. That pain of losing my friend was some pain I never want anyone to feel, but it's a part of life. I still struggle daily with everything. I want to get close with people, but something in me won't allow me. So to Plato's analogy, I'm like the people in the cave still in some ways. We are frightened by certain fears. We just need to break free and live no matter how long we are trapped in the "cave." **(Ontario Frazier)**



My cave would be that I'm always in a routine. I'm always working my two jobs and going to school. Doing all this is keeping me in the shadows and having to do the same thing over and over again. Being financially stable is what is keeping me in the

cave; not knowing when that is happening is keeping me from seeing the light. A step that I'm taking to be financially stable is by going to school and staying away from the shadows, slowly turning my head to see the light and move toward my freedom.

(Erendira Giron Cruz)



I didn't have many friends from elementary to high school. My mom would always tell us, "You don't need friends, you have siblings and family." For our birthdays it was always siblings and family and so on. In high school, my older brother was two

grades older than me, and I always tried to hang out with him because that's what we always did, but he had friends now, so things changed. I would always see the cheerleaders and hope to be one someday, but I always felt like today wasn't that day because I didn't know where to start, who to ask, or if I would even fit in with the other girls.

Sophomore year, I knew it was time to come out of my cave and get new friends. I was still too shy to even ask someone to be my partner in class, but I decided to take the step of fitting in by trying out for the cheerleading team. After making the cheerleading team, I gained more than friendships. I gained study buddies, people to have sleepovers with, even some emotional support.

I was in a cave that consisted of just siblings and family, and when I finally left my cave, I saw the reality of having friends. I learned having friends can provide you with more than companionship.

(Talaisha Goodwan)



Mild depression is an allegory of a cave in my life. I want to go places. I choose not to because of what I fear is going to happen, so I end up isolating myself, which causes my depression to get worse. As a result, I feel trapped in the house.

In order to get out of the cave of mental illness, all I have to do is take the prescribed medicine and required therapy, just like the group of people could turn their heads and realize there was a way out. We sometimes get used to making excuses. We would rather suffer than find a way out.

Socrates said that this is a learning experience. I also agree with him that If we do not educate ourselves, we will be in the same position as the prisoners. We will be trapped in our own caves. **(Cinderrria Harwell)**



I was so in love with a guy. He started off as a gentleman, kind, sweet, giving, and in the blink of an eye, he was pure evil. He wasn't physically abusive, but he was verbally abusive. I gained weight; that was an issue. Dinner wasn't done; that was an

issue. I worked and was taking care of a newborn. He belittled me so much he took away my joy, my smile, my confidence. I became insecure in my own skin. He made me distance myself from my family and friends. I ran away from him and came here to Madison to visit my best friend. He came looking for me because a mutual friend told him where I was. I got an order of protection on him, and I haven't seen him since. He had me so absorbed in his life I stopped living mine. I'm happy with the choice I made. I'm doing better interacting with my family and friends and even have new friends.

In comparison to the cave, I was so into my life with him that I didn't socialize with anybody. I was so absorbed with pleasing and taking care of him, I shut everyone out. I was scared to leave him because I thought he could get physical with me, but he didn't. He stalked me for a while, then went on with his life, I guess. I was scared to leave, but I knew I had to come out of that cave and get my life back.

(Crystal Johnson)



In my lifetime, I have experienced many times of darkness and uncertainty. Growing up, I've dealt with many forms of abuse. My mother was in an abusive marriage for several years, which impacted my two brothers and me tremendously. We suffered emotionally, physically, and mentally. I now realize the depths of this and how it has impacted me/us today.

I currently am making my way through/out of the cave of many things. I was in a toxic relationship with someone for many years and didn't know my purpose or worth. I still struggle with my dependence and emotional well-being at times. I have addictions to food and much more. Luckily, finding/seeking the truth through my church has changed my life. I've been so fortunate and blessed. There are still chains that are being broken.

I've witnessed drug/alcohol addiction through close relatives and loved ones. It is heartbreaking to see how pain can turn one away and to dependence. In the world, this is becoming more and more prevalent. People are trapped and cycling, not knowing how to break out.

I honestly feel like our world is a cave. There's so much being broadcast into our society that's not true. Social media is making people reliant on clout/fame and self-worth. Peer pressure is all around, especially for our children, who are susceptible to all. Drugs have become the cool fad of our day and age. Broken homes and families have severed and traumatized our generation. The government is more about power than it is about helping our country. People are suffering and fighting against one another just to make a life for themselves. Look through the scopes of child neglect, abuse, and sex trafficking, and then there's the oppressed and the poor, who don't have the proper resources or funds to

move forward or make change. Our world is so full of sin and brokenness, and light is the only way out. Thank God. **(Michelle Mack)**



With my own experience, I would say depression is like being in a cave. At the time, that is all you can see, and it's hard to 'turn around.' When going through depression, you believe nothing is going to get better, so what's the point of change? It's still sometimes hard to stay out of the cave. I have to focus my energy on the positive, which is like the "sunlight." **(Mariam Maiga)**



I saw the light as an employee of my last job that I excelled in but hated. When COVID hit, I was working overtime and gaining bonuses. I loved it, but the love was for the money. It felt good, but I hated the meniality of answering phones. I hated having to change my voice and act white.

I got sick of it and quit. I bet it all on myself and my writing abilities once I saw the light. I was able to "use my voice" and publish my own books. **(Reginald Moore)**





Some caves we observe are love and marriage and in life in general. We are told that you are to fall in love and go to school, graduate college and fall in love and have kids, blah blah. We live where we're supposed to live life this certain

way, or we are to love a certain person, and all this by the rule stuff. We need to just turn around and look and see what is around us and let people love who they want, or just in general let people live the life they want, so be it. **(LaRonda Morris)**



I was on my couch, sitting there, scrolling through Facebook for about an hour and a half. Initially, when I first started this experience. I had no idea that I would spend that much time lost in scrolling on Facebook. I was simply bored,

so I thought it was okay to spend some time on Facebook to distract myself. As I looked at each story, I gained satisfaction in looking at it, so that made me want to continue to the next story. Before I knew it, reading story after story after story, this time I was spending on Facebook was not the time I had in my mind because in reality time was flying by. There, I was lost like in "Plato's Allegory of the Cave," not looking at the light but only darkness because I couldn't stop looking at Facebook.

Another time, being trapped out of boredom, I decided to go online out of enjoyment to spend some time looking at cars. For the longest time, I have been desiring a new car, specifically a 2018 or newer Toyota Camry. With that being said, I would google every dealership in Madison and look for this specific car, sometimes even Milwaukee dealerships. You could only imagine how much time this took out of my day. To reiterate from Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," just as they desired what was in the darkness, I desired a new car and didn't want to pay attention to anything else at the time. . . . **(Kimari Rogers)**

I'm sitting here in a bed that's not mine, the table and chairs not mine. Nothing in this room is mine.



Plain, dull, and lifeless: nothing in this room is of any importance but the air and me. I'm only important in this space for one reason. A great reason for me to have to take up this room is for the people that own it. It brings them great joy.

Me, it brings dreadful sadness, the feeling of being in a completely empty room, a bitter chill that is constantly around. I am alone! There's nothing to bring me comfort, nothing to fill the deep loneliness I feel in my soul. Days go by and nothing around me seems to change. Day after day, night after night.

Then, one day, I'm discharged from this prison. The long lonely nights are done, the sun will shine on my face. On how I can't wait for the brightness, the warmth, and the comfort of the sun to touch my pale, frail body. While I'm outside sucking up the ambience around me, I get hit with a flood of emotions, so many. They take over my body and my mind because at this very moment, I know I get to enjoy this day with this sun because I have lived through my second heart attack.

(Mechele Williams)



Have I been in a cave? Of course I have. I am a survivor of more than thirteen attempts at suicide. Thank goodness I am out of that battle and haven't tried since I was 18 years old. I had so much grief and so much pain that I couldn't take

life. For a while I had no outlet and those same emotions turned into anger. I may be only 30 years old, but I have lived a long, heavy life. From being sexually abused to losing a child, I have had my fair share of heartache. I've had pain that many can't bear. My cave was depression; my cave was a black hole filled with so many emotions I almost cracked. I drowned myself in books trying to escape, but it didn't work. With therapy, spoken word, and lots of prayer, I climbed myself out of the broken hole that was given to me. I found my own serenity and build myself up with love and positivity. I am now free out of this long, dark cave, and I'll never go back.

(Cylinthia Ollie)



Personally, dealing with depression, anxiety, and PTSD, I feel as though I am truly stuck in a dark cave that I can't find my way out of. After losing my Grams two years ago, I felt as though a piece of my heart had left as well. She was my go-

to person. She was someone I could vent to and not feel like she was judging me by my actions, thoughts, and responses to situations as some people in my family or friends in the past had once done. I would always be judged by so many people, but they never told me how they really felt about me.

I let the anger and hurt build up for years. When I felt as though I had no one to call on or talk to, I found myself getting deeper into sadness and depression. I felt as though I was afraid to let people see me hurt or emotionally scarred, but I came to the conclusion that people will judge you anyways.

After losing my Grams, who played a mother role in my life, I was lost, but I am now slowly finding myself again. I have dealt with so much in my life. Now I am smiling more because I let toxic, unhealthy, jealous people out of my life. I got away from an abusive relationship and found AMANDA again. I got tired of being in the dark cave and not using the strength, faith, and courage that I know I have inside of me to fight for AMANDA and my KIDS. I have a purpose in life. Getting out of the dark cave, I found life in myself again. I can finally say that I see light at the end of my tunnel. I can finally say that I took back control over my life. **(Amanda Bell)**



I remember it was about around this time last year when COVID first started, and I was working at a private school. As we all know, all schools closed and went virtual. Yes, I was nervous because my job just suddenly closed down. I sat

around the house for a week or two, and finally I got a call back from my old job saying they found work for us. The job was in the same company, but

differently titled. It was a caretaker job, and I hated it. I wasn't trained right, it was an hour drive to work, and the people were not nice. So, a couple months passed by of me working there.

Have you ever felt like you were destined for greater things than the position you find yourself in now? Every day that I wake up, I find myself struggling to figure out why I am here in this position in life. I am depressed—it is a fact, but I am not a hundred percent sure of the reason. Maybe it is because of my childhood; or maybe it is because I never felt good enough for anyone. I feel like a failure even though I know I can be successful. Fear of being successful and being happy and living a better life: why would I fear that?

I wake up and play the game most of the day, knowing I should be doing other things with my time. I'm trapped in a virtual world of basketball. I can say I am not addicted, but that would be a lie.

I am happier in this other world more than I am in my actual life. Is there a problem in this? I could never be a professional athlete in real life, but in this game, I can be a 6-foot 6-inch point guard, with a shot like Stephen Curry and dribble moves like Derrick Rose. I

enjoy this so much, but I must realize it is not my reality. There is a whole life passing me by, but I am stuck in this virtual cave.

I want to be great and successful, and I want to be happy, yet I do not know if I will ever get there. Maybe I will get there if I get over my pain, my fears, my feeling of being alone in this world even



though I know I am not. Acceptance is the first step, and I am taking that step today. I know I make bad decisions and my life could be a lot better if I make the decision to make it so. So today I am going to try and adventure outside of my cave and see the world for what it truly is. **(Brandyn Bess)**



As you know, the pandemic closed everything down—school, stores, and gyms—so I did not get to work out like I was used to doing. I was upset. About to make matters worse, I was getting sick and did not

know why. I missed a few days for it. Finally, I got a doctor's appointment, but it was on a day I had to work, so I called in because I was tired of being sick.

I went to my appointment and got pretty bad news: they said I was pre-diabetic and I needed to change my diet ASAP if I want to feel better. I finally found out what was wrong, but then I learned the next week my job was taking me off the schedule. So, I was pre-diabetic and jobless for about three months during this pandemic. My girlfriend had to support us and, man, that was a long three months, but we survived and are doing a lot better. **(Jermaine Booeey)**



I dated a man for six years. He was my high school sweetheart, but he changed and began to be a man I didn't know anymore. Our breakup took me into a really depressed stage. It took me a year to finally reach out for help. Being depressed

and not reaching out for help was my cave.

After joining my church, my life took a whole 360 degree turn I was able to escape depression and find myself again. If I didn't stand up and escape that cave, I would have been stuck in the same place. I was able to break free and chase after my dreams and what makes me happy. **(Kayanna Branch)**

Today's world feels like a cave to me because of COVID. I and many people I know have had or will have to soon make a decision to lose their job or get vaccinated, and drop out of school or



get vaccinated. Now, we have to make a decision whether to get our children as young as five years old vaccinated or find another alternative for school. This feels like a cave because we are being forced to choose between what we

feel is right for our bodies and our livelihoods, our children's livelihoods. Rightfully, I feel we should always have a choice. This feels like our choice is being taken away. It makes me wonder what else can they take away?

Other caves are social media. Social media is a blessing and a curse. It allows anyone to be who they want to be, and even who they are not. We also have caves like systemic racism and need justice system reform. I personally have received systemic racism by being treated differently and not cared for properly in places like the dentist and the hospital. There are so many things that are silenced, and people are afraid to speak up because they feel this information sounds foreign to others. Some people are even unaware they are being treated differently based on the type of insurance they have. I have been blessed to have had both experiences with low-income insurance vs. private insurance, and I can vouch it is very different. The hard truth is people (specifically lower income) have been dying "legally" since the beginning of time. This is why this is important to me. There are things far worse than not getting vaccination, and that is why, in my opinion, we are in a cave. **(Naquila Taylor)**

[Editor's note: We print viewpoints in the Oracle that we don't agree with because we support our students' freedom of speech. However, when life and death are involved, we will add an editorial note like this one. The entire Odyssey team, following scientific guidelines, has chosen to be fully vaccinated and urges all Odyssey students to do the same both for their safety and that of others. We have lost too many loved ones to COVID and know the facts: vaccination provides the greatest protection from hospitalization and death. Communities of color are at higher risk and are dying disproportionately. We do not want to lose another member of our Odyssey community.]

CHANNELING FREDERICK DOUGLASS

After reading Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Odyssey students were given an editorial from the Southern Quarterly Review of 1852 claiming that slavery was God's plan, that slaves basked in the sun and were happy, and that slaves could not understand the conception of liberty. Students responded using the fiery voice and oratorical style of Frederick Douglass. Here are excerpts.

Dear Editor:



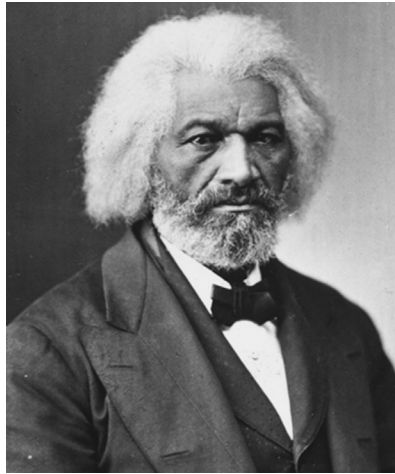
Your article possesses many points, all of which, at the least, run counterintuitive to the moral fabric that even a child

is conscious of and, at the most, deny the inalienable and innate rights conferred upon all mankind by a just God. The dissonance of what "your" religion professes and the deeds that your hands commit is manifested in the cruelest of ironies. You garb yourself in religion, yet strip naked those you beat! You speak in the name of the Almighty, yet your notions testify against Him!

The good word says all men and women were made in His image, but you have endeavored to make Him in the image of you! Tell me, how does a slave attempt to escape yet not dream of liberty? Tell me, how does a slave bask in the sunshine and is happy, yet under the moonlit sky howl in melodies of beautiful anguish and supplication?

One can only infer from your editorial that since liberty is so natural to the white man, consequently, the inverse must be true for the black man. Yet if I kept in conformity with that rationale, it would produce a blatant redundancy and slavery would be even more perverted because you would not need to implement a system to enforce what one would do naturally! Do you enslave a bird that it might fly? Or a fish that it might swim?

By seeking to marginalize our nature, you have exposed yours. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**



I saw what you wrote for the *Southern Quarterly Review*, and I am shocked and angry about what you said.

How dare you say that God has destined me to be a slave? Do you know how it feels to be controlled? Do you know the feeling of being a slave? No, you do not. You never worked in the hot or cold just to please your master. Just because I am in the sunshine does not mean that I

am happy.

Slavery chose me; I did not choose slavery. Some things in life you do not get to choose. We are all people, just not the same skin color.

God put me here on earth to make a change in society possible, to help end slavery. . . .
(Amanda Bell)



After opening the *Southern Quarterly Review* newspaper, I felt compelled to respond to your statements of the Negro's happiness through slavery and how it should not be disturbed because it is our God-given right to be enslaved. It is any man's interest

to pursue liberty no matter what color of his skin. I am sure liberty to you is like caring for your family; it's a must have. It is not my desire to be owned and beaten bloody, to experience such barbaric, brutal treatment from such religious devils as slave owners.

I have always had a desire to be free, and I feel that should be everyone's God-given right and not just

white people's. Liberty should not only belong to the white man. Liberty should belong to every man and every woman; it should be a conception so naturally belonging to everyone. Do I not bleed the same way you bleed? Do I not deserve a chance to learn to better my conditions?

A cruel task is to continue to make Negroes go through slavery as if Negroes asked to be enslaved, beaten, taken away from their surroundings and sold off, separated from their children, raped, and verbally abused. It is also a cruel task to try to convince your audience that slavery is enjoyed by Negroes and should not be interrupted. Do we not bleed the same way? Do we not both cry tears? Why do you associate God with such an evil destiny?

I have never basked in the sunshine happily. I have basked in the sunshine but was still in the dark. Because you block me from education, I will not see the sunshine for what it really is. I have to feel my way through the dark. I brought my own sunshine to my life through learning from one of my mistresses and other children on the streets. You are scared of the thought of educated Negroes and what abilities they will develop. Do you think the Negro will become educated and begin enslaving white people? Is that not a scary thought?

Christian slavery is a joke. God is goodness and slavery is evil. It is horrible how slave owners have used religion to justify slavery as the rightful position of Negroes. Slave owners are religious terrorists who should be convicted and held in the same treatment that they gave their slaves while in bondage. The same slaves they owned should now own them. Do you think Negroes would treat slave owners the same way they were treated when the owner owned the slave? Liberty to Negroes will be like honey for bees. Negroes will overcome their oppression and slave owners will be held in contempt. Once I got a taste of education there is no stopping me. This Negro is on the pursuit of liberty. **(Ericka Booe)**



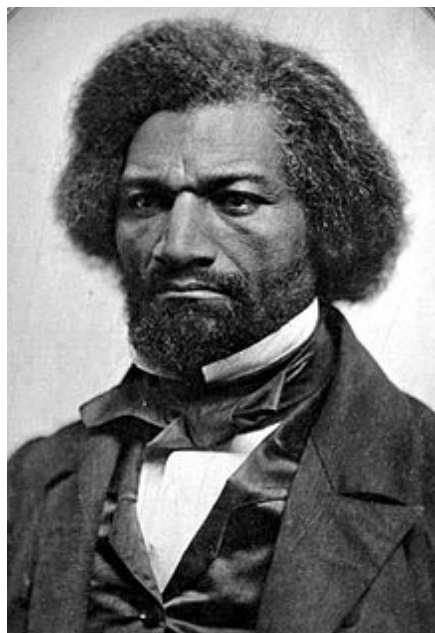
We built this country with blood, sweat, and tears. You thought I was a menace to society for breaking boundaries. We are all doing our part and making sure that people who think or share your viewpoints keep being afraid that we are superior to you and your kind. **(Ontario Frazier)**

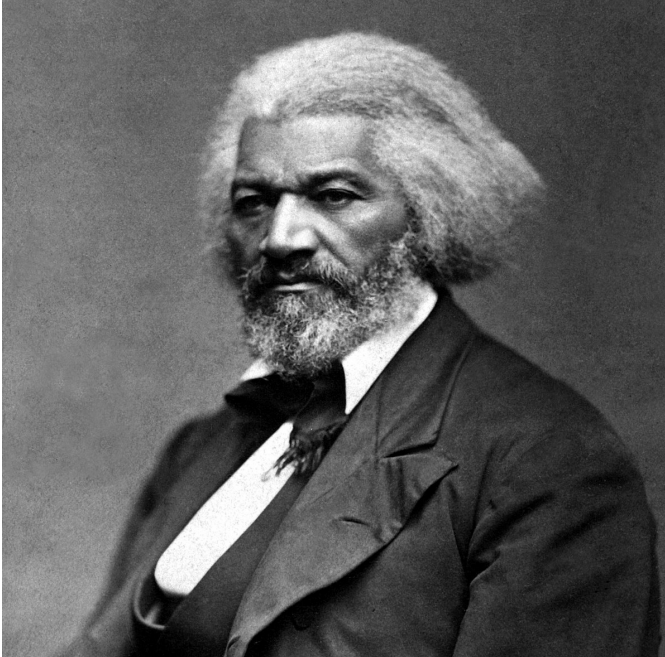


This Negro dreams about freedom, thinking that I am a bird that knows no limit. This bird understands more about what freedom means than you do. My freedom and the freedom of my people come when we know our age, when we know who our mother and father are. My freedom comes with a risk of running away to nowhere because in my heart I know that is better than that dirty bed waiting in the cave you people call home. Thinking of becoming one with the water was more of a freedom than picking up cotton outside while the sun burns our backs. Once I found out what freedom means, I almost joined that water. The freedom of our people should bring us happiness.

Were slaves happy when you brought them to your lands? Did slaves enjoy having to wake up early listening to you, owners, demanding them to wake up? Are my people happy to be sleeping

in a shack and in a bed that is not even a bed but more like a rock? Do my people like having their backs being whipped, blood running through our backs as you stare at us like we are clowns performing in a circus? Do you think I was happy when I had to witness my aunt being whipped just because she was doing something that makes her happy? Who are you people to say what makes us happy? Listen





to our music, but listen to it with your heart. You might hear beautiful and happy melodies, but if you listen closely you are going to hear sorrow and sadness in our lyrics. Should we make more music about God?

Your people claim to be Christian, but what is being Christian really about? Christians should be people who protect the less fortunate, Christians are loving people who care about everyone no matter what status they are, Christians are always giving and loving to all living creatures. You claim you are Christian but even your church, which is the house of God, supports slavery. Why does God approve of slavery? When your God and church are harming other human beings, your Christian slavery is HYPOCRISY!!! **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**



You said that "A negro left to himself does not dream of liberty." Well, I am living proof that negroes want to be free. We take out the time to privately educate ourselves to free ourselves. Learning to read, write, and spell gives us an opportunity

to show other slaves it is possible for us all to become free. We comprehend very well. You made it clear you will not be able to control us unless we are stupid and content. We do not like being slaves. We are still happy each and every day we

wake up to a brighter day, dreaming of one day being free. God did not make slavery our future, a white man did, and since our future is out of our hands, we still smile for a brighter future. God did not destine us to be slaves. He destined us to live, like you. We have had education taken away from us and were beaten for speaking up and trying to better ourselves. My aunty was beaten for doing something she thought was right. Being malnourished by our masters is just one of our problems. I was a slave but now I am free! **(Crystal Johnson)**



It seems to me that you have lost a sense of moral realism when it comes to your opinions of slavery. How is it that you deem such cruelty and the inhumane to be that of God? If God created all men to be equal, how then do you become

chosen for authority? Your cruelty is beyond that of aggressive cancer. As my fellow brothers and sisters have continued to endure the inclined suffering, your culture continues to maltreat, minimize, and diminish our rights and freedoms. From the chains of miseducation, injustice, physical brutality, and your superior idolatry, we are faced with opposition on all angles.

To bask means to find pleasure or relaxation in, so please enlighten me on how that is so that we bask in slavery? To have your right and left arms fastened behind you and your feet in the quicksand is far from that of entertainment. A mother left without her birthed child, and a child without a father, what a divine sense of power.

You continue to use Christianity in vain, insisting that it is His will, but you have a stone heart. You have come to demolish, devour, kill, and steal the glory given to us.

You throttle me with your hatred and seek to condemn me, even though I am born like you. May it be so that the dust in your eyes be polished and unfastened, like that of error. One man's wish, one man's equity, one man's eternity, all basking in truth and man's love. **(Michelle Mack)**



When speaking as an authority on a subject, would not one be better served to have themselves gone through the experience they so vivaciously describe? A white man in favor of enslaving blacks only sees it one way.

Although a lion is the undisputed king of the jungle, is he not a cat still? Even so, does he relate to the common house cat? Not by far.

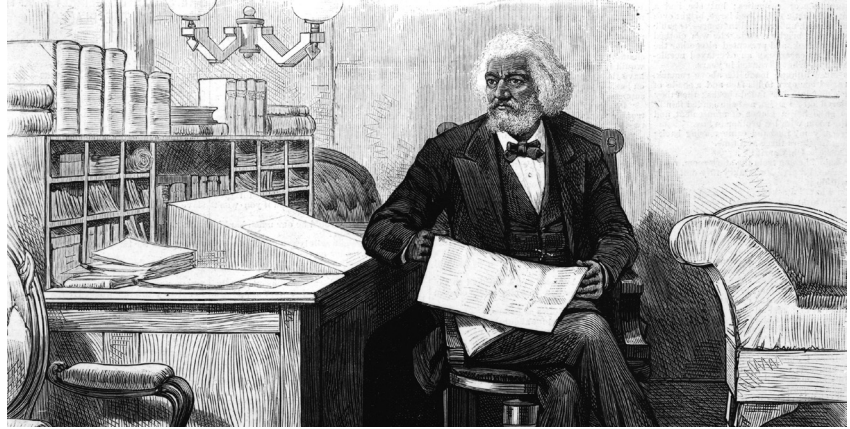
If you were to ask a Negro if he dreams of liberty, he may convince you that he does not. This is a lie. The Negro dreams of a liberty so deep in his heart but, convinced the white man would kill him if he suspected such, he buries hope in the darkest corner of his soul, lest he be hanged for fear he would get other Negroes riled up.

Freedom to a Negro is no more than a dream, but a constant and fervent dream. Every second, every hour, every day, all a Negro dreams of is freedom and liberty, all whilst being sure to not let that thought climb from his soul and emerge as a vengeful warrior from his mouth.

Furthermore, I have never seen a Negro bask in sunshine without the fear of the overseer's lashes, and never have I seen a Negro truly happy. How can he be, when he is not even allowed to read or grow or mature or even be a man? Does not a man have these common liberties? Indeed he does!

Does not the same Bible you refer to demand to do unto others as you would have done to yourself? Just as wild animals sometimes toy with their prey, knowing that they have complete dominion over them, so does the white man to the Negro.

I speak from a place of knowing, of experience, and say that the one and only thing that a Negro is destined to is to eternally dream of freedom, a liberty he is forbidden to have. **(Reginald Moore)**



How dare you suggest the things that you did in this piece! I am here to ask you, do you know what it is like to be a slave? Have your children been ripped right from your arms, or better yet, have you needed to sneak out to see them?

To say that "God has destined him for slavery" is wrong: Jesus died for all of us, not just whites. Saying something like that is saying a saw does not cut trees. Slavery is the most cruel, stupid thing that could possibly happen. You know nothing about being a slave and barely having food, clothes, or a decent place to sleep. As a white man, you cannot relate nor speak about how we think. Slavery is really hell on earth! **(LaRonda Morris)**



The ignorance you speak baffles me. . . . You could not possibly understand the burden of a mother being pulled away from her children, hearing the cries of hunger from over worked and beat down men, women, and children, a simple mistake to forever lead to a reminder on your back. Can you imagine the sting of the whip cutting into your flesh as smooth as a knife to butter?

Having the audacity to be born with a silver spoon in your mouth along with freedom, to say "we are happy?" Just who is the "we" you are in reference to? It must be nice to say we belong a slave, when you and your ancestry ran from bondage of England, having the ability and resources to build an army and fight for your humanity. Imagine a life where you are born, whipped, and worked, and

then just death. Sounds outrageous, does it not? The disgusting lack of empathy and compassion for the next is as equivalent to sin as Judas to Christ.

That is the best part: you lie and say you are under God, when you are nothing more than a wolf in sheep's clothing. You are another Saul, condemning those with a word that is supposed to be filled with love. Slavery has been and will always be unrighteous, unjust, disgusting, and outrageous. Basic human rights are no discussion at all. This will always be a fighting problem, until all of us realize the truth of love, empathy, and togetherness. So, before you speak again, ask yourself first, could I be a slave? **(Cylinthia Ollie)**



If the Negro does not dream of liberty, why do we run away? Our dreams are a much larger reality than the conception of the white man. The Negro himself strives for something more than liberty, but dignity and integrity. Our days now are a living death.

Free slaves!! I am free to express the desire for freedom through hymns. To free ourselves spiritually and soulfully, we sing even though we are bound physically.

The white man hears hymns of sorrow, but ignores them to uphold his satisfactory, luxurious life. Is my life not more valuable than yours? Do we not have the same God? The same God who created Adam and Eve was the same God who created all men. Did the white man know what color Adam and Eve were? Does that justify our suffering because of the color of our skin? By the stripes on his or her back, Jesus' blood is on their hands. **(Kimari Rogers)**

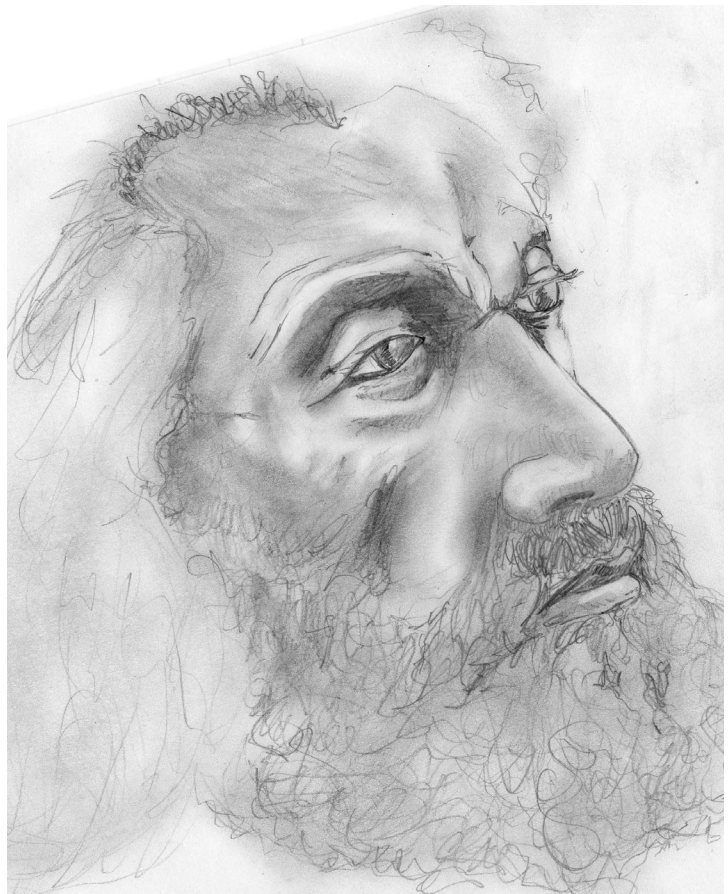


How could you ever fathom what I dream of? Have you ever been shackled and stripped away of basic human equalities? Have you been denied a mother's love? It is gracious and thoughtful of you to believe in the possibilities of

any enjoyment of being a slave. What exactly is a "Christian slave?" Does Christianity praise hateful love? Do they praise legalized kidnappers? Do they praise rape? How could the white man possibly know what God has destined until he too has been brought to his knees to face him. Freedom is the brightest sunbeam for a slave! The white man would never compare slavery to sunshine and happiness if roles were reversed and that which is first was last, and that which is last now first. Editor, you are doing yourself an injustice viewing the life as a slave with such cold warmth. When this chapter of our lives is over, only then will you see the emptiness that laid within yourself. Justice is eternal, for slaves will irrefutably have peace while slave owners should pray that God be merciful.

(Naquila Taylor)

*Sincerely,
Frederick Douglass*



Douglass Sketch by Stanley Sallay '07

SAVORING SENTENCES FROM FREDERICK DOUGLASS

From Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, students chose to analyze and respond to one sentence that stood out to them.

"I had now a new conception of my degraded condition."

This sentence illuminated the power of knowledge and how it works as a double-edged sword. It was so profound to see someone experience atrocious and heinous acts firsthand, and yet have trauma that comes from it deepened merely from learning to read. The very tool that liberated him also eviscerated him mentally and emotionally as his perspective was broadened. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

"It may be that my misery in slavery will only increase my happiness when I get free."

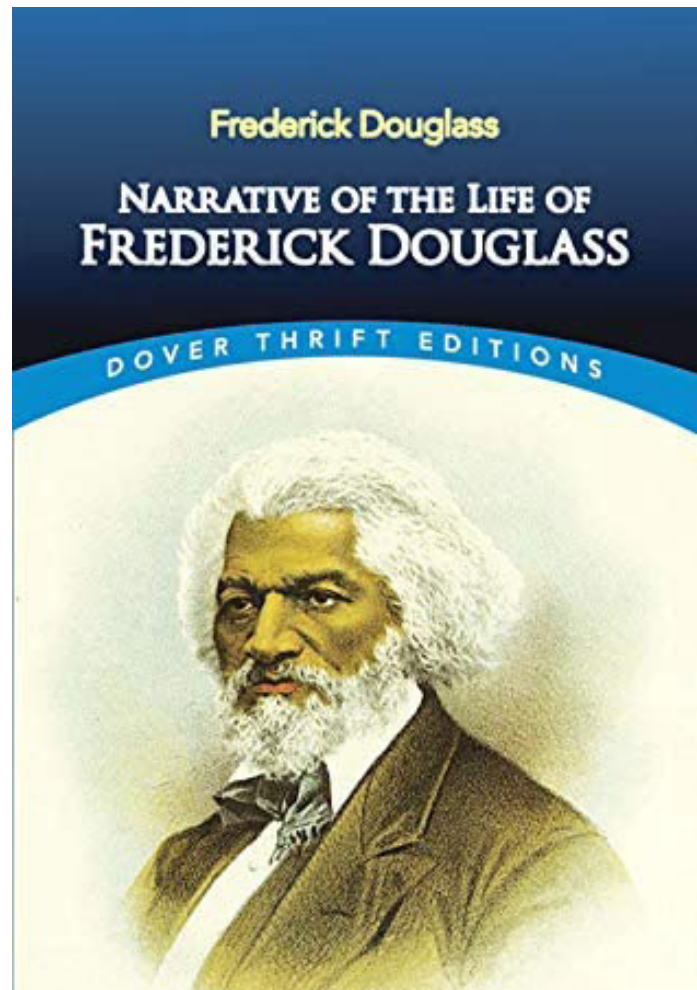
I chose this sentence because I can relate. It's an angle I usually think from. A sentence like this can be used to encourage yourself when you are down. He thought of slavery not totally being in vain—that he will gain more happiness through experiencing so much misery. The sentence serves the same purpose as the songs slaves would sing, to get through the misery and encourage yourself through thoughts of a great future out of bondage.

Douglass feels that through painful after painful experience he is earning more and more happiness when he is free.

It's important today because we must use what we must to encourage ourselves through these dark times. I believe people in prison play their memories over and over in their head to get through their bondage. They probably create great stories in their head from their memories. **(Ericka Booe)**

"Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C."

I chose this sentence because it was the start of great change in the world. This was a powerful start to that great change because it showed not all people are the same and there is some hope in the world. **(Jermaine Booe)**



“On the one hand, there stood slavery, a stern reality, glaring frightfully upon us—its robes already crimsoned with the blood of millions, and even now feasting itself greedily upon our own flesh.”

It was very difficult for me to choose just one sentence because I find this book filled with tons of persuasive writing techniques that really draw you in and paint a perfect picture that although you were not there, you could see what he is explaining. This particular sentence includes figurative language, specifically personification, as Douglass imagines “slavery” as an actual person. This sentence is so powerful to me because I can see slavery as this scary person in a hooded robe dripping with blood. It’s like an eternal beast whose lust shows Douglass a good picture of the barriers that stand in his way as he begins to strategize his liberation from slavery. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**

“Knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave.”

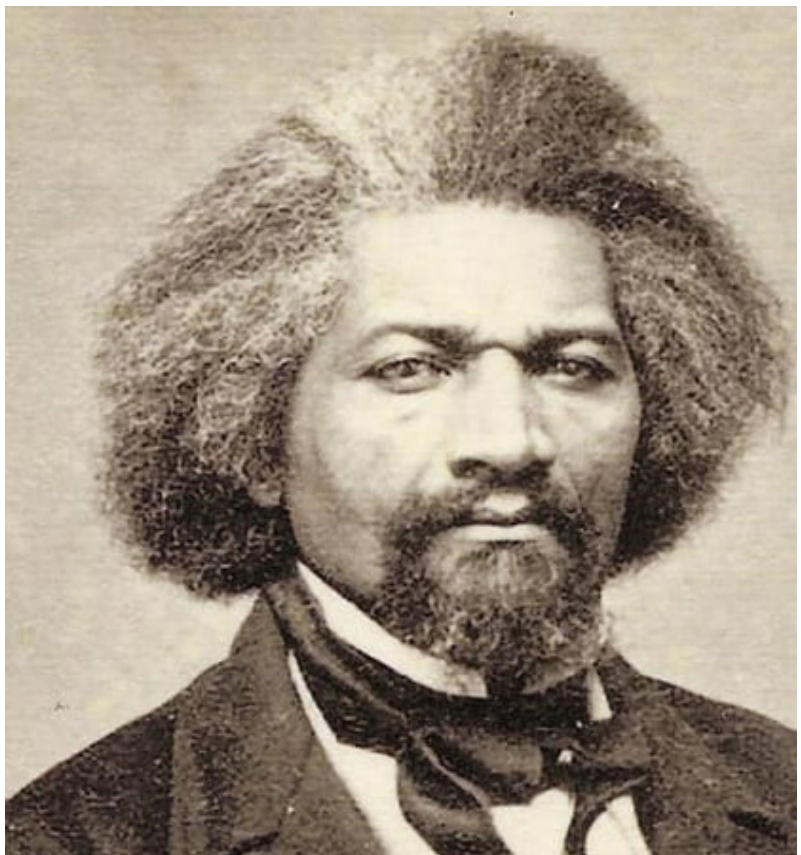
Just like today, most black men are still modern-day slaves, trapped in a situation we cannot escape without knowledge. We are stuck in violent/broken environments where you only make it by rapping, playing sports, or selling drugs, so we become a slave in one of those professions when, if we had the proper knowledge of how to conduct ourselves in business, look smarter, etc., we could break chains and barriers. If we took education more seriously, you would see more of us in powerful positions. **(Ontario Frazier)**

“It is common custom, in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part children from their mothers at a very early age.”

I chose it because of current events in our society. For example, the children in cages, why are we not hearing it in the news? Why are we not talking about it more? Why are we separating children from their families? **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

“My poor old grandmother, the devoted mother of twelve children, is left all alone, in yonder little hut, before a few dim embers. She stands—she sits—she staggers---she falls---she groans—she dies—and there are no children or grandchildren present to wipe from her wrinkled brow the cold sweat of death or to place beneath the sod her fallen remains. Will not a righteous God visit for these things?”

In the book, he talks about his grandmother watching all the masters and people around her grow. She watched them be born, she watched them grow and watched them die, and now that she’s of older age, she is basically being left to die alone, I’m assuming by a fever, given the quote “to wipe her wrinkled brow the sweat of death.” **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

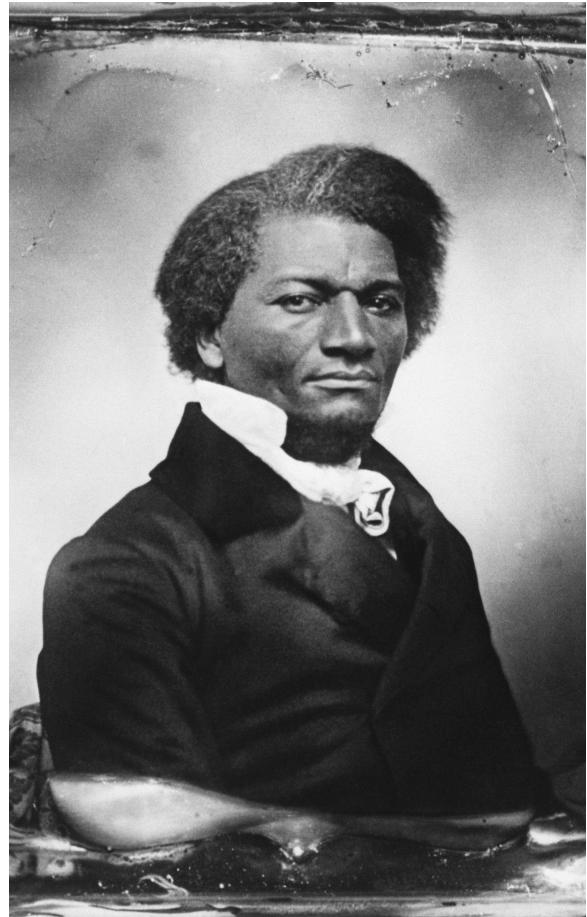


*"Learning would spoil the best n****r in the world."*

It amazed me that they thought that way. If a slave only knew how to cook, clean, and obey his/her master, then there were no problems, but once they got educated, that's when they began to speak up and learn laws and rules. I see that if they keep the slaves down, they'll just stay/be slaves forever. This can play a note in the economy today, like employees and employers. If he becomes unfit to be a slave, he becomes unmanageable and of no value to his master. **(Crystal Johnson)**

"A great many times have we poor creatures been nearly perishing with hunger, when food in abundance lay moldering in the safe and smoke house, and our pious mistress was aware of the fact, and yet that mistress and her husband would kneel every morning, and pray that God would bless them in basket and store."

I chose this sentence because I felt that it was powerful in the sense that Frederick Douglass showed how irony played out. It's sad how he expressed the fact that his master/mistress practiced religion but still allowed the slaves to faithfully starve. It was the complete opposite of how biblical reality played out. **(Michelle Mack)**



"I have seen him tie up a lame young woman and whip her with a heavy cow skin upon her naked shoulders, causing the warm red blood to drop, and in justification of the bloody deed, he would quote this passage of scripture—'He that knoweth his master's will and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.'"

Nothing and no one describes the vivid horrors of slavery like Douglass. That sentence alone shows how evil men will use religion as justification. It's horrible to use God as a way to use pain and torture. **(Reginald Moore)**

"I have often sung to drown my sorrows, but seldom to express my happiness."

I chose this particular sentence because right now, this is exactly how I am feeling. It's powerful because I can relate to this feeling. **(LaRonda Morris)**

"They would sing as a chorus, to which to many would seem unmeaning jargon, but which nevertheless were full of meaning to themselves."

I choose this particular sentence because it grasped me to understand that they were so clever and wise to sing in code. In the power of the era, slaves were viewed as ignorant, but back then the slaves' hearts were filled with sorrow and they would have to be very careful because it was a dangerous environment. **(Kimari Rogers)**

[one sentence about Mr. Severe, the overseer] "His death was regarded by the slaves as the result of a merciful providence."

It is powerful because to say one's death is a providence means the slaves felt his death was an act of protective care of God. It reminds me of the allegory and another reading (Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour") where a woman's husband died and she felt free. For me, this sentence stands out because each of these stories have similarities, mostly the yearning of wanting or needing to feel free from someone or something. To me this is powerful. **(Naquila Taylor)**

"Education and slavery were not compatible."

This is a powerful statement to me and holds so true in my life. I have been working on getting my education for 14 years and I am still working on it. When I started my road to education, I had no idea of the cost of college or how determined I would be to get it. In 2007 I made the decision to enroll at Madison Area Technical College to obtain my Associate Degree in Human Service; this is a 2-year program. At the time, I had 5 children that lived at home with me. I was on housing assistance, food stamps, and no job. Speak about poverty: I was consumed by it at this time. I thought by going to school that I would be working my way out of this situation; that was my goal. I had no clue of what the cost of college would cost me and I am not talking just financial.



I enrolled as a full-time student ready for the journey ahead of me, well, so I thought. I took out all the loans and grants that I could to pay for my schooling. This seemed like a great idea because I would not have to have a full-time job and it would allow me to spend time with my child.

The loans and grants became my only income. This seemed like the right move to make but in the long term not such a good one. . . . I felt knowledge was power and I still feel that way. I am a sponge and I learn lessons in everything. It feels like every bit of my being. It gives me a joy that I get from nothing else. That joy is slowly trying to slip away. "Education and poverty were not compatible," as I am finding out on this journey of mine. . . .

So, I say to you again, "Education and poverty were not compatible." I will not give up! I will finish my Associate, Bachelor's, and Master's degree. Poverty might still be my sidekick, but I am the leader of this journey. **(Mechele Williams)**

BECOMING METAPHORS



I am a fire. I can cook your food and keep you warm, and when you get lost, I can even provide light in the dark. But depending on how you interact with me, you can get burned. Is that a reflection of you or me? A lesson I'm willing to learn. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

I am a military warship The Kitty Hawk.

I float on the open sea riding every wave as they come to me.

I come equipped with fighter jets ready for battle.



Each fighter jet I release heads on an odyssey to win.
(Ericka Booeey)

I am a piece of fruit. You have to wash me off and get me warmed up before you take a bite. After taking a bite, you realize how sweet I really am. I'm not always the best shape. Sometimes I can go bad. After being rebuilt and replanted, I'm back to healthy, fresh, and ready to be sweet me. **(Kayanna Branch)**



I am a cat, nice and gentle until you do something to me,

and then I'm evil, going from purring to hissing, from rubbing to scratching. **(Katrina Collins)**

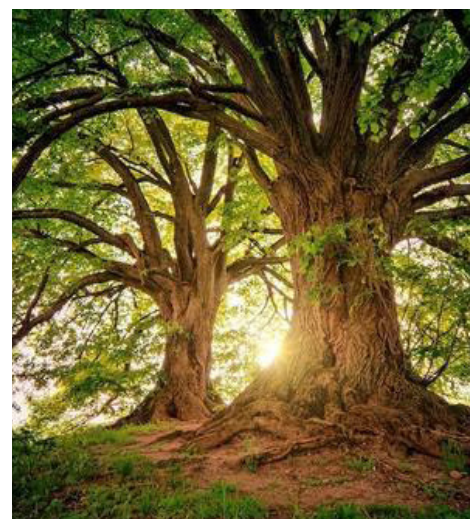
I am a great man. I used to be a boy, but now I am a man. Look in the mirror, what do you see? I see a man who goes above and beyond to see his kids smile, from the time my eyes open until I get a few hours of rest. I'm calculating, overthinking on how to get better or improve on all aspects of being a father. When I do sleep, the failures from my sperm donor haunt me and remind me

of what not to be when I wake up. Since the birth of all three of my children, I have been there 24/7, 365. Iyjah, Iyjah, and Erimos changed me for the best. I used to be a boy but now I am a man. **(Ontario Frazier)**



I am a root
Born in the mud
Arose from the dirt
Blossomed in this
Concrete jungle!
(Ontario Frazier)

I used to be a seed,
Small and quiet
But now through the seasons
I am a tree
More grounded and
Standing tall
(Erendira Giron Cruz)



I am a well mechanically engineered robot. I don't stop from dawn to dusk. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

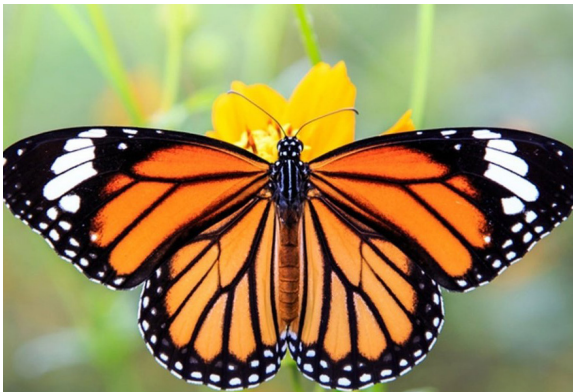


I am a sponge, absorbing as much as I can from my surroundings, always wanting to learn more and more. I release my knowledge on paper as a sponge releases its liquid, day to day, hoping to grow. **(Yael Jimenez)**

I am a trophy, to be admired on a shelf. Tall, shiny, and you'll have to hold with both hands or with a friend. **(Crystal Johnson)**



I am a child who is just trying to find my way. I'm wandering and searching day by day. Each day I am shown and taught the way of life, but yet and still, I am in a fright. From an early age, inside my mother's womb there was light, but it always felt so new. I worry that if I stumble I may fall, but I've learned it's okay, even if I crawl. **(Michelle Mack)**



I used to be a caterpillar, Fragile and shy. Now I soar, new levels I never Thought I could. I'm a butterfly. **(Mariam Maiga)**

I am a painter. I use my pen to paint scenes that are read by the people. The paper is my easel, take your time, this is

art. You're not supposed to speed through, either way, let your vision lead you. **(Reginald Moore)**



I used to be a spring chicken, but now I am an old hen. **(LaRonda Morris)**



I am like a water bottle, holding in my tears clear as day. **(Kimari Rogers)**

I am a rose
I am simply divine
The look of beauty

Yet with thorns of mine
You can only look, not touch
To protect the creation that I have inside. **(Mechele Williams)**



WOMEN WITH THE COURAGE TO WRITE

From the section on brave women writers in the Course Reader, students chose one poem that spoke to them. Most picked Maya Angelou's powerful "Still I Rise," while others responded to poems by Alice Walker, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Phillis Wheatley, Emma Lazarus, or Emily Dickinson.

MAYA ANGELOU – "Still I Rise"

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise. . . .*

I believe this poem is about standing above oppression and pain. Maya Angelou was a black woman growing up in the 1930s and 1940s at a time when women still did not have the same rights as men. She must have been through a lot of hardships during this time, yet it did not break her as a person or as a woman. She rose every day to take care of business. In the face of injustice, she overcame it. I can apply this to my life because every day I am trying to rise over my pain and failures of my past. I am trying to do better each day to overcome my fears. **(Brandyn Bess)**

What I get out of this is to never give up and to believe in yourself. She was a strong black woman. When I hear this, it reminds me of back when I was in high school. In my senior year, nobody believed I should make the basketball team, even as a senior. Of course, I was looking to prove them wrong so I worked hard all summer long to show everyone I can rise above hate, and I did deserve to be on the team. **(Jermaine Booeey)**

First, Maya Angelou is well known to me as an African American activist. In this time, there were the attempts to crush agonized African Americans, and she wasn't having it. No matter how much power you have to degrade her name, she will always reverse and rise. What's in me can't

be taken; you can try to break me down mentally and spiritually, and I will still rise because of my confidence, self-love, and determination.

It was about determination to succeed, strength, and overcoming obstacles; she would never let them bring her down with hate.

I can apply it to my own life. Everyone can it apply it in so many ways due to facing obstacles of life. With negativity from others, I am still able to move forward through it all. Everyone said I'll never be able to do anything because of everything that happened with Jamarion, but as we can see, I am still going strong and pushing forward for him. **(Capri Booker)**

I love her. For starters, her poetry is so empowering and her voice was angelic, to top it off. This specific poem talks about self-empowerment, being happy with who you are, and not caring what anyone has to say or think, and that's something people lack now. All we care about is the opinions of others, what they will think and what they will say. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**



I believe in this poem Maya Angelou is saying regardless of the things people say or do to you, you have to rise up; nobody can tell you or determine where you will make it in life but yourself. I can apply this poem to my life because as a 22-year-old mother of a one-year-old and three-year-old, I get a lot of comments such as, "You can't go to school, it will be too hard." "You won't have time to do school work with kids that young." But for myself, I am determined to have a degree under my belt, so as Maya Angelou says, "Still I rise." **(Talaisha Goodwan)**



The reason why I chose this poem was because it sounds so powerful. She was saying to me, hey, no matter what you think of me, still I'm going to rise. If you feel some type of way, I'm still going to rise. I can relate to this poem so much because I feel like no matter what, I'm going to rise. If you feel some way about me, I'm still going to rise. What I got out of the poem was to stand proud of what you do and rise. **(LaRonda Morris)**

In "Still I Rise," I feel a motivation in each sentence because this

The name of the poet is Maya Angelou. This poem means a lot to me because every day is a struggle. I always have to prove myself, so I'm inspired by the part where she says, "Does my sassiness upset you? Why are you beset with gloom? 'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells pumping in my living room." This means that she was being criticized for her beauty. They knew how powerful her voice was so they tried to silence her with negativity. I face that every day.

Another quote that struck me was, "Does my sexiness upset you? Does it come as a surprise that I dance like I've got diamonds at the meeting of my thighs?" This meant a lot. It implied that people were jealous of her. They talked about her based on her looks. They may have treated her differently because of her grace and beauty. I was also bullied by the popular kids in high school based on looks, so just like Maya Angelou, I rise. **(Cinderria Harwell)**

This poem is almost a church song for black people. If we're not familiar with any other poem, we usually, at least, are familiar with this one. This poem, in its own way, is all of our battle cries—bank discrimination, housing/zoning laws, prison and jurisdictional imbalance, poor schools, section 8, so many obstacles that we face daily, but still, here we are, prevailing and setting trends regardless.

Maya is THE prototype, and this poem is what most would call her staple poem. Classic. **(Reginald Moore)**

poem is about standing strong even if the odds are against you. It speaks power into each struggling black women, to lift your head up even if the odds are against you. I feel confidence as I read along because I can relate to some of her rhetorical questions such as "Does my haughtiness offend you? Don't you take it awful hard, 'cause I laugh like I've got gold mines diggin' in my own backyard." Growing up and even 'til this day, people have often misunderstood me or even flat out disliked me because naturally my voice projects, especially when I am out in public having a good time with my friends. I tend to laugh loud, talk loud, and not pay much attention to any of my surroundings other than my crowd and what we're focused on.

This poem sums up to me how I have learned to approach and handle these situations by asking, am I intimidating or are you just intimidated? I am free to be comfortable in my own skin, and I am not hurting anyone by just being me. People have to deal with their own demons. **(Naquila Taylor)**

I think her poem is about three things. One, that she is black. The second, that she is a woman. Third, that in her life she is overcoming so much.

Being a biracial person, I feel I can relate to her whole poem. While reading it, so many memories in my life ran through my head. I understand the looks and feelings she explains, the joy of rising up, the feeling of rejoicing in the moments. **(Mechele Williams)**

ALICE WALKER – “Women”

*They were women then
My mamma’s generation . . .
How they battered down
Doors . . .
To discover books
Desks
A place for us. . . .*

I read “Women” by Alice Walker. The meaning I took from the poem was women work hard for their family. I work hard for my family so they can do better and have more than I did. **(Katrina Collins)**

Black Women
Black Women
Black Women
I love you

She is speaking about all the women who were the backbone of everything black people are today. Without them standing behind men, my race would be lost. Thank you for paving a way for me to get an education, thank you for getting water hosed and attacked by racist police. No matter what you endured, you always find a way to adjust your tiara and keep it pushing. Without you, black families would be no more. Despite you getting the short straw in life and being unappreciated, they would have us in chains. Everything in this poem is what Black Women have done since the day they are born on this earth. **(Ontario Frazier)**



She’s writing to her mom’s generation--aunties, cousins, women that are the age of her mom. She talks about how strong their voices were, and that they were fighters. They were ready to fight for education and the doors couldn’t hold them back, so they knocked them down. They came together with their hair tied up, discovering schools, books, and desks. They sacrificed so we can have opportunities for an education.

What I take away from this poem is that Alice Walker was thanking her ancestors for paving a way for her future. They went to war to be able to open doors for their future generations to be able to go to school and to learn. **(Crystal Johnson)**

SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ— “En perseguirme, mundo”

*In persecuting me, World, what is your intention?
How do I offend you, when all I desire
Is to place beauty in my mind
Instead of focusing my mind on worldly beauty?*

After reading all the poems, I settled on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. After reading it in Spanish, I understand more of what the poem was about. In my understanding, it’s that one should value things and not take them for granted, to enjoy life, which I think a lot of people need to do, and go enjoy the richness that life gives you.



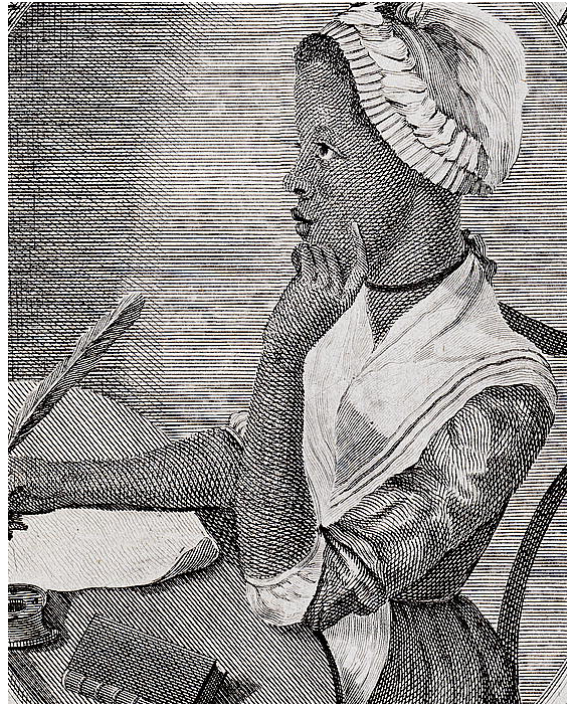
This is something I want to do and not worry so much about if I can afford my next bills and stuff. As well, women should educate themselves; if you have to do it yourself, just do it. We should judge a woman by her knowledge instead of just the beauty. **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

EMMA LAZARUS – “The New Colossus”

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
 With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
 Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
 A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
 Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
 Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
 Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
 The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
 “Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
 With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
 Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

Emma Lazarus starts off making the point that the statue is not like the brazen giant of Greek fame. No woman is thought of in the light of great liberty; that’s why I can understand when Emma Lazarus spoke of the flame of liberty’s torch being imprisoned with this particular name, “The Statue of Liberty”; women aren’t held up like those monumental statues. She also speaks of the beacon in the hand glowing “world-wide welcome.” This is understandable because holding the beacon out in front of her signifies triumph and togetherness. With the phrase “silent lips,” Emma Lazarus emphasizes that the Statue of Liberty welcomes all backgrounds of people, even the homeless, through the golden door. which to me means liberty.

(Kimari Rogers)

**PHILLIS WHEATLEY – “To Students at the University of Cambridge”**

*... Still more, ye sons of science, should ye receive
 The blissful news by messengers from heaven.
 How Jesus’ blood for your redemption flows. . . .*

Phillis Wheatley not only wrote a poem, but she wrote a letter of encouragement to the students of the University of Cambridge/our future. In the poem she begged the students to be “good Christians.” She also encouraged them to have good behavior because God has knowledge of everything they do. She talked to them about staying free of sin. She told them about how a small time of pleasure can end in suffering where you could even go to hell.

Phillis was a religious person who followed the Bible. She was a believer in Christ. She felt it was needed to write the future of our country, which is the students of the world. She was trying to lead this group of students in the right direction. She’s letting them know through Christ, all is right. The Christian religion encourages love and to help your neighbor. That is a recipe for a great future society, I think. **(Ericka Booe)**

EMILY DICKINSON – Selections

*#670 One need not be a
Chamber—to be Haunted—
One need not be a House—
The Brain has Corridors—
surpassing
Material Place. . . .*

I believe that this poem is talking about how we are more imprisoned by our minds than we are by the world. It talks about the different compartments of the brain and how it is better to confront the external than the internal (mirror). Reflecting oneself can be challenging and a glaring pain. The spirit is constantly at war with the flesh and mind.

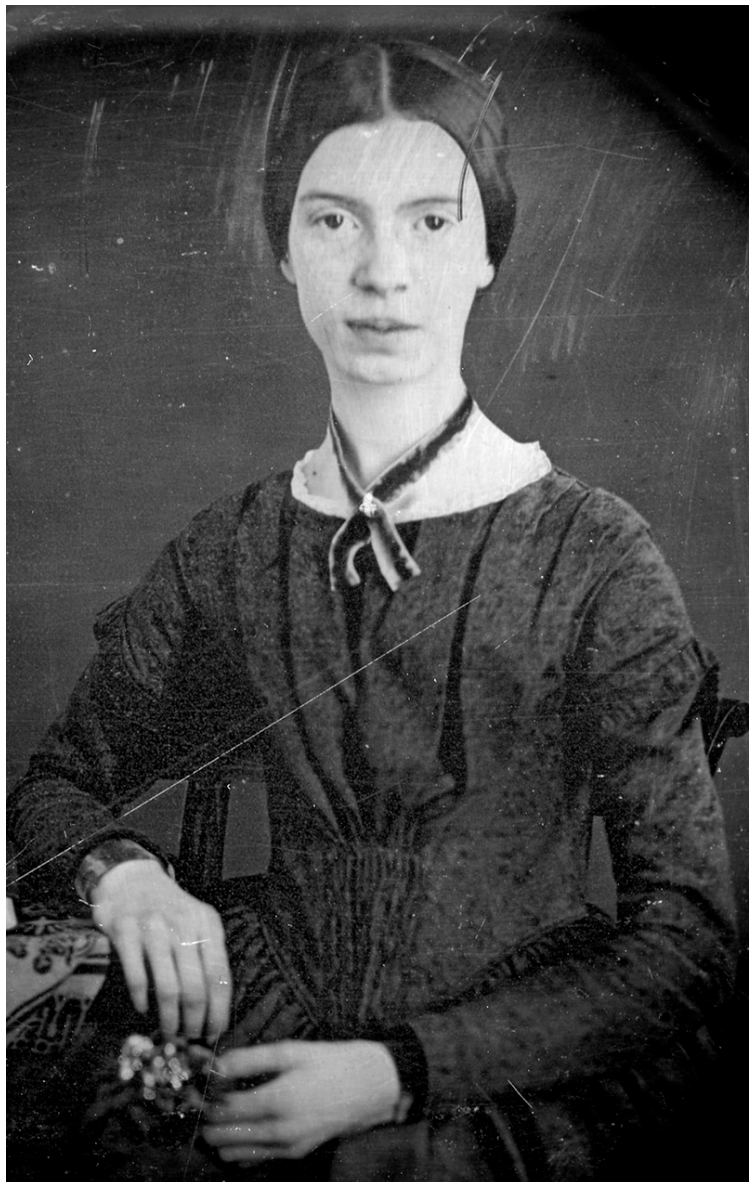
I can relate to how the mind takes over my life. Sometimes I can feel like I'm caught in my head, and most of the time it's dark, negative thoughts. That's why I feel like having spiritual guidance is such a huge factor in people's lives. Also, we need to realize that some of our minds can't be controlled on their own because of mental issues. **(Michelle Mack)**

*#919 If I can stop one Heart from
breaking
I shall not live in vain
If I can ease one Life of Aching . . .
I shall not live in Vain.*

That poem resonated with me because it serves as a beautiful reminder. Even more so, it serves as an anchor. It reminds me how easy it is to get caught up in the affairs of life and lose perspective on what's important, that the most important metric to measure one's success is the impact you have on people, that without connecting, bonding, and relationships, everything else is not as enjoyable. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

*#1263 There is no Frigate like a Book
To take us Lands away
Nor any Courses like a Page
Of prancing Poetry— . . .*

No matter if you're rich or poor, a book can take you a million places money cannot. "Without oppress of toll" means it's basically free to take your mind on an adventure. I can relate to this because I can recall a number of times I couldn't put a book down and it felt like I was a character in the story. Books are a perfect getaway without actually going anywhere. **(Mariam Maiga)**



SHOWING OFF STYLE

Rhetorical Question

How can you treat someone like an animal yet expect them to reintegrate like a civilian? **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

Am I not worthy of greater love? **(Michelle Mack)**



Exclamation

I need help! **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

Hurry out the door before you're late to school! **(Reginald Moore)**

Thank God I paid my rent! **(Michelle Mack)**

I am enjoying Odyssey!! **(Jermaine Booeey)**



Analogy

Being under the influence of a lie is like being under the influence of drugs. Both allow you to dance in the bliss of illusions. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

Fingers are to snapping like feet are to stomping. **(Ontario Frazier)**

Raising a dog is like raising a child: you feed them, nurture them, and guide them. **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

Oxymoron

He was a gentle brute. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

Trump supporters remind me of patriotic treason. **(Ericka Booeey)**

My friends and I have open secrets. **(Ontario Frazier)**

My daughter is a sour sweetheart. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**

At the sold-out concert there was a small crowd. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

My daughter gets mad when I call her a big baby. **(Crystal Johnson)**

Onomatopoeia

The *buzzer* is driving me crazy. **(Ericka Booeey)**

You can hear the phone *ring* from the next room, and you can hear the *pop* from the candy pop rocks. **(Jermaine Booeey)**



Simile

Kha'lani is like a bouncing kangaroo, jumping all over the place. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**

Alliteration

Pepe pica papa con un pico en la playa (translation: Pepe picks potato with a pick on the beach.) **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

Her back bled from the brutal beating she received. **(Ericka Boeey)**

My daughter is a capable, courageous kid who's consistently chaotic. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**

The hospital is hospitable but hardly has a heart for helping even though they have to do their job. **(Kimari Rogers)**

Irony

Wish I would have put on my bikini on this zero-degree day. **(Ericka Boeey)**

Being a mom of a boisterous, sleepless toddler and a spoiled, clinging infant is so "easy," a real "walk in the park." **(Yasmine Dobbins)**

My friend is going to school to be a nurse but hates blood and needles. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

I find it wonderfully and politically correct that the government passes laws that lead our nation to destruction. **(Kimari Rogers)**

"It's a beautiful day outside," she says while looking at the pouring rain. **(Mechele Williams)**

Repetition

I keep getting my heart broken over and over and over again. **(Ontario Frazier)**

All men are created equal, all under one nation, all under one God, all in one country, all fighting for peace and restoration. **(Michelle Mack)**

Chiasmus

You can take the girl out of the hood but can't take the hood out of the girl. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

Do I read a good book or does a good book read my mind? **(Kimari Rogers)**

Ask not what this life has to offer you but what you have to offer life. **(Michelle Mack)**



THANKSGIVING MOODS

Odyssey students were asked to start a paragraph with “I give thanks for,” “I celebrate,” “I lament,” or “I worry about,” as moods during this pandemic have been a roller coaster for us all.

I give thanks ...

I give thanks for my strong, beautiful mother, Delilah, myself, and my threat beautiful, smart, strong babies, Raquis, Kaniyah, and Kaymonii, my Odyssey team and people in my life that I know love me back. **(Amanda Bell)**

I give thanks for my family. After losing loved ones, you start to appreciate the living loved ones and honor the memories of the ones who have passed away. It is a blessing to have my mom living. It was a blessing to have had my two oldest brothers in my life and in my son's life. I've learned to step back and appreciate every moment with family and every single memory I have of my brothers. **(Ericka Booe)**

I give thanks for the opportunity I have to be in Odyssey, for my friends and family, and all my Odyssey classmates/friends; they keep me going even when I'm not confident. Everyone who plays a part in my life, they really keep me going. Life can be very hard with school and work, but my family and friends won't let me quit. **(Jermaine Booe)**

I give thanks for having my health and being in my right mind. I am thankful for having people that believe in me. I am thankful that I am able to help others with what little that I have. **(Katrina Collins)**

I give thanks to have found a new job that's paying me more and I'm not struggling like I was before. I give thanks that I'm in a good health and that all my family members are well. I'm thankful for the opportunities I'm given. **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

I give thanks for having people in my life who care for me and want to see me succeed. Additionally, I give thanks for having the opportunity to be in a program like Odyssey, where I am able to grow and



expand my knowledge with a group of individuals who want to do the same. **(Yael Jimenez)**

I give thanks for strength, guidance. I give thanks for life, being able to wake up healthy and blessed with a roof over my head, food on my table. I give thanks for an amazing daughter. I give thanks for being free to live the life my ancestors fought so hard for so I can fight for my future to have and to build the kind of life destined to them. I give thanks for freedom—freedom to grow, freedom to live, and freedom to be happy and create. **(Crystal Johnson)**

I give thanks for my new job. I got a job at Meriter just about a month ago. I work as a housekeeper, but I want to work my way up through the hospital. I really like it there so far. **(Helena Lee)**

I give thanks for my family. **(Michelle Mack)**

I give thanks to my children. Because of them, I want to be a better person, and for them I am a better person. **(LaRonda Morris)**

I give thanks for everything that I have right now. **(Will Nunn)**

I give thanks for my children; every single one is a miracle. I was told at thirteen that I would NEVER have children, but look at God showing out. **(Cylinthia Olle)**

I give thanks for my body. The body is the utmost example of a functional cooperative at play. Without the body, I am nothing. Every day, I learn through the body. **(Benji Ramirez Gomez)**

I give thanks for the Lord providing me with everything I need. He provides me with great friends, a great connection with my family, and great role models. Not only that, but the basic necessities, like clothes on my back and food on my table. I can't thank Him enough for the things seen and unseen. **(Kimari Rogers)**

I give thanks every day for being able to spend time with my children. I thank God for believing in me enough to bless me with these precious gifts. My children are my everything. They deserve all the greatness the world and I have to offer them. They bring me joy when I am down; their hearts are pure. Their comfort is refreshing. **(Mechele Williams)**

I celebrate . . .

I celebrate God giving me an opportunity to continue fighting and staying strong during this hard time and not giving up, keeping faith to succeed and complete school. **(Amanda Bell)**

I celebrate my grandparents for being the impetus for which my family and parents chose to come to the United States. If it weren't for them, I doubt I would be in the place I am now with the opportunities that I currently have. This is not to mention the fact that they provided the opportunity for my mom to come and settle in Madison. Although they took the difficult decision of returning to Mexico, I celebrate them for being brave enough to take the first step and risking it all to come here. **(Yael Jimenez)**

I celebrate my successes. **(Michelle Mack)**

I celebrate finishing what I started. It took a year of focus to do 12 books in 12 months. It was mentally draining, but now that it's over, I have a profound sense of accomplishment as well as realizing that my writing is much better now than it was 12 months ago. I find it very cool that I'm better at something because of doing it. **(Reginald Moore)**

I celebrate every day because tomorrow is not promised. **(Will Nunn)**

I celebrate life because at one point I wanted death so bad. Sometimes you got to pull yourself out of a deep hole and continue living. **(Cylinthia Olle)**

I celebrate my community. The people who support me are immensely valuable to my life. Life would be very dull without them. **(Benji Ramirez Gomez)**

I lament . . .

I lament the time not spent being myself, my true self. Life has been a cruel mirror attempting to reflect the worst parts of me through broken shards of glass, a distortion of truths. Yet as I embrace myself, those broken shards begin to reknit themselves into a semblance of truth as I accept what's truly staring at me in my reflection. Me. I celebrate me. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**



I lament the passing of my beautiful grandmother Marilyn, my granddaddy Mr. Walton (dad's side of the family), my granddaddy Mr. Rankins (mom's dad), and my stepdad Ray, who was the dad I never had growing up. They taught me how to keep going in life. Losing them brought me a lot of pain, but I know they are in a better place. **(Amanda Bell)**

I lament not spending as much time with my grandparents as I wish I did before they went back to Mexico. For some reason it's hard to value what you have until it's no longer there. I am still able to talk over the phone and chat over video, but nothing compares to the warmth of a real-life hug or being able to go across town to say "hi" and share a meal. Most of all I miss the candid/impromptu moments that made us rejoice. **(Yael Jimenez)**

I lament in my sorrows.
(Michelle Mack)

I lament the deaths of loved ones we lost too soon. **(Will Nunn)**

I lament my first-born child. I held him in my arms as he took his last breath and drifted into his next journey. **(Cylinthia Olle)**

I lament the climate crisis. The impending doom from global inaction is overwhelming. I often feel powerless in the face of certain disaster.
(Benji Ramirez Gomez)

I worry about . . .

I worry about my mom, who has heart failure, my children, and myself. **(Amanda Bell)**

I worry about my health, both mental and physical. Being a diabetic and having a family with a history of poor health makes me worry. Experiencing a large amount of trauma makes me worry about my mental health. I feel so happy to be addressing both my physical and mental health now. I have been running from them both since I experienced the trauma. **(Ericka Booe)**

I worry about the negative implications that COVID might have on my health in the long term. Initially, I didn't think too much of it as I knew I was a low-risk category and that I was already vaccinated. Unfortunately, it appears that it had an adverse



effect on my lungs, and I worry that it may be indicative of a larger problem. I truly hope that's not the case. Additionally, I worry about what the doctor might say when I go back in on Monday.
(Yael Jimenez)

I worry about the future. I feel like, at times, uncertainty creeps in and ignites my doubts. I worry about the past and how it may impact my future. I worry about my son and the impact that the world will have on him. I worry about the generations ahead and what that will entail. Most of all, I worry for those who will never seek the truth and find hope. **(Michelle Mack)**

I worry about nothing I can't control. **(Will Nunn)**

I worry about how sufficient I am for my children. Every decision, every move I make is for my children. **(Cylinthia Olle)**

I worry about my little brother. He is young, in a country that never wanted us. I am not around enough to be a stable place he can build from.
(Benji Ramirez Gomez)

I worry about my new journey in life. Do I have the skills to withstand the pressure? I sometimes think about giving up. My dream is to succeed.
(Mashell McCarter)

UW BADGERS HOMECOMING GAME

I arrived at Camp Randall Stadium an hour before game time. There were a lot of fans wearing red entering the stadium with me. It began to become packed. I had a great seat. I could view every angle of the stadium. The color red consumed the entire stadium—red as I looked to my left, red as I looked to my right, red above me, red below me. Badger fans are true to their apparel too. The weather was perfect. I've never seen the sun shine so bright as it did gameday.

When the Badgers made their first touchdown, I yelled, "Go, Badgers, go!" The Badgers led the entire time I was at the game. My ride arrived a little early and I thought it was a good idea to beat the crowd by leaving a little early. The score was 27-0 when I left. I like to think that I was the Badgers' good luck charm for their homecoming game because Iowa managed to get one touchdown after I left.

I couldn't wait to see the halftime show performance. The marching band was a delight to watch perform. The greatest part of the homecoming game was when they'd show different fans dancing in the audience on the huge screen between quarters and at halftime. Mechele and I definitely busted some moves just in case we made the big screen. We didn't make it on the big screen, but we definitely had fun dancing.

I enjoyed being at the game with my Odyssey classmates. I love every moment I get to spend with my son Jermaine, but it was also a delight to get to know Mechele better and meet her sister, the Birthday Girl. **(Ericka Booe)**

Go Badgers! Walking in to a field of red and white, I heard the crowd roaring so loudly that you could feel the ground shake. It looked like miles and miles of people all there for one reason: the game. This was not just any game but the Badger's Homecoming game. Not only was the stadium full but the entire area around

the stadium was covered in red and white. I do have to say there was a little gold and blue, and this was because they were playing Iowa. They must love their team because they traveled four hours away to see their team LOSE. But I guess if you are down for your team, you are down.

That was the first college Badger's game I had ever been to. It was a beautiful moment because on top of that it was my sister's birthday. She came up here from Denver with her family. It was great that we could attend this event together on her birthday. This was a moment that I will remember for the rest of my life. **(Mechele Williams)**

I walked into Camp Randall stadium shy, not sure if this was a good idea. No reason at all but I am just not a big fan of being places with a lot of people I don't know. But as I got closer, I started to feel the energy and the excitement--in the air, on the field, just everywhere. Man, I'm happy I went to it! Thank you, Odyssey [and donor Alec Chang], for this exciting experience. **(Jermaine Booe)**



MEETING 'GO BIG READ' AUTHOR YAA GYASI

As part of UW's annual Go Big Read event, author Yaa Gyasi visited the Madison campus to speak about the book that the whole campus was assigned to read: her acclaimed novel Transcendent Kingdom. When she was invited to come with a guest to a VIP reception with the author on a Wednesday night, conflicting with Odyssey class, Emily arranged for two Odyssey alumni to attend in her place: Char Braxton '06 and Jeannine Shoemaker '14. Char managed not only to get a photo with the author but also one with UW Chancellor Rebecca Blank, who will speak at our Odyssey Class of 2022 graduation ceremony in May. For Jeannine, the event was highly moving. Jeannine's late daughter Sydney considered author Yaa Gyasi one of her favorite writers and introduced her mother to her books. Here are comments from Char and Jeannine, as well as story about Jeannine and Sydney shared with Odyssey supporters last month in an e-newsletter.



The reception honoring Yaa Gyasi was uplifting and invigorating. After our conversation, I felt that my writing could reach and create many kingdoms in life. She truly represents a gift of encouragement!

Also, Rebecca Blank provided laughter and lots of love. She is so excited about attending and speaking at the upcoming Odyssey graduation! Thank you for this awesome experience! **(Char Braxton)**

Emily, I want to thank you again for allowing Char and me to take your place last night. It was as if all of the events were guided by Sydney herself. Not only did I meet Yaa and get to tell her my story, but also the keynote interviewer was one of Sydney's favorite professors—a professor who spoke at her funeral and was the person that introduced her to Yaa Gyasi's books, which Sydney shared with me. The night was heaven sent, and I want to thank you again. Love you more than I can say.
(Jeannine Shoemaker)

From Odyssey's October E-Newsletter:

Odyssey is a lifeline for grieving mother

"Odyssey is an amazing program, a lifeline, a source of strength that keeps me going and lifts some of the weight off me."

So said Jeannine Shoemaker, a graduate of Odyssey's Class of 2014, now enrolled in Kevin Mullen's UW writing course for Odyssey alumni. "I had started to take Kevin's writing class two years ago but had to stop because of losing my daughter Sydney. She was set to graduate with honors from UW and go on to law school. Now I feel her with me as I write, encouraging me to find the strength to complete the course, to tell her story as a way of helping other families."

Jeannine faced many obstacles prior to enrolling in the UW Odyssey Project, including raising five daughters as a single mother and overcoming physical and mental health challenges. In her graduation program entry, she credits Odyssey with





that said, 'I have a child that's going through this same thing right now. Thank you for having the strength to talk about your loss.' It touched my heart. I know Odyssey helped me find my voice, and I'm going to keep on speaking out."

In her day job, Jeannine welcomes UW students as they get their COVID vaccinations. "At first it was hard for me to be on campus. My daughter

helping her believe in herself: "It was the support of Emily and the Odyssey team that brought me back when I was ready to walk away from the pains of life. They showed me that I'm worth being here and that I have something to offer this world."

A talented quilter, Jeannine shared her art with the class and used quilting as a metaphor for piecing together the fragments of her life.

Odyssey not only provided her with an educational opportunity but also a family-like support network and camaraderie. "We help heal each other from drug issues, family issues; it's a life link to make it through every day. For me now in Kevin's alumni composition class, I have my daughter in my head all the time because she knew I could be a writer. She's what I write most about because she fills my heart. I hope to write a book about her. Even as a baby, she seemed to be an 'old soul.'"

Jeannine's daughter Sydney tragically took her own life on New Year's Eve just a semester before her UW graduation. "She was a brilliant student, with beauty and brains. Depression is scary. It's a silent killer. I want others to know to listen to your kids, seek help, love on them, just talk, talk, talk and reach out for help. Sydney said she knew I loved her more than she loved herself."

In Sydney's honor, UW organized a tribute, awarded her a posthumous degree, and placed a plaque on campus. "The UW came out with a big heart and celebrated her life. At her ceremony, I spoke to her graduating class. I had parents that came up to me

walked these steps, these grounds. Wow, it was hard. Sometimes I'd see a student with a backpack and think for a moment it was Sydney. But I like being around the students, helping them. And then in the evening, I take my Odyssey writing class."

Next month, Jeannine looks forward to attending a VIP reception with Yaa Gyasi, author of UW's Go Big Read selection, *Transcendent Kingdom*.

"Sydney always had a book in her hands, she was always reading. Yaa Gyasi's first book, *Homegoing*, was one of the books she said I must read, and now I'm excited to read *Transcendent Kingdom*, too, which deals with keeping one's faith even when battling incredible loss and mental illness. Odyssey provided me with copies of both books and the opportunity to meet the author, and I'm so grateful. I hope I have a chance to tell the author how impressed Sydney was with her writing."

Jeannine calls on others to donate to Odyssey to keep being a lifeline for others. "Supporting Odyssey will be the best gift you ever give because of how many lives Odyssey touches. Odyssey brings out brilliant gifts people don't even know they have inside themselves. Odyssey lets people know they're smart, they matter, they can accomplish what they want and their words can speak volumes. If you look at our pictures, we all have smiles on our faces. It's amazing how Odyssey students have transcended a situation where they had no hope, to now, where they're giving others hope, telling them they can do this. Odyssey gave me strength and hope even in the darkest times."

AWED BY THE OPERA

Thanks to the generosity of Madison Opera's General Director Kathryn Smith, the opera staff, and the Board of Trustees, especially Peter Lundberg, we provided free tickets to current and past Odyssey students so they could attend performances of Donizetti's famous opera "Lucia di Lammermoor" at the Overture Center on November 5th and 7th.



she couldn't marry the love of her life, Edgardo. Lucia then kills herself. When Edgardo learns Lucia is dying, he kills himself.

UW Odyssey's generosity [from donors] allowed me to be able to take three guests: my son Jermaine's girlfriend Giselle, my cousin Dana, and my partner Lenroy. All of them said, like myself, it was their first opera and that they really enjoyed the experience. We all agreed we will definitely attend the next opera: "She Loves Me." It's at the Capitol Theater on February 18th and 20th. I also got to take pictures with Odyssey alumni. (**Ericka Booe '21**)

The name of the opera that we saw on Sunday, November 7th, 2021, at the Overture Center is "Lucia di Lammermoor." I found this show to be easy to follow, and it was an interesting story. They had subtitles on a screen, and they gave the audience 30-page brochures that included the synopsis to the story. The show included three acts, with two intermissions.

This show told a story about a woman and a man that were in love. At the beginning of the show, Edgardo proposed to Lucia. Lucia's brother Enrico tried to arrange a wedding for Lucia to marry a man name Arturo. Enrico tells Lucia bad things about Edgardo to try to convince her to marry Arturo. Enrico wants Lucia to marry Arturo because it can save him politically. Enrico is able to convince Lucia to marry Arturo by bringing up their mom, so Lucia decides to marry Arturo. At the wedding Edgardo finds out Lucia married Arturo and leaves very angry. Lucia goes crazy and kills Arturo because she has an overwhelming amount of sadness that





Lucia di Lammermoor: this opera reminded me of Romeo and Juliet. It was a love story that was wrong. Lucia was in love with Edgardo but she was promised to another man because of her brother's interference. Due to miscommunication, Edgardo found out that she married another man. But on her wedding night, she chose to kill her husband as she professed her love for Edgardo. There were bitter tears. Lucia ends up killing herself because she had lost the love of her life, and at the end Edgardo kills himself because he will reunite with Lucia in heaven.

This is the first time I have been to an opera. I decided to take my mother, and this was the first time she had attended one as well. It was an enjoyable experience and is one I would do again. I found myself engaged in the music as well as the actors performing. I'm sure most of us can relate to this love story and take it to heart. I have an undying love for somebody, and I think I'm losing them. **(Mechele Williams '21)**

I thank you so much for the opportunity. It was my first time, and I enjoyed myself—and my husband also enjoyed it.

The one thing that stuck out the most was that there were a lot of ethnicities in the cast, and you understood what was going on.

I also liked the fact that it was a love story gone bad. The betrayal of her family was so wrong. **(Emily Robinson Beckam '07)**





This Italian opera dealt with pain, tragedy, ethics, and love! The cast included people from a variety of backgrounds.

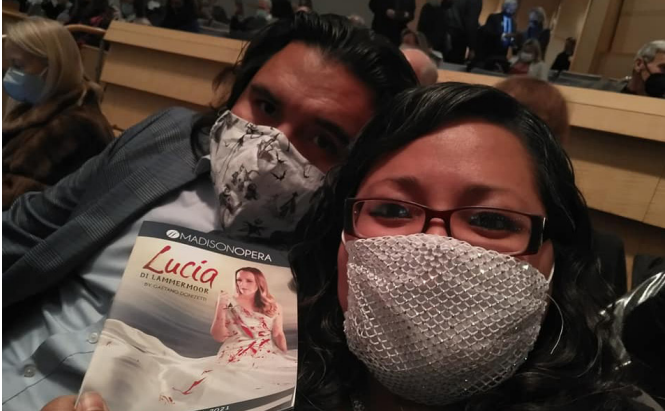
The set was so real and believable. I literally felt like I was a part of this musical story. The opera event pushed my determination level to succeed to another platform. Thank you for providing this awesome opportunity! (**Char Braxton '06**)

I looked forward to this night, and I must say I had a ball! What can I say? I love a good love story, and "Lucia" was just that. It was tragic but good.

You should learn to embrace different venues and genres. You just might like it!

Thank you, donors to Odyssey, for making my date night awesome. (**Ruthie Allen '18**)





Thank you so much for the opportunity to see the opera Lucia. It makes me think of the injustice of gender that existed long ago and still exists today. Why do we as women have to sacrifice our lives for the well-being of others? It was very interesting the role that religion plays in the decision-making of Lucia because she wants to do the right thing and the pastor encouraged her to marry a guy she doesn't love just to keep the same social level she used to have. The brother and the pastor are two men that pressure her to make a huge mistake. This is not too far from the reality of many women today. I know so many women that even today are in very tough situations.

Something that I also think a lot about is of all those wives of the presidents and kings. I wonder if they are forced to stay in relationships that suck just to keep their place in society. It makes me think of Princess Diana and Meghan Markle who were kicked out of the kingdom for not following the rules. And if that is for those ladies of the high class, what can we expect for the working-class women? We definitely have a lot to work on in our society, especially with gender equality.

Something that I will always remember is that women don't kill for pride like most men do, but women can kill for despair, love, and loyalty.
(Marisol Gonzalez '17)

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the opera.

I invited my boyfriend, Larry, and friend Prenicia Clifton, who as you well know is an opera singer. It was great to see other Odyssey family there.

I was amazed that the production had a diverse cast, which is one of the reasons I wanted to attend. This was my very first opera, and it was a great experience. It was the first for my man as well, and he even got teased from his friends in Chicago who laughed at him because he is going to an opera. This is not something that we would be exposed to, being from Chicago, so this was great.

I will not go into a full summary, but of course this was a love story. It gave me the feel of Romeo and Juliet because it was surely a love story that ended tragically. I was really grateful that the production had the English words on the screen because it helped me follow the narrative. What I got out of it is that women are always the ones who are used to save the day. Lucia was forced to marry a man only to help the wealth of the family. She was not able to love the man her heart desired for. Sad.

Overall, I was excited to be there and enjoyed it.
(Michelle Bozeman '11)





I arrived late at the opera and couldn't sit at my assigned seat, so I ended up sitting on the balcony for what was left from Act 1. My first thoughts were, wow, Lucia has a lovely voice, but somehow her voice faded into the background because I was mesmerized by the orchestra. I couldn't take my eyes off them. They sounded amazing but they looked even better, so poised, the way they moved in unison; I found myself subconsciously moving with them, I was hypnotized.

For Act 2 I moved down to my assigned seat. I loved my seat. It was in the center but more to the left. I love sitting on the left or being on the left; it's just one of my many weird things. When the curtains opened, I clutched my invisible pearls because I loved the backdrop. Whoever the props people are...wow, just wow! I was so Intrigued by the stage setting, the wardrobe, everyone's voices that I didn't even notice the English subtitles weren't showing until I heard from the very talkative crowd. It just shows all along I was captivated by the very essence of the opera and not understanding one word yet understanding the whole storyline. I love how the lighting changed with the mood of the scene. When they were happy and dancing, the lighting was warm. When she was sad, the lighting changed: it had a blue

tone, making the stage look and feel gloomy. You didn't have to understand what they were saying because the lighting set the mood. To me, it was incredible how lighting can affect more than one of our senses.

Looking back, I'm glad I arrived late because when I left the opera, I felt as if I saw two different shows. At my assigned seat, I could only hear the orchestra but didn't see them. On the balcony, I could not only hear them but see them too.

This show proves that women always had to fit the mold. We could never live freely. We always had to sacrifice ourselves for the benefit of others. If we're not test subjects, we are being controlled. It's been like this since the beginning of time. But it also shows how strong and resilient we are, despite everything we go through. We keep going. That's one of the many reasons I love being a woman. I'm surprised she didn't kill or poison her brother. I don't condone violence, but all I'm saying is I would understand, ha!

Thank you to Odyssey and the donors. I've never been to the opera before. This was my first time, and I'll always remember it. **(Loché Mothoa '20)**



'ODYSSEY DAD' BOB AUERBACH RECEIVES PHILANTHROPY AWARD

At a November 11th reception at the Overture Center, Bob Auerbach received the 2021 Outstanding Individual Philanthropist Award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals-Greater Madison Chapter for his transformative support of Odyssey over the past 20 years and for his lifetime of giving money and time to other charitable organizations.



From Holocaust survivor to internationally acclaimed scientist to Dane County philanthropist, Bob Auerbach inspires all with his dedication to humanity and social justice. Bob accepted the award on behalf of his late wife, Wanda, and all the Odyssey students he has met over the past decade. Odyssey students like Char Braxton '06 sometimes refer to Bob as their 'Odyssey dad.'

Along with Wanda, who grew up in poverty in Appalachia, Bob adopted a spirit of philanthropy committed to giving back to others with love, respect and dedication. At the beginning of their marriage, while still poor, Bob and Wanda decided to "tithe" by donating at least 10 percent of their income each year to nonprofit organizations.

He has supported many charities in Dane County and beyond over his long life, but dearest to his heart are donations and planned gifts to Berea College, where he received a tuition-free education and met his wife, and the Odyssey Project.

He helped propel Odyssey to new heights, encouraged other donors to dream big, and empowered low-income families in Dane County to break a cycle of generational poverty, find their voices,

and achieve their goals. For his 90th birthday, he offered \$100,000 as a match for donations made to Odyssey. More than 400 donations came in, raising \$150,000. He then matched the additional amount over the next few years.

Bob is also a musician and donates money he earns from playing piano to Odyssey. He plays in over 20 Dane County assisted living, memory care, and senior center facilities. In just one typical, non-pandemic year, Bob played 216 piano gigs at more than 20 venues.

Bob Auerbach stands as a shining example of philanthropy inside and out, through donations and actions, through a jubilant call to others to help him make the world a better place. His charitable giving over his lifetime has surpassed a million dollars and inspired hundreds of other people to donate also. The impact of his gifts of money, time, and love has been profound, helping to ensure the future of Odyssey.

