

YEAR 19, ISSUE 7

JANUARY 26, 2022

# ODYSSEY



# ORACLE

## MAKING A CASE FOR SEMESTER TWO



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# MAKING A CASE FOR SEMESTER TWO

*As Fall semester 2021 ended, Odyssey students admitted into the Class of 2022 made a case for continuing into the second semester. They also penned letters to COVID.*



I should continue because I have so much more to give. I'm an introvert by nature, but as I've grown closer with the wonderful people in this class, I've become more comfortable sharing who I am. The class has cultivated a beautiful atmosphere where it's okay to make mistakes. That type of setting provides the catalyst needed to pursue education and growth with a newfound fervor and rigor. My path and perception are unique because my life has been so unique. I'm looking forward to sharing that as others bless me with their unique experiences as well. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**



Since the beginning of class with the Odyssey Project, I have learned so many things. There's a difference with me since I haven't been in person much with my instructors and classmates, but everyone still treats me like family at the end of the day. Classmates have been checking on me and encouraging me to keep pushing through the semester strong. My instructors have been an inspiration to me as well, understanding this tough situation I encountered since being in school after two weeks.

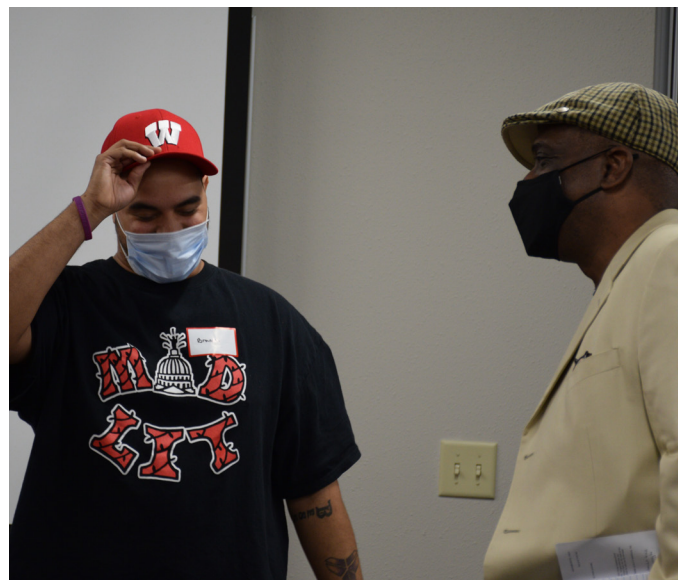
My life changed drastically, but I am still using my strength to fight and conquer my goals. Falling behind in school was something I never wanted to do, but I am on a mission, and I refuse to give up. I got caught up in school (which makes me feel complete). I appreciate all the support I have within the Odyssey Project.

My goal is to be in class the rest of the semester and return once we get back from break. The second semester will be totally different for me

personally. I want to do better than last semester, do what I have to do in my life so that I can graduate and pursue my degree in business and start my homeless shelter before I move out of Wisconsin. I love my support team with my class, and I hope to see everyone once the second semester starts. Now I see why everyone says this program is life-changing! Thanks for everything you have done for me this semester! **(Amanda Bell)**



Hey, I am Brandyn. I am a dreamer who has not found his dream, if that makes sense. Odyssey has been fun and a journey so far; some of the assignments have been tough and I am a little behind, yet I still try and make it to class and participate. I really enjoy the acting portion of the class, and if I had to pick a dream job it would be a movie actor. I want to see how far I could go with acting and maybe sign up for some acting classes. I want the second half of Odyssey to be more about growing as a man, a human, and a student. **(Brandyn Bess)**





I should continue into the second semester of the UW Odyssey Project because the class has taught me so much information that is relevant to what I do for a living, and what I want to do in the future. So far, my writing has improved a lot due to the Odyssey

class. I feel like Odyssey has woken up my skills in writing as well as having improved my writing ability.

I'm interested in furthering my education. I want to get a bachelor's in social work and am interested in getting the degree through the UW-Madison School of Social Work. The teachers and other staff encourage me to go for it and further my education. I've also been offered support in furthering my education from Odyssey staff.

I'm learning how to not be so shy. I'm learning to find my voice. I am encouraged to step out of my comfort zone. What I bring to the class is experience. I'm an older student that has lived a lot of life. I enjoy sharing my stories through writing and encouraging my classmates to ask me for help if they ever need help from me.

I would like to participate in the next semester so I can continue to improve my writing skills. I want to be ready to start the UW Social Work program.

**(Ericka Booe)**



Well, I've learned so much, from art history to becoming a better writer/reader. First, I want to start by saying thank you for having me in this class. I made new friends, heard wonderful stories, and most of all, became a little

more comfortable in class. Being one step closer to having college credits is a good feeling. I never thought I would go back to school, but I'm here and I'm enjoying it.

Second semester, [I'm going to] keep myself going because not just myself but we as a class are one step closer to crossing the finish line. **(Jermaine Booe)**

So far, this class has given me more historical information I didn't have. It opened my mind more on people in prison or jail and ways they can improve learning skills or alone by themselves. There's always a way if you really want it. I have reached out to other classmates, offered help with work study sessions, made sure people were okay if they missed classes or family members passed. I was just being the person to push them to get through the little months we have with Odyssey.



I would love to be a part of the second semester because it will push me to do something so much more. It will continue to make me push myself further and will make me smarter for my child. To be able to deal with doctors in a more impressive, improved way is

convenient for me. Odyssey helped me out of my depressed state of mind and helped me out of the house for a little break. Although it was class, it was fun, which sounds totally insane. I have some hope for college more now.

I just want to say Odyssey class helped me more with Jamarion than any of my family members did. Although we got some toys he couldn't use, it's the thought that counted. Also, it was my fault I didn't say soft so we got a hard toy. I can still use it in a way if I want to think on it, which is totally amazing. If he could be in person, the laughs and smiles you would get would bring tears from my eyes. To know he's happy is such an important thing to me. I would love to continue on forever, not for just me but



Jamarion as well. That's something we will do because communication doesn't stop when we graduate. Thank you for all the hope and encouragement I could have ever gotten. **(Capri Booker)**





I believe I should continue the next semester so that I can challenge myself. I don't feel like I've shown my true potential. It seemed so easy to do before I knew life would be so rocky. I want to . . . I WILL take more time

to focus on class and set aside more time to complete homework and understand material. It is my goal to turn the next semester around. I will do a 360.

I have learned a lot about my own voice and the things we have been through. I also have met a lot of great support systems (all the teachers that are a part of this program). They are all willing to help and support you in any way they can. You don't find that a lot in school or programs. **(Kayanna Branch)**



I would love to be part of the second semester. I really enjoy coming to class. I am learning so much with no force. It takes me time to understand things. I am not forced to have things on time. That makes me feel good about this class. I can talk to someone

that can break down work, and I don't feel bad about asking. I like learning at my old age, at my pace. **(Katrina Collins)**

What I have gotten out of class is more courage and being more sociable. Before I got accepted into the Odyssey Class of 2022, I was just like an oyster



in its shell—closed off from the entire world around me. I feel like more and more as the classes go on that I am starting to break out of that depressing stage. Odyssey has helped me be more vocal and to participate in group exercises

instead of just sitting back and watching others. I love the person I am becoming, and that's all thanks to Odyssey. These exercises, especially with Baron Kelly, helped mold me into an adult with a voice and a purpose. I feel like although I am one of the most introverted people in the class, seeing that even I volunteer will get others to feeling comfortable with being themselves or speaking to classmates you normally wouldn't talk to. I would love to be a part of this growth and learning, how to take these lessons out in the real world and thrive as a mother and person. The Odyssey Project seems to be such a life-changing program, so I would feel incomplete if I didn't finish. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**



I should continue into the New Year/second semester because I have busted my butt to be here. Like most of us in the class, I wear various hats, being a father, student, and worker while also working on trying to get my real estate license. I have done all this

while being in school full time along with this class, and I have kept up with all my homework while doing these endeavors.

I have learned so much thus far in the class. Without this class, as I mentioned to Kevin on Monday's 11-29-21 tutoring session, I never would have read Shakespeare, Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln. Yes, I have not been to class a lot (in person) due to not being vaccinated, but I'm always on zoom paying attention no matter what, even if my world is crashing. I really do enjoy the class. I will be sad and maybe shed a tear when it is over because I have learned so much in these three months and will continue to grow and learn more as we continue. I plan to take more Odyssey classes you offer for alumni. **(Ontario Frazier)**





First, when I got into the Odyssey program, I was happy. I was glad that I had made it into a program that could help me succeed in life when it came to my education. Finishing the first semester, I have noticed that Odyssey is more about family, and it's not just a class. I appreciate the professors and anyone included in this program. [They] treat you well and are involved in your life and who you can [be to] succeed.

I do want to continue with the Odyssey program for the next semester because I want to continue with my classmates and the professors who have been supporting each one of us. I feel like I still have a lot to grow, and I want to participate more in class. I am still somewhat shy in class and would like to grow in that perspective. I still want to be part of this wonderful atmosphere we have created in the last couple of months. I feel like the next semester, we still have a lot of learning to do, and I still have a lot to learn. I [am] ready to take on the next chapter of Odyssey, to take on whatever is coming to Odyssey. I want to graduate with the classmates I started with on this journey. **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**



Odyssey has really impacted me in more ways than I can count; I've gained the confidence to read and write again. It has made me realize that I really want to go back to school and finish what I started. I'm already two years in;

why quit now? I have become aware that there are teachers out there that really do care about making an impact in students' lives. Odyssey has taught me that whatever I do in life, it will be for my own wellbeing. I want to show my daughter that I can finish this, and generational curses will be broken so that my generation and every generation after me has an educational path that started with me finishing this. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**



I am a determined young lady, trying to reach goals that I myself don't see happening. Throughout this semester, not only have I learned to shorten my run-ons, but to also add meanings to my writing, how to make the words of my writing grab one's attention, and how to [put] the millions of thoughts in my head onto paper without sounding as if a psych ward is needed.

I would like to be a part of the second semester class to be able to get even better at writing, knowing more about literature than just what they call general literature in school. I want to continue to find myself through my writing and acting. I'm beyond ready for another Odyssey journey more than ever. **(Talaisha Goodwan)**





I love this class. This class has changed our lives for the better. I have a five-year goal. I am making changes in life to ask for help. I want to go to MATC for my associates. I will continue to my four-year degree at the University of Wisconsin. You've not only changed my life, you've changed my daughter's life. The Odyssey Project gave me hope. I did not have hope before Odyssey. I'm working my way up at Dunkin'. I'm starting my testimony speech for graduation. It all started with an acceptance letter from Emily.

This second semester is a make or break. I have my sisters looking up to me. Emily gives me the strength to push forward. I will take this with me in the times where I may have a professor who will not be so nurturing. I will remember the love, care, and compassion I was given. I just want to end with thank you. **(Cinderria Harwell)**



I can say that for myself I'm the most amazing crazy hot mess there is. Sometimes I'm up, and sometimes down, sometimes I'm brilliant and sound, but sometimes it feels like my mind is all around! However, I still find the courage to keep pressing

on! I try my hardest to keep going, learn from my mistakes, and learn to be the best that I can be through it all! I hope that I'll get the opportunity to be a part of next semester to actually participate and show my skills! I've learned what not to do and to stay away from falling behind! I know that I can be great. Sometimes you need chances!! **(Zaria Hunter)**



The reason I would like to continue with Odyssey for semester two is to continue learning material in the areas of literature and history. I've enjoyed the first semester and meeting new people. I've contributed during class by asking questions, reading out loud, and at

times sharing my opinion. I've especially liked the activities with Baron and being able to get up and move. Additionally, I felt like I've been able to expand on things that I've already learned, and it provided more context in terms of the material. **(Yael Jimenez)**



So far in the UW Odyssey Project, I've built confidence in my writing. I'm learning to stop run-on sentences and how to break down my writing into sections to get to the point, and to also build a rapport, gain my reader's attention, and keep it.

I've learned there are so many words that I'm not spelling correctly, nor putting the right word in its place. So far, I feel I can start writing my own book and get published in just a few pages, LOL [but] not too long.

I'm really looking forward to the future. Learning about more writers and our history has been an eye opener, and to know there is more to learn is very exciting. [It's] encouraging to know that a lot of people fought for our rights and future to be here today. I believe I need to be in the second semester because I'm only hitting the outer core but want to hit the middle and be greater than what I've already learned. **(Crystal Johnson)**







When going into the Odyssey Project, I had a lot of misconceptions about how class was going to be. I thought everything would be a competition and I wouldn't be noticed as much. I was proven wrong. I found a family in

Odyssey, and everyone was really patient and kind, even though things outside of my Odyssey class were falling apart. I want to work on my time management skills and on having steady resources for when I go to college full time this summer. I've learned so much so far, and I want to learn more. I loved reading Frederick Douglass and poems by women. I want to get all the vocabulary down before second semester and properly know how to use different sentence structures to improve my writing skills for college. **(Helena Lee)**

Being in Odyssey has helped me to expand my mind and to grow in areas that I didn't know I needed to. It's helped me to see others, and to go deeper into myself to see my purpose. I feel like with this class I've been able to make connections and be more like myself. I feel honored to be a part of something so sentimental and be surrounded by such beautiful souls. I believe I bring my own beliefs and thoughts along to add to this beautiful atmosphere. I want to continue to learn and grow



and build amazing bonds going forward with Odyssey. Thank you for everything, Emily.  
**(Michelle Mack)**

When I started Odyssey, I was very excited. I was happy to be taking the steps I needed in order to do better for myself and my daughter. I still feel that same way now! I think with first semester, things started to get hard once my daughter started daycare and was sick every other week (literally). Between tending to her and making up all the missed time for work, I started to fall behind.



Now that I'm about caught up, I am starting to feel at ease again.

In the second semester I plan to make a schedule and stick to it. I'm going to dedicate a specific evening just for homework so I won't fall behind and feel the stress that I was. Also, since I'm now vaccinated, it will help a lot with not having to go get tested every week and hope the results were in by Wednesday. I'm proud of myself for sticking to the program and can't wait for what second semester will bring. **(Mariam Maiga)**





What I got out of this class so far it that it has been helping with my writing and also with taking a look at my life-learning, my struggles. Also, I've been thinking about what I really want to do with the rest of my life, to make changes. I would like to continue to the

second semester because this class is the foundation to my educational journey.

**(Mashell McCarter)**



I am a writer. I honestly wanted to do this class as an opportunity to become a better writer. While in class, I'm always mindful to be attentive and actively participate. So far, I've loved being reintroduced to Frederick Douglass and his amazing writing style.

When I'm home alone in writing mode, I've learned in my time in Odyssey to be more descriptive when writing. I am already much better at what I call "painting the picture," which is exactly what Frederick Douglass does.

I'm definitely getting better at not being a procrastinator, which is my calling card, because this homework takes the type of dedication procrastination doesn't allow. If allowed to complete this course, I truly believe I can be ANOTHER Odyssey success story. **(Reginald Moore)**



The reason why I want to continue being in the second part of Odyssey is because I do really enjoy coming to class and have met some really nice people

from all different walks of life; I just want to continue what I have started. Just like Odyssey means it's going to be a journey, it never said the journey was going to be easy. I also want to show

my two sons that I can finish this because my son asks me all the time, how is class? I want them to be proud of me, them and my mom. What I've gotten out of Odyssey is no matter what, try your best, even if you do look silly doing the acting games. **(LaRonda Morris)**



It's almost been a tough semester. I have missed class due to kids getting sick, employees getting sick, and working at a homeless shelter where the homeless population is at risk of being sick. Through it all, you all at the Odyssey program refuse to give up

on us when things get tough. I fell behind. That can be discouraging but being a part of this class has taught me to stay on the path of the journey no matter what. Also, it shows me that there are people that support me and want me to succeed.

This class taught me more about family dynamics. I feel like I bring an energy to the class that blends well with the other students. "Everybody needs a Will because where there's a Will there is a way." I would like to stay part of this family. **(Will Nunn)**







Personally, I should continue because I don't want to leave. I've met so many wonderful people and personalities.

This class absolutely rocks! Every time I prepare myself to come to class, I think to myself, "I wonder what we're doing today?"

Next semester would absolutely be beneficial to me because there is way more to learn and experience. Also, I will gain life tools that I can carry on and

express through my life and character!

**(Kimari Rogers)**



I should continue in the second semester because I feel I have grown already, not only in the mind but also in my friendships, additionally in the support. In my tough time of my last trimester of pregnancy, the family support from the Odyssey program has

encouraged me to keep going, as well as the check ins and the extra tutoring. I can go on and on about how grateful I am for this program. **(Cylinthia Olle)**



First of all, I'm grateful because I was accepted into the Odyssey Project, and this is one of my biggest accomplishments. The first semester was great, and I have learned a lot from the content and from the instructors. Being in the class makes me feel

happy because of the diversity of the class. Thanks to Emily and Kevin for being there when I needed it the most, not only for help with my writing but also for all the support outside of class.

However, and I want to be honest, I feel like I have not given all of me to learn and to be successful during the first semester. It is not because I don't want to be part of the class; it is because of everything that is going on out of class. At the beginning of the semester, I received a letter from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and since then, it has been a fight with the time to prove to them that I want to be here in the States for good. It stresses me out because I can be removed. Sometimes I want to quit, but I do have so many reasons to fight my case.

Secondly, I do want to continue and be part of this class because it helps me grow academically and as



While the year has been difficult, Odyssey has been great. In Odyssey, I've found a community, a routine, a journey. I've been able to meet people from all over Madison, connect with rich texts, and make the first step in returning to school. I've been

present in class, contributing my views and thoughts to discussions, as well as being a resource for my peers.

Winter is a difficult time for me in an already challenging context (read: pandemic), but I wish to remain a part of this community. I hope to continue bussing in every Wednesday and having something in the calendar that's both riveting and stimulating.

Odyssey is a second chance. **(Benji Ramirez Gomez)**

a person. This class has helped me to see what I want to be in the future and also where I don't want to be. My interest is the same: I want to be an elementary teacher, but I also do want to join the ARMY.

Finally, I want to make a commitment that I will attend my classes second semester on time and complete the assignments on time. The most important thing is that now I'm fully vaccinated so I can be in the classroom. **(Jessica Saldana)**



Although Odyssey, my other classes, and my children and family have been keeping me pretty busy, I feel like I have become a stronger reader and critical thinker so far in Odyssey. In my opinion, I have become a little more of a better writer by

now. [I have] new tools to take into consideration while writing, such as being more descriptive and painting a picture, so I can really catch my audience.

I would like to continue Odyssey because when learning to have a growth mindset, you learn to use challenging situations, such as pushing myself to complete assignments and readings in Odyssey and using it as a learning stepping stool. I don't want to give up and would like to see myself become that better student, writer, and parent at the end of the year. I believe I have contributed a different point of view that others can learn from and relate to, and I believe I have much more to contribute and much more to learn from all of our teachers and fellow classmates, etc.

**(Naquila Taylor)**



There was a time that I used to miss class when it was an assignment that I didn't want to do, and I would calculate how much time I had that I could actually miss class. I am very grateful to say that I don't do that with this class. I enjoy this class tremendously. I enjoy the outcome of everybody in it. And I've learned that more people have spoken up in due time. And I was very surprised how open people were and for me that was very important because I had a lot to hide or I would hide from people. And I am very glad that I got in this class with this group of people. Even though I don't speak to them all, I hope by the end but I keep communication with every one of them.

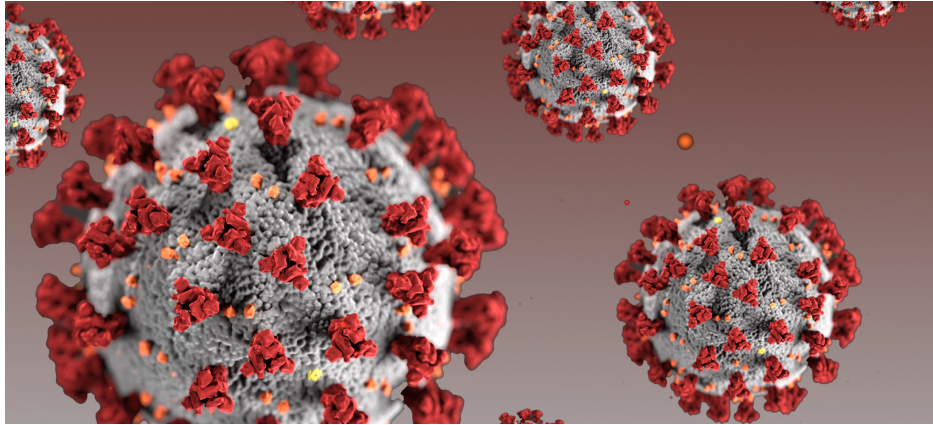
My long-term goal would it be to get my master's in social work. . . . I am in a great place in my age. My youngest child is seven and my oldest is 27. And I just found out that I will be having my first grandchild—first grandbaby--and I'm very excited about that. I just want to be able to have a good income to sustain my family, which I've done by myself all their life. So it's not an option for me to quit.

For second semester I am truly going to do my best to be in class every day no matter what the circumstances may be because I know that I'm the only one holding me back from that. I believe that education is power; it's one of the most powerful things you can earn and nobody can take away from you. I want to gain all my power. I know that I have a voice to help, a voice that needs to be heard, and a voice that can accomplish things. At the end of all my schooling, that is what I want: to be a voice, my voice, where it's needed. I thank Odyssey for everything that you have offered to me my family and my children.

**(Mechele Williams)**



# DEAR COVID-19



Corona, because of you I have to hide behind a mask.  
 Corona, because of you I had to go ahead and get a vax.  
 Corona, can't you just go away?  
 Corona, the world doesn't want you here to stay.  
 Corona, usually I take one with a lime.  
 Corona, leave us alone, it is time!!! **(Brandyn Bess)**

COVID-19 has impacted so much in our lives:

You stopped so much in our lives  
 You hit our lives at the same time as so much other stuff did.  
 I didn't get to mourn my brother,  
 I had to start a really great job from home.

People's jobs have been affected,  
 People's mental and physical health has been affected.

We have to wear a mask  
 We have to social distance  
 We have to get vaccinated  
 We have to keep fighting you

You are still here  
 You won't be missed when you are gone **(Ericka Boeey)**



COVID, oh, COVID!  
 You dark cloud of a person.  
 Why must you interrupt our play?  
 Why must you show up to our party?  
 Who invited you?  
 No hugs, limited handshakes,  
 COVID, you have no heart.  
 Please go away so we can resume fellowship. **(Will Nunn)**



COVID, COVID, COVID. While shaking my head, you took away basketball, visits with my granny, the NBA, and many more fun things I love to do. I hate you because not only did you stop me from playing basketball for a year and a half, but you also started the process of pre-diabetes. Oh, I hate you. COVID, COVID, COVID. You took a lot from us.

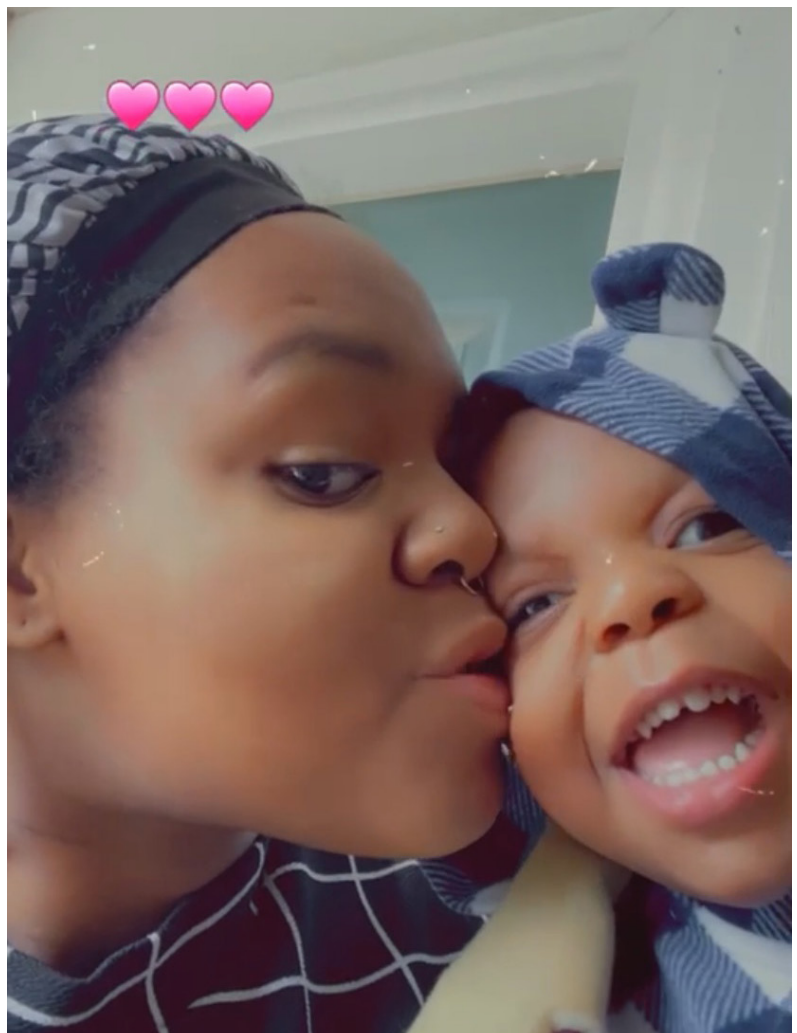
**(Jermaine Booeey)**

WE ARE NOT IN THE SAME BOAT . . .

I heard that we are all in the same boat because of COVID, but it's not like that. A moment of reflection, re-connection, peace, rest time with mother, father, children, in pajamas with a blended cocktail: that isn't my Corona. For Jamarion [my four-year-old son with cerebral palsy, also damaged through his father's abuse] and me, this pandemic brings just another desperate financial situation and family crisis. No appointments for Jamarion! No therapy at home for me! I just accepted I needed a therapist because I didn't want to lie in bed, starve, and die while Jamarion's in the other room with an overflowing diaper, starving and crying. I never want my nightmares to come true. Social workers were more like family, but living alone after everyone left us, I face endless loneliness more than before. I want to go back to birth to three services, with physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and more. We don't qualify for normal anymore, and I'm above and beyond running out of patience. . . .

With Jamarion, I thought he WILL walk, he WILL talk. I'm spending 24 hours/day helping my child with everything he can no longer do while doing all the things I learned from a therapist for him. . . . Hearing everyone say, "have faith in God and expect miracles," I was sucked dry, left to die. I started having more depression. I was never free because my "free" was those appointments where I could see him getting better with every new thing that they taught him.

So, if I'm not smiling that's why. I wish people could stop only looking and actually start opening their eyes to seeing we are not in the same boat. Corona screwed me right after I was just screwed. I'm on a very different journey that no one sees, with so many questions but no answers. Corona, my dear, you are in the top five of people and things who screwed us the most. **(Capri Booker)**







Corona, it was fun trying to figure out how you developed and reading all those theories. But then BOOM! Everyone was scared of you and your power. A monster who has been let loose, and not everyone knew how to prepare for it. You almost took my dad away from me, the one man who I love the most. Go away! Nobody wants you here. Go back, and stop taking our loved ones.  
**(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

To COVID:

COVID, you have traumatized the world. You have ruined families. You have made some of our biggest accomplishments and blessings feel so small and empty. Every sneeze, every cough, and every fever is not what it used to be. It's frightening to our world. Can you please go away and never come back? The world wants to be whole again. We miss the way things used to be before you snuck in and took over. **(Kayanna Branch)**

Dear COVID,

No one likes you; you have ruined what our world used to be. We all have to wear masks; now we cannot see each other's beautiful faces. You took the excitement out of life; we cannot share a smile/hug with one another due to you causing harm to our bodies. No good has come from you. People are scared to leave their homes or go places; you have killed hundreds of thousands. We can't celebrate holidays with our loved ones, especially older generations, all due to you making an appearance in the world.

Please find the nearest bridge, jump off of it, and never return.

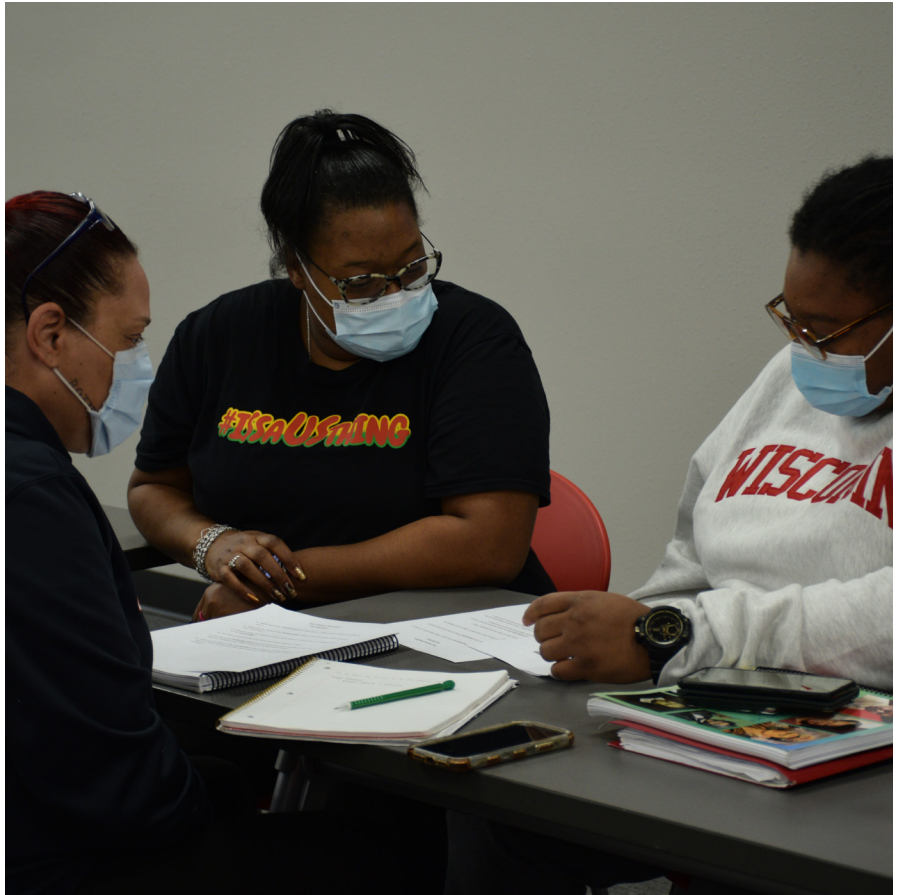
Love,  
 Ontario! **(Ontario Frazier)**





Corona, you have taken away being able to understand one's meanings of words by causing us to cover our mouths in public. You caused a labor experience that has given me trauma by making hospitals call for a shut down. You have caused sorrow, pain, and fear in not only my family but the world around me. You, Corona, are not someone I would call friend, nor want around for much longer. There is a team being formed between humans and vaccines, and soon you will be no match for this world. **(Talaisha Goodwan)**

Dear Corona, you are a definite pain. I am a full-time working mother. When my daughter coughs, we have to go to the ER. If she's sick, she gets sent home, and guess who misses money? Me! You are a sickness. I dislike you so much! **(Cinderria Harwell)**



Dear COVID 19,

Who released you into our world? We already have enough going on—poverty, discrimination, and food and water insecurity. We didn't need this outbreak on top of all that. For you to add yourself to the list has taken a high toll on humanity. You've taken so many loved ones—grandparents, moms, dads, kids, grandkids, aunties, uncles, wives, husbands, sisters, brothers, and countless more.

You came out of nowhere and demanded millions of innocent lives—old ones that lived beyond slavery and young ones that never got to see the light of day (sun). You hurt plenty of my family members and friends, and people in general. COVID, I HATE YOU!! I hate how you scared the nation for our lives. I hate how you stopped our normal lives. I hate how you stopped some lives completely, and you continue to do so.

Please find a cure for this evil. We want to live and be COVID-19 worry-free. **(Crystal Johnson)**





Corona has taken a lot from me. It feels like I've been thrown away in jail and can't seem to find the key. I'm having to watch my loved ones from afar, hoping one day the real villain, Corona, will be deceased.

**(Mariam Maiga)**

Dear Covid-19.

You have made me scared, paranoid, and sad. You have taken from me. I'm ready for you to leave. You have altered my life, and it's not been the same since you entered it. I'm working on taking control of my life and am tired of you making decisions for me. This year I plan on being healthy and safe and living a productive and fulfilling life. I'm no longer living my life in fear. P.S. I'm evicting you from my life, SARS-cov2, omicron, Gamma, Delta, and any other strain of Covid-19!!

**(Mashell McCarter)**

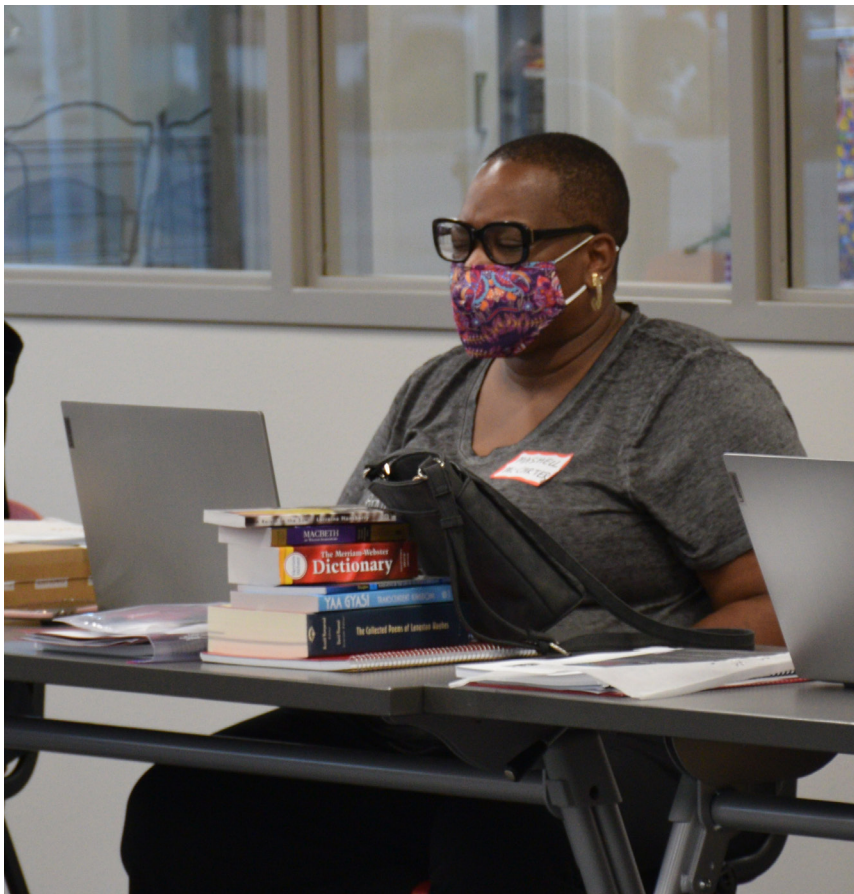


Dear COVID-19,

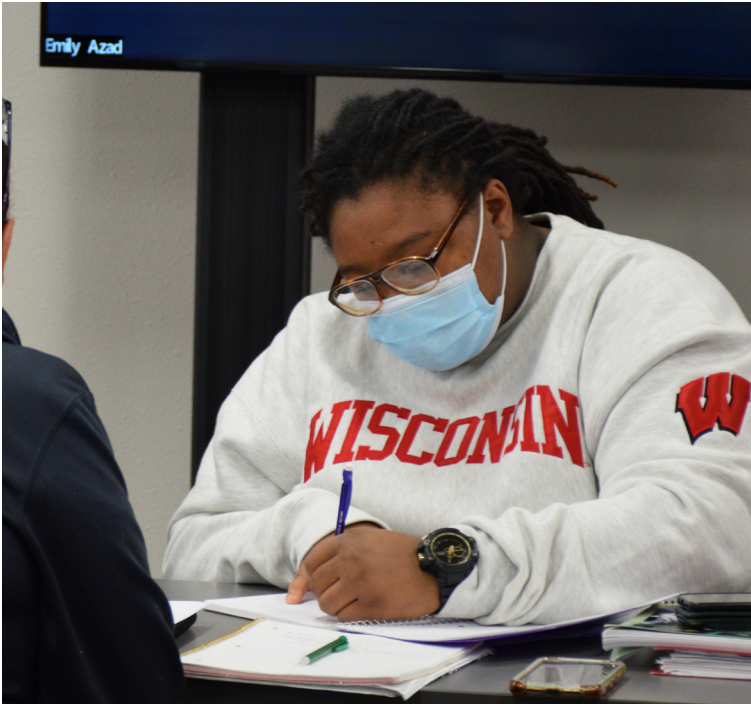
The nerve of you, the shame of you! You came into this world like a thief in the night; you MURDERER! You swept across the world and took over the place like you owned it. To be even more conceited, you decided to create children with your multiple variants. The devastation, despair, and depression you so carelessly decided to spread changed the entire world.

You are a sickness that is difficult to beat but not impossible. Must I remind you that human beings are resilient? We are learning how to defeat you! Soon you will be just another page in history, just another memory. We will never forget nor forgive you for your untimely presence and the destruction you bring. War against nature, you say. You are not even the most dangerous plague, for we have outsmarted and defeated worse than you, so I suggest you pack your bags and get to stepping.

Sincerely,  
A tired human being **(Cylinthia Olle)**







My family was brought back together, stronger and more powerful than before you came. We once again valued one another. We held each other up. Yes, you confined us to our homes that we thought were prisons. We had forgotten that our home is our safe place, our comfort zone. It took us awhile to adjust, but when we did, we had won.

Running from you made me want to keep my family safe, but it gave me so much more than I could ever have expected. For that, I need to thank you. For all of the disasters that you have caused, I pray that the blessings come back tenfold. But whatever your next move is, I will be sure that it gives me so much more than I could ever have expected. I will be grateful every day for my small blessings.  
(**Mechele Williams**)

Corona, you think you're slick. I knew you were coming in some way, shape, or form. It was prophesized already. But the only mystery is how long you will stay and haunt my people? How many times will you adapt to allow us to suffer? (**Kimari Rogers**)

Corona, you are a nightmare come true, Freddy Kruger in the flesh. You have installed pain and fear in many houses, and now our world is a mess. The only thing that is left to say is Corona, Corona, go away, please tell us you aren't here to stay. (**Naquila Taylor**)

COVID, in the depths of all your consumption, the paths of sadness you have spread, the lives you have taken, I will not allow you to have my all. I have found happiness even though you tried to take everyone's. I found lost moments that again brought me great joy—the laughter in my children's voices, quiet time we cuddle, stories that there was not time to tell before.

