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# ODYSSEY ORACLE

## CELEBRATING THE JOURNEY



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# ENVISIONING EIGHT YEARS

I see myself in April 2025, reaching my goal of having my social work degree. It seems too far away from now, but I am very confident that I can make it happen. Of course, first, I have to find financial support or scholarships to make my dream come true.

I also see my three children going to college in 2025. So far, I know my oldest son wants to be a nuclear engineer; the other two do not know yet what they want to be. I just hope they study and get a college degree that can help them have a better future.

If all of the above happens, I will be the most fortunate mother of all times. **(Grisel Tapia Claudio)**

Well, I honestly don't know where I see myself in 2025. I hope to be alive, first of all, and still living in the USA or maybe somewhere else, maybe on an island somewhere in Europe. But more realistically, probably just living here in Madison with my son only and being happy. I hope that maybe I would have a better job

than I do right now. I hope to be a cook or in culinary school. I love cooking, so I hope I can be doing something in that field. Cooking for my family is the thing I love the most. So, if I can get the chance to cook for someone else, it would be amazing. **(Susana Gomez)**

It's April 2025. I am forty-one years old and all dressed up and ready to go to my first book signing. After a few cookbooks, I finally have the courage to actually write a book about how you are what you eat. I'm kind of nervous and excited at the same time. My oldest son, who is eleven, is all set to go with me, and for his sake, I can't express being nervous. At this event, I will also have current Odyssey students who will be looking up to me for inspiration. Thinking about them just reminds me of how it all began and how inspired I used to be of past alumni while I was in Odyssey. Everyone's story used to be so inspiring that it became a great motivation for me to push on to my dreams, believing that it's not impossible to achieve. Giving back that kind of encouragement and boost to current students is worth all the effort I put into this book. **(Sukai Yarbo)**

In 2025, I am helping the people of Syria and other once war-torn countries recover from the war as a doctor without borders. I have my own house and am married, with one amazing boy who's inspired me to become a dentist. At this point in my life, I am relieved because there's no more war, no worries whether my



family is OK or not – everyone is safe and happy around me. I have a big house where my whole family is able to live; being surrounded by the people I love reminds me that it was worth it. Every tear that was shed, every heartbreak, every loss of someone important, and my long journey to America were all worth it.

Now that my life is where I wanted it to be, I'm helping those in need moving from country to country hoping all this would end one day. My wife, who calls me every night to make sure that I'm alive, is not worried only for herself but for my son not to be fatherless like most children in these countries are. One thing I promised myself when I left my country is that if I ever have a child, I will teach him about the value of life, family, friendship, and education. I will teach him that with the education I got, I am able to help save the valuable lives of many. I will tell him that family is what keeps a person human. I will teach him how to help himself and others, to not make his life a waste or "live in vain" as Emily Dickinson describes in her poem.

**(Ahmad Nahas)**

Eight years from now, I will just be graduating from graduate school with my doctorate in OBGYN (obstetrics and gynecology). I will be residing in Minnesota and will hopefully be married with one child and probably expecting my second child. I will be 31 years old, and hopefully my husband and I will be building our four-bedroom, beautiful home with lots of yard for a pool, playground, and room for cookouts. I will then be able to buy my Escalade truck and give back to my mother and grandmother as well as others without being down myself. I will then be able to go on vacation with my family and enjoy life delivering

babies and taking care of women in need. I will be able to finally live my dream and live life without stress. **(D'onna Atkinson)**

I would be working as a lactation consultant and owning a house. I would also love to open a free clinic for mothers and babies, making sure they had one-on-one help with questions having to do with breastfeeding, supplying them with all the things that they need involving breastfeeding.

I also want to work on a group for young women to help them know what they're worth and to help them gain self-esteem, as well as providing information about prevention of teen pregnancy, letting them know about protection and contraception. I see myself giving back to the community, helping young moms and babies, throwing baby showers for low-income families. I have a heart for helping young women. I plan to help with anything I can. If moms are trying to educate themselves to get further, I will fund a program for that and have daycare available. I know how hard it is to go back to school with a baby. Last but not least, I will be coming back and helping with the UW Odyssey Project because it has given me hope to keep moving forward and to not quit. **(Simone Bell-Perdue)**



In 2025, I will be graduating with my doctoral degree in psychology. I will officially be a child psychologist. I will have my first house bought. When I am done with my doctoral studies, I plan to continue on with school to get my business degree so I can build my own business. Until then, I will be working in a clinic. **(Kendra Atkinson)**

In April 2025 I will be all finished with college and have children who have graduated college. I will have my own business and have a *New York Times* best-selling novel on the market. I will be married and have a beautiful home. I'll be out in the community changing housing laws, feeding the homeless. and ministering to youth. **(Avé Thorpe)**

Spring 2025. I'm starting the day with a chai latte, sweet and aromatic. I'm working as a behavioral therapist and part-time personal trainer. I gaze out of the window on a sunny morning in my two-bedroom loft in Seattle, WA. I moved there upon graduating with my psychology degree. I have a dog, Spunky. He is a cute little pup I got as a graduation gift from my son. I've accomplished so much, and I have God to thank for giving me the strength and faith to continue on through strife and turmoil. **(Spencer Gamble)**

Right now, I'm enjoying a cold glass of lemonade made by my mom. I'm living with her, and we are remembering how hard it was for me to accomplish one of my biggest goals in life. I'm in Mexico, living with my family. Life hasn't been easy, but I have a girl, and she is six years old. It's for her that I have to wake up every morning to show her

that life isn't easy, but you have to work hard for what you want. I do miss my life in the U.S., but I wouldn't change the time with my family for anything. I get to wake up every morning, make breakfast, take my daughter to school, come home and help my mom with some of the chores. My mom stays home and waits while my brother and I go to work on the greenhouse. Although it is hard work, it's paying off. My dad is supervising to make sure everything goes well. We all spend the afternoons and weekends like a family, laughing and enjoying life. **(Belem Calixto)**

Now I am a grandfather of four grandchildren. I spend a great deal of time with them. I have my own business. I am growing many vegetables in my backyard, so I do not need to buy any vegetables from shops since I have everything I need. My wife is very happy to get fresh vegetables, and she cooks them in a healthy way to save our health and life! All my children have graduated from college and received their degrees, and they are happy with their new careers. They have gained what they worked for. I am involved in my community and help those in need.

**(Musab Naji)**



In April 2025, I plan to be enrolled in school working towards being an attorney. By that time, Kayla will be thirteen years old. I plan to be an active advocate for children that have suffered vaccine injury. I plan to still be involved with Odyssey. I plan to have my own home. My dreams are deferred, but they will happen. **(Felica Thomas)**

In 2025 I would have finished my Bachelor's Degree in Nursing at UW Madison, and I am back in school to obtain my Master's Degree in Nursing. I am still working at Meriter Hospital as a Registered Nurse. I have bought a house, as well as my dream car I always wanted. I have my Infiniti truck. I am in partnership with my aunt owning my own business while still working toward opening an office. I am working toward having a consulting business where I can help place other nurses.

I also help Emily and Kevin with the Odyssey Program. I am recruiting students and spreading the word that education is the key to success. I meet with people to share that though we are less fortunate, we can still get a great education and give back to our communities. Odyssey has opened doors for me that I never

thought were possible. When I graduated from the Odyssey Program, my son Javonta was facing jail time. He has served his time, and he has done a complete change with his life. He is doing well for himself and working and attending college.

I try once in a while to drop in on an Odyssey class and tell the new Odyssey members how my life was before and how it helped me attain my success.

A typical day for me is waking up, having my hot chocolate on my desk. I lay out my clothes for work and pack my lunch the night before. I enjoy not having to get any kids up as all my children are grown and living in their own places. I head off to my ten-hour shift. My grandson, Ameer, will be turning eight this year. He's my pride and joy. He visits me regularly, and he has his own room in my house. I make a couple of calls before I start my day.

As I mentioned before, I am co-owner with my auntie Debra, and I need to make sure everything is running smoothly as possible. After I do all this, I am ready to start my day. My daughter, Alexis, is finishing her bachelor's degree at the UW, and she plans to attend law school. Isiah is working with

my cousin and saving for his own place. He is currently taking classes at Madison College. He is majoring in engineering and expecting to attend the University of Illinois next fall. **(Ngina Ali)**



April 2025. My daughter will be a senior in high school. I hope to be more educated, employed, and able to send her away to a respected college. I, in turn, would like to have furthered my degree in the nursing field. I know I will have tons of student loans to pay back. I dream of working my dream job continuing to help people. I plan to travel more and enjoy life with my spouse. Hopefully, I can take a trip and travel to Europe. It would be good to spend a month on the other side of the world, learning about different cultures and how they survive. Enjoying different holidays and customs would be like a dream come true. I would also hope to have a solid foundation to rely on in terms of savings. When I visit Europe, I hope to learn more about French. As a young child, I always wanted to visit the other continents. It would be good to meet my in-laws in person and take my entire family with me. **(Lawana Diagne)**

It is April 2025... What a wonderful sunrise. I live in Naples, Florida, near the ocean. This is a good place to raise my two children. The nature here is wonderful, and the weather is perfect. We go swimming, fishing, and biking by the ocean. I like to watch the dolphins swimming under the pier. I have a big garden in my backyard, and I also planted some fruit trees which I brought from Mexico. I just bought a little dog for my son, Alan, as his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday present. He will be graduating from high school this summer, and he will go to the University of Tampa, Florida. My son, Erick, is 14 years old. His major is to be a train chauffeur; he loves trains and exploring nature. My wife, Lupe, has had a good job teaching first grade for almost five years. I am very excited because this Christmas my parents are visiting us from Mexico, and I haven't seen them in 20 years.

Thanks to God having given me the opportunity to succeed in my education, I became an accountant. I am working in a bank, and I own my house. **(José Mendoza)**

I want to be a firefighter/nurse. By 2025, I will be both! My children will almost all be out of the house and beginning their odyssey to a successful life. **(Alyanna Cooper)**



Eight years from now, I would be on the beach, enjoying the different shades of blue, the bright sunshine smiling upon my face and skin. Eight years from now I would be discovering Egypt, Japan, China, making connections with people and cultures I know nothing about. Eight years from now, I am going to catch up with my dear friends who I've kept in my life from youth. We'll talk about our young days of bouncing around, climbing trees, building tree houses, swimming, fishing, and remembering our first love. Eight years from now, I get to watch Angelina grow into a strong, happy girl. I get

to share stories of my youth with her, teach and show her things that would amaze her.

Eight years from now, I would truly have wings to fly and be free to do whatever I want, sleep late, stay in bed all day watching movies, stay in my pj's all day, just listening to music... take a walk aimlessly to nowhere, ride my bicycle aimlessly to nowhere. Eight years from now, I don't have to wake up to the sound of an alarm clock, Monday through Friday. **(Joy Bally)**

Wow, it's 2025! I can't believe it's been eight long years since I graduated from Odyssey! The Odyssey Program has been a life-changing event, of course, all for the best. The summer after I completed the Odyssey program, I took the optional special education course that my Odyssey instructor told me about. I completed that course just to have it under my belt. September 2017 I was accepted in the University of Wisconsin-Madison! (You go, girl) Starting full-blown college with seven credits, I hit the ground running full force. Now it was no walk in the park, but believe me when I tell you hard work and dedication

pay off. June 2019, I did it! I walked across the stage at the Kohl Center with my children and family cheering me on. My excitement is through the roof. As my name is called, I have butterflies. I did it. I did it.

Six years later, I am an established social worker working with at-risk youth, getting them on the right track. I always knew my story could help someone else. I have a big beautiful five-bedroom home. I have my husband/life-long partner, Parish, by my side. Yes, we are still going strong (19 years). Ashzianna is away at Howard University. My baby is doing big things. Parish is in his senior year in high school. My boy has been accepted to Florida A&M University. He is still mom's baby boy. Londynn, my Londynn, still keeps me on my toes. She is basically the last child in the house and man oh man... between dance, ballet and soccer, I try to keep her as busy as possible.

Needless to say, my life after Odyssey has been nothing but great and moving up for me. I still owe a huge thank you to all of Odyssey for guiding me in the right direction for my future. I will forever be a part of Odyssey, and Odyssey will be a part of me. **(Asha Green)**

It is very hard to know how my life will be even tomorrow. I live in uncertainty all the time as an undocumented person. Every day is different and sometimes every hour. For example, this weekend I went with my family to Wisconsin Dells to buy shoes for my son as a birthday present, and a sheriff stopped us. In that moment when I saw the blue and red lights behind us, many thoughts came to my mind, but one shocked me the most: I thought he was going to arrest us and





deport us. This is the same feeling I experience every day if a police car gets close to me. With tears in my eyes, I have to admit that I don't know how my life will look like in April 2025.

My future doesn't depend on me, it depends on politics – if they make a law that allows us to stay in this country or if they keep making it impossible for us to stay and make us leave. Also, it depends on the people with power that have so much money that they can decide on our future, like bankers; if they decide to take our money, we can't do anything about it, and we will end up homeless. Or the big corporations: if they feel like making a phone call to immigration like Walmart did, lots of workers end up being deported. Similarly with health insurance: if I get sick, and my life depends on it, I will probably die because I don't have health insurance, and they don't care about my health. They only care about money. It's sad but true: my future doesn't depend on me. I am sorry for being so pessimistic, but this is my reality.

Otherwise, if my future depended on me, this is what I wish to happen. If I stay here, I will have some of my books published. I will dominate the English language perfectly, and I will definitely keep writing books as a full-time job. My older son will be finishing college, my husband will maybe be an engineer, and we will have a nice house. I will keep teaching my younger kids at home as homeschoolers, helping others to learn Spanish. Maybe my younger son will win at least one chess competition, maybe my daughter will be already in a play as a princess, dancer, or singer, and maybe we will be happy and free.

If I go back to my country, I will be making plans to celebrate my oldest son's birthday with all of my family, if he goes back with me. I will still write books and have some books

published. We will have a house in Veracruz, and I will volunteer my time teaching Spanish in the poor neighborhoods. I will be organizing something like Odyssey in my country. My children will grow up with their grandparents, and maybe we will be happy and free.

I don't know about my future. I just know that God already has a plan for me, and I believe He will take care of my family and me. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**

It's been a long night of comparing airlines, but I think I've finally found the right deal. This is the big ticket, Seoul, where I hope to turn a year of language and cultural exchanges around Korea into an internship at the UN office. I'm one of a few dozen fresh-faced foreigners eager to ply the trade and bulk up our resumes for the future, but that didn't stop me back in Busan and it won't here. Is this really happening? Four years out of America dotted with the annual holiday trip back to Wisconsin to see Mom. Four years of hotel living, apartment renting, translation studying, and Korean soap operas. I still carry the pocket book with me for the emergency misunderstandings. The dim flicker of the soccer game replaying on the television brings me back to focus, and the Book button is clicked. For almost a decade I have been on a sort of odyssey through life. Now I say goodbye to shore leave and set sail for new waters.

**(Anthony Jefferson)**



# TO THE CLASS OF 2018



Don't panic. You're sitting in this rectangle of tables at a spot of your desire, and you're constantly thinking how this class is going to be. You're watching everyone who comes through the door, becoming more nervous as time goes on.

Trust me, you will be perfectly fine! You will soon consider these people as family, your supportive team, people who do nothing but motivate you more and more. Sometimes, you can become discouraged by others from their knowledge and intelligent words, but you are just as wise. Take pride in yourself and for once shine and throw yourself out there. You are not going to be judged. You are accepted 100%. Your journey has now begun. Good luck and HAVE FUN! **(D'onna Atkinson)**



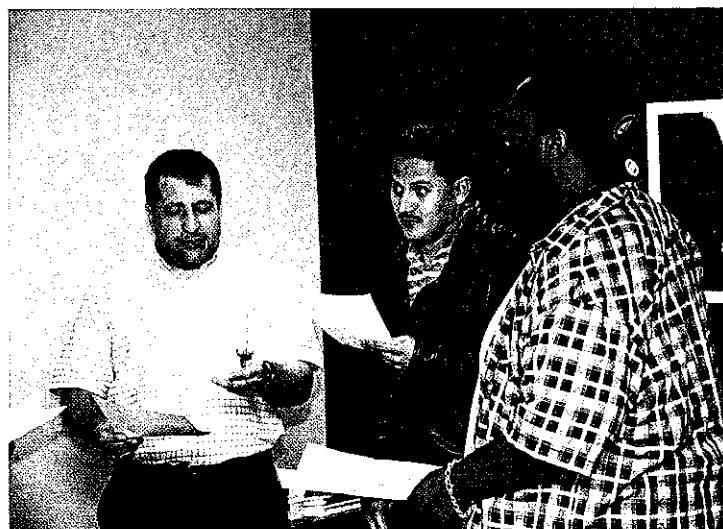
Welcome to your new adventure. Please enjoy every moment. The first day in my class I was feeling nervous like you because I thought I wasn't ready to take college classes. But let me tell you something: thanks to this class, I improved my reading and writing skills. I enriched my knowledge by discussing poems, American history, art, and philosophy. Sometimes, you might want to quit. **DON'T DO IT** because at the end of this course you will feel totally different and very proud of yourself. Odyssey is a wonderful class where you can express your feelings and thoughts. Personally, I can tell you that the Odyssey class is my second home because the students and all the Odyssey Project staff are friendly, and I always feel they are like my family. Again, welcome to Odyssey: attend tutoring to finish your homework, don't miss any classes, and do your best. **(José Mendoza)**



As you are sitting down and reading this, you are probably thinking, "What am I doing here? Did Emily make the right decision in choosing me?" So many questions and doubts come to mind, but just think of it this way. You have been given the golden ticket to a great adventure of a lifetime.

From personal experience during my four years of high school, I felt like I didn't have the same support as I did during my year in Odyssey. Also in Odyssey, you get to learn about many different Black writers during the Civil War and the Civil Rights movements. You learn about other works unknown to many people that were written by Martin Luther King, Jr., stuff that is not taught at high school or anywhere else unless you attend a special class for it, like Odyssey.

I can't tell you how happy I am for you that you got accepted. Believe me, it will be the best decision and opportunity for your life. You will learn many things, you will see things from a different point of view, and you will be a different person by the end of the year. Enjoy every minute of it. **(Susana Gomez)**





*¡No te rindas y sigue adelante!* Keep going and do not give up!

I had the same feeling like you do right now. It may feel intimidating, but let me tell you that what you are about to experience is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I know the feeling; it took me two years before applying for the UW Odyssey Program because I was scared and because I thought it might be too difficult for me since English is not my first language. Well, guess what? I can tell you that this class has helped me a lot to improve my reading and writing skills.

I still remember I started my first full-time job at the same time that I started Odyssey; it was hard at first to adjust to going to class, going home, feeding my children, and then doing the homework. Please do not worry because Odyssey staff and volunteers will always be there to help you whenever you feel stuck like I did many, many times. Odyssey for me is like my second home. It feels good to talk to your teachers like Emily and Kevin, who are always there to help you, and going to tutoring at least once a week helped me get homework done.

*¡Bienvenidos y siéntete muy orgulloso por lo que estás por vivir!* Welcome and be proud for what you are about to live! **(Grisel Tapia Claudio)**



I hope your summer was fun or as you wanted it to be. My name is Ahmad Nahas. I took this class 2016-2017, and for sure it was one of my favorite classes. If you're nervous and might be thinking of dropping this class already, let me tell you how

this class went for me, a foreign student who barely spoke English. At first, it was fast and hard for me to catch up. . . . With time, this class helped me to improve my English. It also helped me with my social life. It taught me to be an active and very outgoing person, to make lots of friends. As time passed by, I realized that it was only fast for me because of my



very minimal English. I caught up and was steady with it throughout the whole year. I didn't think you could really be close to your classmates, but everything in this class seemed to be running smoothly. Now I have the confidence to speak my thoughts and to use better vocabulary.

When I came to America, I knew what I wanted to study, but taking this class I was encouraged to not just be a doctor but to use my knowledge to make this world a better place. Taking this class felt like home, having all these people to motivate you throughout, people who are willing to move forward with you to a better place and become a better person. This class showed me that I wasn't alone in this journey. I'm thankful to be in this class, and I hope you will feel the same when you're writing this paper [your letter to the Class of 2019] and keeping the tradition moving. **(Ahmad Nahas)**



I want to say hello, and welcome to the class of 2018. I'm happy to get to share with you what this class will be like for you. I hope you are ready to have a whole bunch of fun! I learned a lot from this class, and I made a lot of memories. I would advise that you don't be afraid to ask for help. I can

honestly tell you that I have never read so many books in just one year. All thanks to Odyssey for recommending the books we read. If you don't like to read, that will change. You will like the books that they choose for us to read. It feels cool to read books . . . **(Musab Naji)**





I just want to let you know there will be days when you feel like giving up, but don't. You have a great support

around you that wants to see you better your life for yourself or your family. I myself almost gave up because it was so much. I was trying to balance it all with a baby and life circumstances as well. For me this program was the light at the end of my tunnel. Keep your heart open for change and your mind open to learn new, challenging things. During this journey, you will learn more about yourself than you ever knew before. Remember to always look past how hard homework or classwork is. Instead of giving up, embrace it. This is your journey; embrace every heartache, happiness, and long night. Be open with your classmates. They will be there to help you through a lot as well. I hope you all have a wonderful year. It goes by fast. **(Simone Bell-Perdue)**



Get ready to go on the best, eye-opening, motivational journey. When you walk into the class, you'll question if you belong here, but I swear, give it a few weeks, and you will go from strangers to family.

Everyone will become your support system. They will encourage you when you feel discouraged. When you look around, you'll see that you can trust everybody in this room. The best advice I can give you is to come to every class. Always stay on top of your work. If you are feeling stressed, talk to someone. Everyone is here to help you grow and push you towards your future. Have fun! **(Kendra Atkinson)**



You are about to embark on the kick-start of achieving your dreams which you will discover for yourselves. I

will just tell you to walk through that door every Wednesday, and at some point along the line, you will find yourself, your passion, your way. Hold on to every week dearly because before you know it, it's all over. Graduation is right around the corner.

You are privileged to be taken care of by the most amazing people who will test your skills, introduce you to new things, empower you, and empathize with you.

You will also be tutored every week, and your minds will be bent by Coach's Mindbenders. Have fun, ladies and gentlemen! **(Sukai Yarbo)**



Congratulations on being accepted into the Odyssey Program. This is the first day of the rest of your life. Like any new journey, there will be trials, unforeseen hardships, and obstacles, but I can guarantee that if you hang in there and keep

coming to class in spite of them, it will be well worth it. The strength that you'll draw from your classmates, the support your instructors will give, and the knowledge you'll obtain will be a well of wisdom that will carry you throughout the years to come. No matter what, don't give up, keep the end goal in mind, and be open to trying new things. You will get through this, so hang in there, and God bless. Remember that the only way to fail is if you give up. **(Avé Thorpe)**



Welcome to this special classroom. Welcome to the most amazing Odyssey of your life. In this classroom, I found amazing people that appreciated me and cared about me. I also found friends, friends

that felt scared, anxious, excited, and sad in this room, but we all survived. Whatever your goal in life is, make sure this class is one of them. Every Wednesday, every class is unique and you will learn something new every week. Make sure your homework is done every week because catching up is hard. There is a reason for every assignment given to you, so make sure you read them. Odyssey is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so make sure you enjoy every single thing.

Make sure you are ready for the Mindbender. Coach is an amazing teacher, and he will make you learn new words every week. Emily will be here for you; she will explain, and she will tell you what she expects from you, but don't panic: there are lots of people to help you. Kevin will help you with anything you need, he will listen to you, and together you are going to find an answer to whatever the problem is. You will also learn a lot from amazing teachers: Jean Feraca, Craig Werner and Gene Phillips. What these amazing people are going to teach you I won't tell you; you've got to find it out for yourself.

Enjoy every single minute. Even when you feel that it's too much, don't give up; believe in yourself. Nothing is impossible. If I did it, you can do it, too. **(Belem Calixto)**

As I move on to other educational opportunities, I want you to know how lucky you are to be in this life-changing program. The Odyssey program is a labor of love for Emily and her staff. You will feel love, hope, and support as a



student. You must know that being an Odyssey student is a privilege for a few, unique individuals. Working with Emily and her staff provides a bridge to accomplish your goals and find success, whatever that

might mean for you.

Don't be fooled into thinking that Odyssey is not a challenging program. Your studies will provide a journey for you to open your eyes to sights and ears to sounds you didn't know were there. You will learn that education is a key to success. However, you must stay focused on your assignments. You will have to keep up with your weekly readings and writings. At times, it will feel stressful, but opening your brain to the challenge will prepare you for higher education and maybe help you attend the University of Wisconsin or another college.

If you are accepted in the Odyssey Program, you will learn that Emily and her staff found something special in you. Don't waste this opportunity; grab the knowledge you find all around you. Read and study your assignments and books. Make sure you show up to every class – don't make excuses for yourself. Go to all tutoring opportunities. I know this seems like a lot, but this program is like working towards your bachelor's degree in the humanities. I have found the Odyssey program makes us engaged citizens and smarter and better people. **(Ngina Ali)**



Welcome to the Odyssey Project. No matter how tough it may seem, press your way on. Come to class. Never give up on learning about yourself, your history, dreaming about your future, and making it become a

reality. **(Lawana Diagne)**



Be prepared for a journey. Prepare yourself to laugh, to cry, and to be taken aback. Prepare yourself to be captivated. This was more than just a class; on Wednesday, I knew I had a safe haven. I

came to a place that offered me comfort and knowledge. I came in with nothing to lose.

You have to put yourself in a path to be who you want to be, to do what you want to do and to excel. Be prepared to be mesmerized and to find that you are not much different from Plato or Socrates. Do not take this course lightly, as what you are expecting will be totally different. **(Felica Thomas)**



First, let me say it was a treat to be a part of Odyssey 2016/17. I've had my share of setbacks and trials during this time. However, I can say I've grown so much. I've gotten to know and share my journey with my classmates. We've

had several positive discussions about current events and tied them to the works of Socrates, Whitman, Blake, Chopin, Shakespeare, and many others. You will be exposed to so many forsaken art forms. You will get to visit the Chazen Museum and get to complete your own personal inventory of the works, from various eras of art history. You will develop and appreciate the humanities, reading, and writing. It is indeed a terrific opportunity you will never forget. **(Spencer Gamble)**

Welcome to the beginning of this revolving door to your future. No matter what, don't give up; breathe



and take it all in. Take every opportunity to discuss your next step after Odyssey. The entire experience will help you open up who you are and what you want to be.

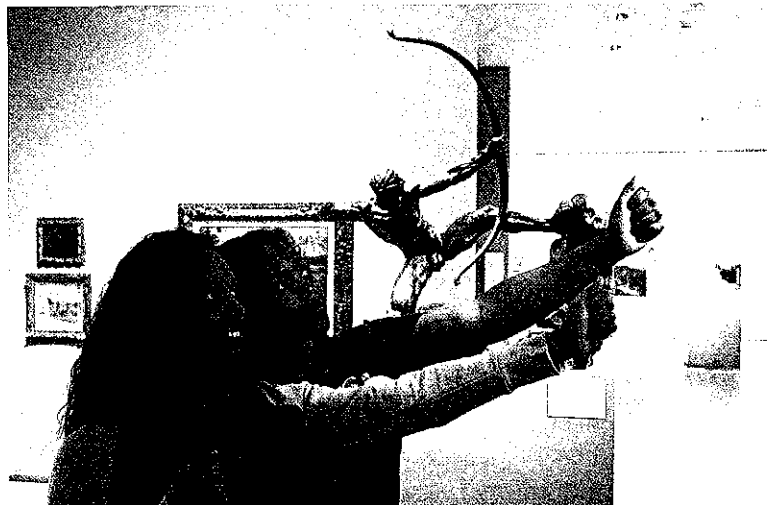
Odyssey is one of the best things that has ever happened to me. I now look forward to the rest of my "odyssey." Let your odyssey guide you!! Be the inner rock star you are!

**(Alyanna Cooper)**



Let me say, "welcome." Odyssey is your step to a brighter future, whether you are pursuing a career in higher education or seeking personal gain.

I love the alternative style that Emily, Kevin, Coach, and all the other instructors use to help us learn and practice what we learn. You will enjoy this class to the fullest. The kindness and unconditional help you get from this class will never be forgotten. Wallow and soak up all the different ideas and perspectives you get from your classmates. Learn from each other. Be the future of the United States of America. **(Joy Bally)**







Ready, set, buckle up your seatbelt. You are in for an exciting new odyssey. I know too well that gut-wrenching feeling that you are all having, walking into a room full of 30 plus new people with different views, backgrounds,

beliefs, and religions. This is what makes Odyssey so great. Soon you will build close relationships with one another. Odyssey will become your home away from home, your escape. You will yearn for Wednesdays to roll around to discuss the homework from last week. My advice to you is that when you are going through hard times outside of school, don't give up! Emily and Kevin will be your shoulder to cry on. They believe in you and want you to succeed. Take advantage of Kevin. Don't hesitate to talk about your thoughts and ideas. Kevin will help you bring your ideas to life.

Brace yourself for the odyssey to come. Before you know it, May will be here, and you will be writing your letter to the class of 2019. Congratulations, and welcome to the Odyssey family. **(Asha Green)**



I would like to congratulate you because if you are reading this, it is because you are very lucky, and now you are a part of this amazing family. Odyssey has been the best thing that ever happened to me. In here I learned things that schools

don't teach. I get all the help I need, and the most important thing is that Odyssey helps me to feel that it's possible to be whatever I want to be. I'm sure you will find many wonderful things that are priceless. I recommend you to force yourself to do the assignments because you'll be surprised at the things you are capable of creating.

Make sure to use the resources and the tutors



because Odyssey has the best tutors and the best team to help you on whatever you need. When my kids are in the childcare they provide, I don't feel guilty doing my homework because I know they are having fun. Congratulations and make us proud of your success. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**



Dear Class of 2018, don't stop looking forward. Whatever brought you to this moment needs to remain a focal point in your decision making. This beautiful opportunity is our construction project, so grab the gloves and hammers because there's work to

be done. Demolish those walls of fear and the ceilings of doubt, pull weeds from the garden of your mind, and dig deep to find the resolve to see this through. Build pillars that support your aspirations, open up that floor space to learn something new, but remember to save room for the library of memories you'll gather along the way. When the paint dries and you stand in front of your accomplishment, what will you see? Ask yourself and apply the answer to this year and even everyday life. We are the foremen of our future, so let's get to it! **(Anthony Jefferson)**

# EDITORIALS



## **Stop the Jim Crow Prison System** **By Ngina Ali**

My son Javonta has been incarcerated and has been treated poorly. Having my son tell me that he is sleeping on the floor brought tears to my eyes because no one

should be treated like an animal. It's bad enough he has to be away from family and friends. To endure this treatment is wrong.

Why do African Americans suffer more in the criminal justice system than other American populations throughout Wisconsin? Your loved ones are shipped far away from families who don't always have access to rural locations. In African American neighborhoods, there is more policing, profiling, and inequity! You even find in public schools that police look at African American students like perps and mistreat them!

The inequity for ex-prisoners is unjustifiable! When prisoners get out of prison, why do they have to pay for their own supervision? They already paid their dues! You arrest African Americans, charge them with some crime, put them on parole, and if they miss a couple of parole meetings, they are arrested, charged, and put back in jail! It is a cycle of continued criminal justice supervision for too many African Americans!

Also, why can't felons vote once they have completed their jail sentence? Why can't they vote in a state like Wisconsin? That is a great way for some politicians to suppress voter participation. There is too much racial bias in

our community and our country. As an African American mother of two young men and a grandson on the way, it breaks my heart to have to suffer with my sons, to have to see men with so much potential being determined as pre-teens to end up in a Jim Crow prison system!



## **Break the Cycle of Abuse** **By Simone Bell-Perdue**

We need to break the cycle of abuse. Did you know that before the age of 18 one out of every four girls is sexually abused and one out of every six boys is sexually

abused? Nearly 70% of all reported sexual assaults occur to children ages 17 and under. 30% or 40% of victims are abused by a family member. As a country, we need to talk about the rape culture in society instead of keeping it in the shadows. Yes, I used the word rape. It's what we need to use instead of being afraid of it and using the word sexual assault.

We don't want to be out of our comfort zone. It's not about comfort; it's about teaching our kids safety, what's right, and the importance of telling

us if something doesn't feel right. Kids and teenagers are ashamed of saying "Mom, I was assaulted." We need to teach them that if you said "no" it doesn't matter what you were wearing or if you were drinking. No means no. There is no way around the word no. We need to break the cycle of abuse.





### **Stop Global Warming By Belem Calixto**

How can we help with global warming? Personally, I think that we all should start being conscious about global warming. There are a lot of things going on. There are

different species of animals endangered, a lot of pollution, rising levels of water, and a changing climate. There are people that don't even care about it. Some governments just think about politics and how to make their country "safe"; they don't even think that there will be no safe country without a future.

Sometimes I think that if I have kids there will be no animals, no nature, and no clean planet for them to come into. So let's think about what plants/flowers/trees are needed for bees and any other animals/insects that use them. Also another big one is to support any activists willing to help. We should try to use bicycles, subways, or even walk to work on a daily basis to help reduce pollution. We should just try to help our planet stay alive for a while longer; anything will help. Future generations will appreciate what we do now.



### **Do You Really Care about Restroom Users? By Alyanna Cooper**

Here is a question you should ask yourself every time you use a public restroom. Do you really care who's in the next stall next to

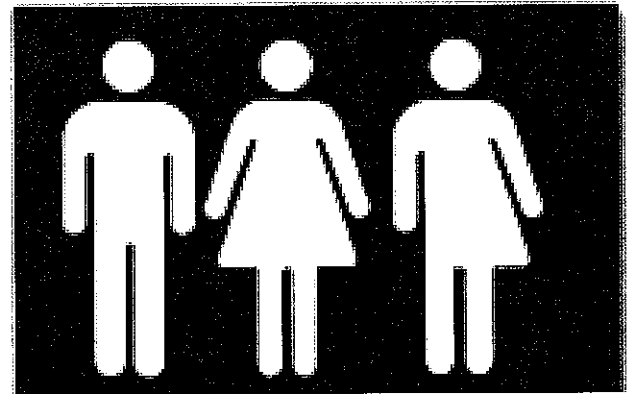
you? If so, then why? Is it because of your own insecurities, government policy, social media, or religious belief?

Our genders were decided for us at birth; however, our body goes through hormonal, physical, and mental changes at puberty. Who is to decide what we identify as? While sitting in a

stall, why does it matter who is really sitting next to you doing the same exact thing?

Because of our society and laws used to restrain, restrict, and prevent the public's ability to live their lives as free individuals, our bathrooms are now a place of controversy. A person who is living as a female or male regardless of their physical attributes is being forced into a bathroom that is defined by who they no longer are.

Your voice as an American citizen and voter gives you the power to make change in the future of these people's lives. Do you really care who is next to you in a stall in a public bathroom, and why?



### **The Post-Segregation Segregation By Anthony Jefferson**

The current set-up of many public school systems in our area does little to promote cultural integration. While programs like ESL are essential to helping foreign students acclimate, often

ESL students are grouped away from English-speaking students a majority of the time. This routine isolation leads to a divide, preventing a cultural exchange that could very well enrich all. It may be necessary to educate in a native language for sheer comprehension; however, we cannot let it overshadow the need for new experiences and firsthand knowledge.





### **Recognize American Corruption** **By Marisol Gonzalez**

Most people think that corruption doesn't exist in the U.S.; however, corruption does exist in many forms, including with multinational corporations, the political system,

the prison system, healthcare, banking, the school system, and everywhere.

Large corporations don't pay taxes. Instead, the city or town pays them to put their business in that place. Many times small businesses can't afford to keep up with paying their taxes, and big corporations kill small business.

The corruption in politics happens when anybody with power/money finances political campaigns. In return, when candidates are elected they pay back by doing whatever the financier asks them to do.

Slavery still exists in the U.S. but now they call it incarceration. The prisons are a multi-million dollar private business making money off the cheap labor of the prisoners, who mostly are poor blacks and Latinos. Did you know that prisoners can't vote?

People die in the U.S. because health insurance doesn't want to spend money on people. In the U.S. a bottle of painkillers costs \$120 while in Cuba it costs five cents.

Bankers commit fraud leaving families without homes, but they don't go to jail; instead, they save their money in legal tax havens.

The school system is corrupt because all Americans should have the same opportunities for education wherever they live. They shouldn't spend most of

their lives paying for their college degree. Corruption exists in the US. Do most people not know this, or do they know but ignore it?

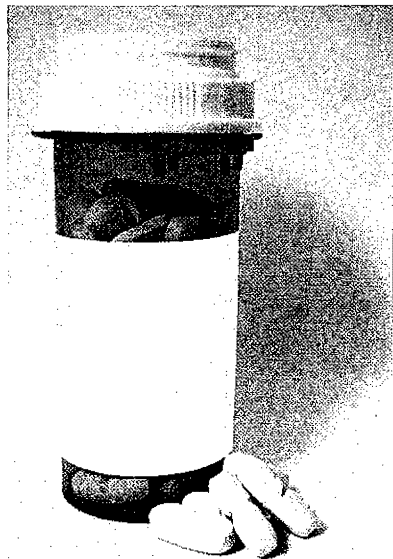


### **Americans Should Travel** **By Nathaniel Lake**

Americans live and die 150 miles from their home, but why does this matter? Humans are pack animals; we learn from those in our immediate surrounding, and our ideals and values stem from those

in it. We learn quickly what traits will help us achieve social acceptance, while casting out those that are unfavorable. In this process we build communities which strip away characteristics or qualities of individuals that don't fit the status quo. Traveling gives an individual a chance to expand the social horizon, come in contact with different ideals, and push and challenge preconceived prejudices to the breaking point. "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts," said Mark Twain.

Without travel, we can never really know how other humans live. It broadens your field of perspective, shattering borders put in place by the surroundings you were born into. It gives you a chance to expand on previous concepts of reality, while stripping away your fears of the unknown. In the end, travel gives people a chance to come in contact with their true selves without inhibitions or restrictions.





### **Do Not Drop Out of High School**

**By José Mendoza**

Many Latino teenagers drop out of high school for different reasons. One of the reasons is because they are not

American citizens, and they believe that they will not be able to pursue a higher education. Many times students feel inferior to the peers. The students think that they are not college material. Another reason is because the students don't have the support from their parents. Many times they need to find a job to support themselves. They want to make their own money and lose interest in continuing school. Some Latino teenagers drop out of high school because they get pregnant. When they have their child, they need to take care of the baby, and then it's almost impossible to go back to school.

If I could change something to help the Latino teenagers to finish high school and continue their education, I would try to encourage parents to motivate their children. Some suggestions are to monitor their behavior, help with financial support, and push them to finish school. The parents should invest time and money in their children's education

instead of buying luxuries because material items will not last long but education will be forever.



### **Don't Fear Muslims**

**By Ahmad Nahas**

Living in the United States of America has taught me two things: first, you can always achieve your goals if you work hard for it; second, the

obstacles in your way become

harder depending on your beliefs, gender, and ethnicity. . . . America had always been the land of dreams and hopes to me. Yet that very land which I hope to live in has a very deep fear and misunderstanding of me and my kind. I'm Muslim and proud of what I believe in. Being looked at differently didn't stop me from moving forward. However, that was not the case for many others who gave up on their hopes in the face of this obstacle. The broken dreams of those people motivated me to speak louder to convince those who have doubts that Muslims can be peaceful American doctors, lawyers, scientists etc.

Now that our new president has shown his concern and asked us why we have come here, we have to battle to prove our

innocence. Those so-called jihadists are stepping on our moral beliefs, tarnishing the peace that we stand for and disgracing our teachings. As a Muslim, I only want to make the American dream stronger and to make sure all of us have freedom of religion. Coming here was a decision I do not regret taking because I know that in this land if I can dream it, I can achieve it. Now to answer that question I will use this as a platform to say I am here for "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."





### **Driver's Licenses in Wisconsin**

**By Grisel Tapia Claudio**

Have you ever had the feeling of worry for not being able to get to places when your car is broken? Then, of course, you start thinking on how you will get to work, bring your children to school, get to a doctor's visit, buy food and groceries, or cope with small children during the cold winter in Wisconsin.

Well, let me tell you that this is an everyday reality for many Latino families in our state. I'll tell you about my friend Miguel, who has been living undocumented in Wisconsin for the last 22 years and has four children. Miguel's brother is a US citizen and has been waiting for his pending application for a sibling-sponsored green card, now 17 years in process.

Two and a half years ago, Miguel's apartment was burglarized; one of the investigating officers started following him for months and pulled him over a few times for driving without a driver's license. Miguel decided to go to the police station to tell them that the officer was harassing him. Miguel talked in front of a judge about the situation, and he said to the judge, "What is the worse crime – driving without a driver's license, or not providing the needs for my family?" Then the judge put a restriction order on the investigating officer.

Please know that if an undocumented individual gets pulled over three times by law enforcement for driving without a driver's license, that individual becomes a criminal. Then it can lead to an arrest. In jail the person can face deportation and end with the separation of a family.

In Wisconsin before the REAL ID came in effect on May 2005, people could get a driver's license. Now, everyone who applies for a driver's license has to provide their legal status in the country, and this is a big issue for families like Miguel's.

The solution to this problem is to provide driver's licenses for all. For example, the state of California Assembly Bill 60 (AB-60), allows everyone in the US to apply for a California driver's license. People can apply for a driver's license as long as they can prove their identity and California residency, as well as pass all required tests.

Wisconsin should offer driver licenses for all. We are all human beings, and everyone deserves to feel safe!!



### **Break Free of a Regimented Life**

**By Joy Bally**

"A resource-based economy is fair. If you don't have equal purchasing power it's not a democracy. Democracy is a con game to give people illusions of freedom."

Jacque Fresco

Life is regimented, and we have no control over it. We are robots; we are dogs in a machine. For me it is not the life I want, but it's impossible to have a life that is not subjected to a monetary system. If you see the movie "Metropolis," you will get a clear view of how regimented our system is, such as the government, our school system, and our jobs. One non-regimented example that pertains to me is that I really love learning. I really, really enjoy my Odyssey classes because it allows me to learn at my own pace. Odyssey treats me as an individual; we get into multiple ways of learning, like acting, going on field trips. This class gives you the details on how you can think outside the box. All these alternative ways of learning hold my interest.

To everyone listening to this editorial, what would you want? Will you use your education for a regimented life that would make you another dog in the machine, or will you use it to be creative and independent?





### **Ask Questions about Vaccines** **By Felicia Thomas**

Zaire Thomas (10/22/15-3/7/16);  
Princeton Hunt (3/14/16-5/21/16);  
Madison Grant (10/25/14-  
1/15/16): These are the names of  
three of many children who have

passed away as a result of vaccines. What these mothers have discovered after their loss will surprise you and provide you insight on a controversial topic.

In today's world, we assume and expect that doctors know what's best for our children. We expect them to be knowledgeable in all areas of medicine. We expect them to be well-versed and able to answer any questions we ask, such as "What's in the vaccine that you are giving my child, and what are its side effects?" We as Americans are expected to vaccinate our kids, not ask questions, and simply go with the social norms that our society has bestowed upon us. These days vaccines have been leading to injury and in some cases death. However, these deaths have not been specifically linked to vaccines. Parents have started to research and investigate vaccines and their ingredients. Parents have started to complete exemption forms to opt out of shots.

Mercury is defined as a heavy, silver-white, highly toxic metallic element used in thermometers, barometers, and pesticides. Formaldehyde is a colorless, toxic, carcinogenic gas having a suffocating odor, usually derived from methyl alcohol by oxidation. I will keep it to these two for ease of understanding purposes.

If you spill mercury when you drop a thermometer, this is considered hazardous to your health and in some cases it is suggested that you contact poison control. Formaldehyde is considered hazardous because it is harmful

if inhaled or passed through the skin.

These are two of the ingredients in vaccines. If they are harmful in such a way, why are they being injected into babies that have not had the opportunity to develop an immune system? Why are they pushed so hard onto parents? When you have a doctor or nurse who cannot name one ingredient in a vaccine, how and why do we trust them? While in school, why is there not a specific lesson devoted to shots, as I no longer call them vaccines?



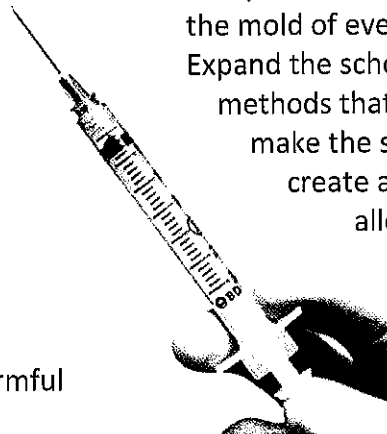
### **Break the Mold** **By Ave Thorpe**

For the last 15 years I have been preparing my children for prison. I send them to a facility. Once they arrive, they go to their canteen quarters, grab a food tray, and wait

in a single-file line for their alternative to real food to be slopped on their trays. Afterwards, they walk the dimly-lit halls until they reach their cells, and that's where they proceed throughout the rest of their day listening to their guards give them orders that are supposed to teach them academically but are not conducive because material is not presented in the method by which they learn.

Why do I send my children to a place that's modeled after the prison system each day? Well, it's called school and is mandatory.

Every child doesn't learn the same, so let's break the mold of every child being taught the same. Expand the school curriculum to include teaching methods that are intriguing to black students, make the school lunches nutritious, and create a curriculum that is inclusive, allowing the children to be involved instead of just grading them on how well they follow orders.





### **Support Local Black Businesses** **By Cherri Sorrells**

Many of you may not know this, but in addition to the Odyssey Program, I attend an intensive IT boot camp for 32 hours each week. I am tasked with creating a website in three weeks, and I have chosen to spotlight local black businesses in Madison. I'm not going to tell you which specific businesses I have partnered with or the products and services they offer. Instead, I would like to tell you why it is so important to shop locally and support black businesses in Madison.

When residents of Dane County buy locally, it has a huge impact on the county's economy. When we go a step further and support local black businesses, those businesses in turn multiply your dollars by supporting other local black businesses in the communities we live and work in. Low income disparities and poverty will decrease, while charities, suppliers, and communities specific to Madison receive benefits. Some argue that prices tend to inflate when shopping locally or that this notion screams discrimination. In fact, the quality of locally made and sold products cannot be compared to their conglomerate counterparts. The only thing discriminating is not supporting business and people overall who are underrepresented in our county. Madison prides itself on being a culturally diverse city that invites people of all backgrounds. In order to ensure the city's representation is accurate, I urge you to step outside of your comfort zone and spread your local dollars to other

communities that you aren't familiar with. I challenge you to allocate your spending power to a local black business that shares your values.

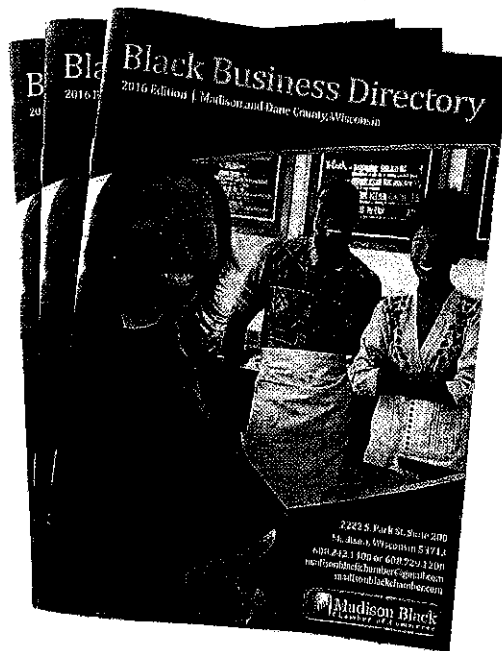


### **Corrupt System** **By Jessica Tucker**

There I was, the summer of 2016, a single homeless mother. I was practically living out of a van stuffed with our belongings, going from friends to friends. I finally was blessed with the opportunity to get approved for an apartment in Cottage Grove. I immediately went searching for assistance. I was baffled when the lady said there was no point because I "made too much to qualify" at \$14 an hour for the two of us. I couldn't wrap my head around the fact that I didn't make enough to get an apartment but made too much to qualify for assistance. That's when I realized we had a bad system.

People who are on assistance are always stereotyped as "lazy" and "wanting everything handed to them." This is not always true in all circumstances, such as mine. I feel as though this system is geared towards keeping us where we are so that we don't want to progress. If progress is made, it will lead to getting less assistance. Less assistance then instills the fear of losing that crutch that most of us with low incomes lean on.

I don't believe that assistance should be abolished, but I believe that there needs to be some type of updating and restructuring. First off, they need to update the average living expenses. The maximum rent that can be claimed is \$450. If you can find that in Madison, I bet a lot of people would like to know



about it. Also, there needs to be a way to weed out the ones who are solely relying on assistance to not better themselves. I would be all for drug testing and an interview process. In this interview process, they should include some type of career and goal counseling to show they are making efforts to eventually be off assistance.

I understand the stereotype of being on assistance, but that is because there are many out there abusing the system. I believe that the system needs to be updated and restructured in a way to build up the people of our communities. I can tell you right now that I, for one, can't wait to be off assistance for good!



**Find a New Way to See  
By Johnnie Walton**

You can't overcome hate with hate; only love changes hate. Sure, you can make laws to protect others from racism and all the other isms, but they don't

change hearts. No. We need a new way to see. What I'd like is for whoever is listening to get a set of glasses so you can move out of the cave and into the light. In that light, you see each other not as objects to be used but as those to be understood and loved. Then it's not about who I am and what I want or who you are and what you can take from me, but who we can be together.

Here's the big BUT. You can't buy those glasses from Amazon, and you don't get them by being political or conventionally religious. Here is what could happen if your heart had glasses. When a homeless man asks for something, you don't avoid them or give a dollar. You look him in the eye, affirm his dignity as a human being, suggest you have a meal together, and ask him to tell his story. And you don't feel/act like a do-

gooder; it's just human to human. Instead of giving him a fish, you go fishing together. If you're an employer and you find a job applicant has a criminal record, instead of making a judgment (uh oh, bad person), you ask the person to tell their story. You ask questions. How did this happen? What do you want for your life now? How can I help you because others have helped me?

If you're a landlord and you want to raise the rent just to make more money, instead stop and ask yourself, can my tenant afford this? What will happen to them if I do this? Is their potential homelessness really worth more, more, more for me?

If you see me (a tall black man from the inner city), please don't see me in your stereotypes, prejudices, and opinions. What if you stopped seeing me through your ideas and began to feel me, to see me as a human being, not just another "it" like your money or your car or your dog? If we talk to person to person, here is what you might find:

I want to love and be loved, just like you.  
I want the opportunity to express who I am, the uniqueness that is me, just like you.

I want to feel safe and secure and free, just like you.

One day I'll die, just like you.





### **The Knowledge** **By Spencer Gamble**

In complete darkness, we are all the same. It's only our knowledge and wisdom that separate us.

If you want to be in control, you've got to be in the know. Whether you're black, white, gay, straight, we all have that special need to belong. We do. We are all human.

Don't judge, don't mock what you don't understand. All of our blood is red; we live, we die. Spreading hate behind the lie, you won't find knowledge in a pipe, while too many lives go up in smoke, all because we condemn what we do not know nor understand. Acceptance is key. We are all here to stay. Don't let your eyes and ignorance deceive you.



### **Water** **By Susana Gomez**

Water is one of the essential necessities for human life to exist. It is also a right as a human being to have access to clean water. So when I hear

that corporations want to privatize water, it infuriates me. Companies are willing to lose their morals in order to make it harder for people to have clean and inexpensive public water. This would mean that city governments would not have a say in decent procedures for water cleaning and people would have no say in what is put into our water and sewer system. The only thing that corporations would worry about is their stakeholders and their own profits.

Any person who cares about their health and the future of themselves and their loved ones should oppose this inhuman way of life. The

world would turn into chaos because prices would rise. There would be no one able to stop these power-hungry parasites from taking over something so essential and vital not just to human life but to life itself. So I ask myself and ask you, do you choose life, or do you choose the way the corporate world wants you to live? Just remember, water equals life, and you do not want to undermine that right to life.

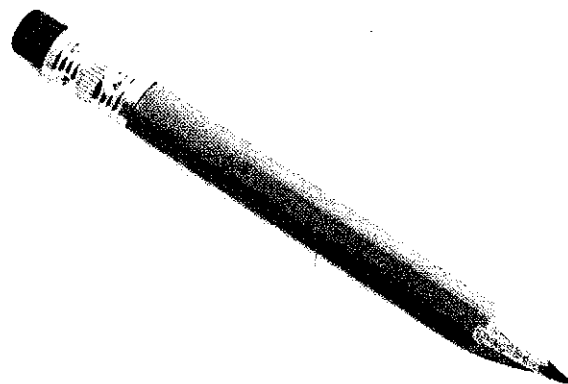


### **No one is Perfect** **By Musab Naji**

I have learned that we all make mistakes. That is why pencils are made with erasers. I have learned from life that there is always room to correct the mistakes, learn,

work harder, and even grow as a person. Do not be shy to say you made a mistake. Even though scientists make mistakes sometimes, they never give up. Instead, they keep trying until they get things right.

Everyone has made mistakes in their lives. No one has learned everything the world has to offer them. Not one person who has walked on this planet has claimed the title of being perfect. Everyone has flaws, and being imperfect is just human.





### **Unfair Housing By Shanon Holmes**

The current administration is considering a six billion dollar cut to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. I think it is a

huge problem because this money would help people receive fair housing. This affects the lives and health of real people like you and me. Imagine being told "no" numerous times within 48 hours after putting in over ten applications for housing. Imagine being told "no" with no further explanation as to why.

I'm a single black mother. I feel as if landlords use that against me. I was once raised on Simpson St., but now I go to apply and am told "no." Now I have to wait five years to apply again. It's so frustrating to feel like I'm knocking on a door begging to get in, but there's no one on the other side listening. I feel less of a human not being able to shelter my one-year-old son in a place I once called home.

I believe if there was a way to obtain the data of how landlords are picking tenants, there would be proof that I'm being kept out of the nicer neighborhoods and forced to accept the run-down buildings. It's purposely being set up this way. We need something like the TV show "Undercover Boss" to look at landlords. We need third parties to have more oversight to insure fair housing for all.

### **Stop White Washing History By Maria Dary**

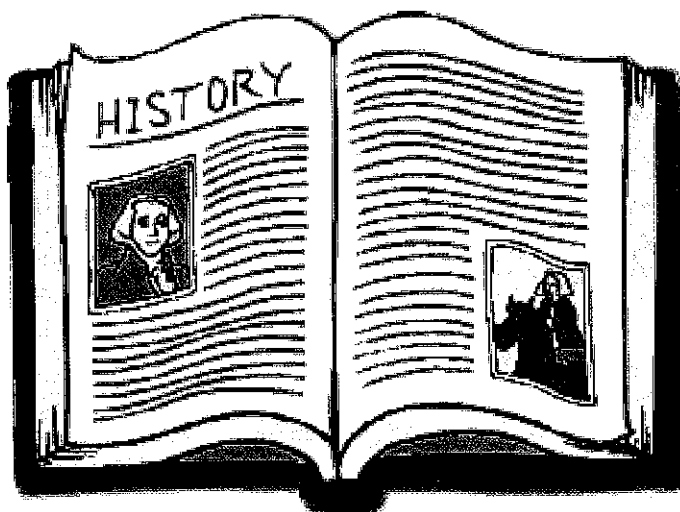
Every year a new group of children enters our education system and leaves that same system with a jaded historical perspective, having learned that our



minority groups have always been and always will be powerless and silent. The other day I was listening to Sean Hannity talk about how liberals are attempting to change history by inventing

the historical victimization of minority groups. The idea that liberals are behind "inventing history" is constantly disproved by the large amount of articles, books, and personal stories of marginalization.

I propose creating a class for the sole purpose of teaching our children the history of the oppressed from their perspective. Every year, our children would choose an oppressed group and learn their history from start to finish. In addition, they would still be taught the U.S. History class, which would hopefully lead to them drawing comparisons between U.S. History and others' history. It would hopefully assist in teaching children how to empathize and properly learn their history and the history of others. It would also help create critical thinking skills and cultivate empathy. We must learn that the "White Washed" history we have been taught only leads to history being forgotten. As they say, forgetting history dooms us to repeat it.

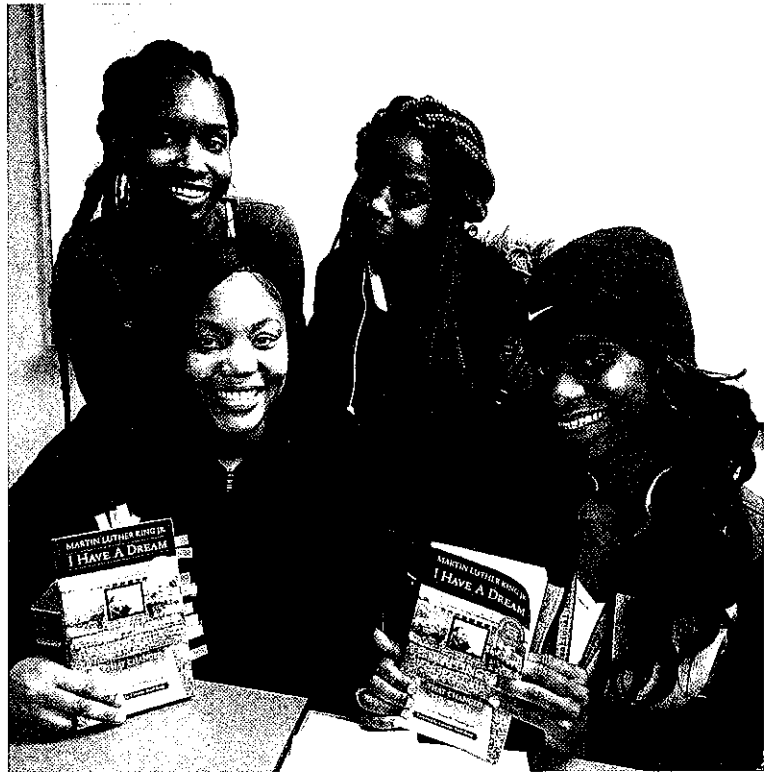




# I HAVE A DREAM

I have a dream... that all of what Martin Luther King, Jr. fought for is not in vain. We must continue to fight the fight together for our human rights and for all the people around the world to be able to live free from discrimination.

I have a dream that we all see each other like brothers and sisters no matter the color of our skin, the language we speak, the country where we were born, the faith we believe in, or how much money we have in the bank. I have a dream that one day I will be free from the golden chains of living in this country without the opportunity to return to my home country; to live my life at the fullest with my family by traveling together in my country, to buy our house and live without fear of separation. **(Grisel M. Tapia Claudio)**



I have a dream that one day I will be able to tell my daughter we made it. I have a dream that my daughter will be able to not be afraid to walk down the street without being harassed. I have a dream that the school systems will change so my daughter will be able to feel comfortable in her own skin. I have a dream that my daughter will know acceptance within herself so she will love both sides of where she comes from: Italian, Black, white, Irish, Native American. I have a dream that my daughter will not have to say, "Hands up, don't shoot" because she will not have a fear of police officers because maybe, just maybe, they will not rush to judgment of our Black children.

I have a dream that we as a country will stop rushing to judgment on others who are not from the United States. They are not all terrorists. We, as Americans, have put blinders up and need to

take a step back and realize we are the ones who terrorized them. . . .

I have a dream that my daughter can be able to be a kid, and we will not have to talk to her about what to do when you get pulled over while driving or what to do when a shooter comes into school or what to do when men are trying to follow her home from her bus stop. Yes, I understand as parents we have to teach them things so they are safe, but why do we have to have a constant worry on our mind? We will never be able to live to the fullest and give our children the best of the best.

I have a dream that my daughter will live in a world full of peace. Everyone says it isn't possible, but I still have hope and faith that it is possible for us to come together as one and stop the hatred. **(Simone Bell-Perdue)**

I have a dream...

That one day, the people will stand up and take over the power they have given to the government, where people believe in themselves to make their own destiny. Where people can be free to travel all around the world without being called an "alien" or "illegal." Where society is willing to share the world, and there are no borders but bridges to cross freely to any nation to carry and bring good examples, new ideas for the overcoming of all nations.

I have a dream...

Where no child is abused or forced to leave their innocence and childhood. Where children are being raised with values like equity, love, humbleness, honesty, respect for themselves and for others. Where parents are taught how to respect their children, how to provide for them instead of spoiling them. Where parents can be providers of guidance and motivation instead of imposing, giving orders, or threatening them to do what the parents want. Where parents care for their children, but also other children in need. Where parents let children make mistakes and learn from them, instead of giving all the answers and saving them from consequences.

I have a dream...

Where schools are not a manufacturer of future workers but an institution where children can discover their passions, their full potential to be in this world, whatever they want to be. Where children can feel happy to go to school every day because they want to learn and because the schools provide the tools they need to build their dreams, to build their lives and to build our future.

I have a dream...

Where money is just another way to trade, but not indispensable to live. Where people don't obsess about money, and avarice doesn't exist. Where big corporations don't exist – that way, the wealth of the world won't be just for the 1% of the people

like today but instead will be distributed equally in the world. Where money is not more important than people. Where money doesn't determine your future or your children's future. Where money isn't a way to manipulate the power of the law on our society and government. Where money doesn't represent who you are or who you will be, but instead your abilities, your intelligence, and your hard work that it takes you to achieve your goal. Where money is not a barrier to saving lives.

I have a dream...

Where the elderly are being respected and valued for their knowledge, wisdom, and their experience in life, instead of being forgotten in a nursing home.

I have a dream...

Where the main goal of humanity will be to help, love, and take care of each other and our planet, our natural resources, our ecosystem, and all of the species that we share the planet with.

I have a dream...

Where families of different colors and countries work together to create a society where race is not important, and the solid base will be respect, unity, compassion, and love.

I have a dream...

Where all of the people respect each other's sexual preference. And that people who are born with or end up with disabilities are given respect and love, and we as a society use these opportunities to help.

I have a dream...

Where all human rights are respected.

I had a dream...

That one day I would be among the students at the University of Wisconsin, and thanks to Odyssey, my dream came true. Let's not just dream but make our dreams come true. **(Marisol Gonzalez)**

I have a dream that my children will discover for themselves that being Black is a privilege; that, as King dreamed, my children and my children's children and their children will not be judged poorly by their skin color but celebrated for having black skin; that having rights, having freedom, and maintaining democracy will be the privilege of all Americans. We have to do what we know is right and have our voice be heard.



2017 is not the end of democracy in America. 2017 is when having an outspoken racist clown in the White House provides a beginning for all of us—white, black, brown, gay, poor, middle class, rich, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and others. Now is the time to end injustice and to pledge to walk together. We must pledge to maintain hope. This is our dream, to unite and work together to stop the wall, to stop the prison industry, to stop hate. I believe, like King, that this is a beginning for myself, my children, and my children's children. We must stand up and fight and have hope for our rights. **(Ngina Ali)**

I have a dream that I find out who I am. By finding out who I am, I understand who you are, and who we are together. I find out that there is no such thing as race. I find out that money, things, and titles on your name are only making it harder to see ourselves in one another in order to really reach our full potential. I find out that feeling has been around a lot longer than thinking, and that's why people don't understand the feelings of others. Sometimes, they don't even understand their own feelings. I found all of this out from a dream where nobody said words. All I really remember from the dream is someone holding my hand. **(Johnnie Walton)**

I have a dream that one day I will live stress-free. I will have financial stability and security. I will have

my career working as an established social worker for at-risk youth. I will be married to my life-long partner of 12 years. I will have my dream home. My family and I will be able to travel the world and go sightseeing. My family and I will start our own odyssey for greatness.

One day, I have a dream to be free. **(Asha Green)**

I have a dream... that all children grow up in a life free of drugs and violence. I have a dream that one day in the whole world, there will be no more crimes and injustices, no more hunger, no more illnesses, and no more discrimination.

I have a dream that one day all immigrant people living in this country become citizens, and they will be able to visit their family in their own countries. **(José Mendoza)**

I have a dream that one day everyone will have enough to keep them full, and no one will go to bed hungry. One day, there will be enough food for everyone and enough programs to help the starving so that even homeless and poor people will have enough food. This would help people have better lives because overcoming hunger is like getting over a giant wall in your way. I have a dream of seeing all the world peaceful and all people happy. I wish the war would end and that refugees would be able to go back to their homes. **(Musab Naji)**

I have a dream... that one day black lives will truly matter, where we can find a way to tear down the psychological barriers that have been embedded during slavery, where we can see that we are powerful, respectable to the capacity in which other races will begin to believe it.

I have a dream that one day the barriers that stress people out in life will no longer be a burden; we will have free college education, low-cost housing with no credit checks, free food, free healthcare, and higher work wages. **(Avé Thorpe)**

I have a dream... that one day my mother won't have to struggle anymore. In my dream, I see her stress-free. Smiling every day, she gets the help she deserves, surrounded by lots of love. I see she finally made it in her career, and all of her dreams and wishes have come true. **(Kendra Atkinson)**

I have a dream that someday I will be able to build a life where I can be surrounded by family and friends. All of us would be able to live near each other and be a part of each other's lives as we grow rather than separated by long distances. I have a dream that I will be able to build a family of my own, one where my children can grow up without having to know the hardships and struggles that I have faced. I have a dream that my parents will be able to watch my children grow up. They will be able to see how far we have all come from where we started. I have a dream that our country can heal and form a community where we all support one another and strive to make our country a better place for everyone. If we work to achieve this goal, we will all be able to find more success and happiness in our lives. I have a dream that our world can stop recognizing the things that make us different and rather start to recognize the things we share in common. These commonalities will help us connect with each other to build stronger relationships and

friendships. As long as we each keep an open mind and approach everyone with an open heart, I am positive that we can make these dreams become a reality for you, myself and everyone! **(Ahmad Nahas)**

I have a dream... that I will be living out-of-state, in Arizona. I will be attending a university to finish my bachelor's degree in nursing and then am accepted into medical school to become an OBGYN. I have a dream that I will soon become successful and be able to help and impact others. I have a dream my mother raises and succeeds with her bachelor's degree in the next few years. I have a dream that this world soon comes to its senses. I have a dream that the hatred dies down. I have a dream that I will be able to build my own house and continue to follow and live within the Lord. This is my DREAM! **(D'onna Atkinson)**

I have a dream of a place I can call home – a home where people accept me for how I dress, my hair, my preference of a partner. I have a dream that my family won't be judged by their accent, place of birth, or color of their skin, a world where no one is considered illegal because man decided to wall them off. My dream is full of color, but none is more cherished than another. **(Maria Dary)**

I have a dream that one day bright flashbulbs will blind me as my photo is being taken. This will be the day that I graduate with a college degree. I can already feel the silk gown slightly whisking the floor. I see smiling faces cheer as I go across the stage.

I have a dream that I will be fortunate enough to find my passion and earn a living doing so. This will provide the foundation to owning my own home. I dream about being able to leave something to my children that meant so much to me. **(Cherri Sorrells)**

I have a dream...

that one day the world shall rise above the  
ignorance and hatred that we have for one  
another.

I have but one dream that we will come together  
as a united state and not the United States.

I have but a dream that one day my black sons and  
daughters could walk the street and not be feared  
and afraid of an attack upon them.

I have a single dream that the dark days and cloudy  
nights be turned into something ever loving and  
bright, that one day race is no longer a factor, that  
finances are no longer a factor.

I have a dream that the justice and liberty of all will  
be granted.

I have but this dream.  
**(Felica Thomas)**

I have a dream...  
Love not hate  
Peace not war  
Food not hunger  
Shelter not homelessness  
Health not disease  
Education not ignorance  
Fulfillment not emptiness  
Sharing not selfishness  
Laughter not tears.

**(Joy Bally)**

I have a dream...  
Judgment will not be justice.  
Poverty is not a permanent way of life.  
Wealth is not given, must be earned or shared.  
People are not looked at as wrong because of who  
they love.  
Drugs become voided.  
Fighting is not a must.  
**(Alyanna Cooper)**



I have a dream...

Just a seed of faith  
with a few teardrops  
will blossom into many  
dreams coming true.

Family, life, faith, love  
and restoration, too.  
prioritizing your goals.

From career, continuing  
education to higher education  
to completion of Degree.

There is no limit. **(Lawana Diagne)**

I have a dream...

My son will live life, before it outlives him.

I have a dream, that he will excel  
regardless of the color of his skin.  
I have a dream, my son will dodge the  
streets, and education will take the lead.  
I have a dream that my son knows when  
dealing with authority  
respect is key, respect will most likely get  
you back safely to me.  
I have a dream, to believe my son will  
grow into a handsome little thing  
and find a strong woman to love him just  
as much as me.

I have a Dream. **(Shanon Holmes)**

I have a dream about this world having  
peace one day.

For its people one day to walk on every green field  
of grass,  
drive on every freeway or every dirt road of every  
country  
Without the need of a gun.  
I have a dream for world peace. **(Susana Gomez)**



I have a dream...that we can live our lives  
without judgment, scrutiny, and being  
despised.

A life full of wonderment and the hope of  
possibility flies.

The beauty of uncertainty can finally flow  
and leave all the ugliness for the haters to sow.  
It may happen one day, we will certainly see  
how good such a life would be.

To go into detail, I'm not sure it would rhyme. I  
spent my entire life believing in King's dream. I  
never was exposed to the trauma of "back  
when." He truly paved the way. I was offered  
almost every opportunity as a child. Being  
Black was different, but never something to be  
shameful for. I was able to sit with white girls  
and white boys, use whatever bathroom I  
chose. Didn't have to sit in the back of the bus  
but did anyway. I could sit back there and  
silently evaluate other passengers'  
shortcomings. Clearly, I've been liberated. As  
the years pass and my shyness evaporates, I  
feel as though nothing can stop me. **(Spencer  
Gamble)**

I have a dream of finishing school,  
Of educating myself for the future of my son,  
Of providing a life for my son that he will thank me  
for later.  
I have a dream of owning a home,  
Of being a higher power in a large company.  
I have a dream that my son will go to college,  
Of teaching him the importance behind it,  
Of teaching him the importance of credit.  
I have a dream that I will be able to put my son  
through college  
to reduce his risk of creating debt for himself.  
Most of all, I have a dream that I raise a young man  
to accept himself and others as they are  
without passing judgment and that he strives to be  
the best that he can be and I will be happy.  
**(Jessica Tucker)**



I have a dream about a beautiful sunset.  
An orange circle covered by clouds.  
Mild heat radiating on my skin.  
A garden hosepipe clasped in my palms,  
surrounded  
by different exotic trees.  
The smell of colorful flowers refreshing the air.  
Raised beds of my favorite veggies on either side  
of my footpath.  
The musky smell of wet earth captivating my  
senses.  
Oh, I dream of a moment so pure and so real.  
**(Sukai Yarbo)**

# ODYSSEY IN A SENTENCE

Odyssey has given me a place to grow. (**Ngina Ali**)

Odyssey has been the best experience of my life. (**D'onna Atkinson**)

Odyssey has motivated me to return to school and work hard. (**Kendra Atkinson**)

Odyssey exposed me to other classmates' ideas and thoughts that I'd never heard before. (**Joy Bally**)

Odyssey has changed the way I view life. (**Simone Bell-Perdue**)

In Odyssey we can laugh, talk, cry, etc. about anything and no one will judge us. (**Belem Calixto**)

Odyssey has helped me gain confidence in my writing. (**Maria Cardenas**)

Odyssey has given me hope for my future and my children's future. (**Alyanna Cooper**)

Odyssey showed me a side of myself that I never even knew I had when it comes to literature. (**Maria Dary**)

Odyssey has allowed me to learn about my culture and other cultures. (**Lawana Diagne**)

Participating in Odyssey is one of the best decisions I've made in a long time. (**Spencer Gamble**)

I'm on an Odyssey of words through Coach with new words like "agoraphobia." (**Susana Gomez**)

Odyssey is an awesome UW program. (**Marisol Gonzalez**)

Odyssey will forever be a part of me! (**Asha Green**)

Odyssey taught me it's important to read daily. (**Shanon Holmes**)

Odyssey helps us speak with a voice some of us didn't know we had. (**Anthony Jefferson**)

*Short Odyssey* is an oxymoron. (**Nathaniel Lake**)

Odyssey has made me a better person. (**Carissa Love**)

Odyssey changed my life because I am now more focused on my education. (**José Mendoza**)

Odyssey has transformed me. (**Ahmad Nahas**)

I am a person who doesn't like to study, but with Odyssey I do homework every week. (**Musab Naji**)

In Odyssey I've gained new family members in everyone. (**Victoria Patterson**)

If I had to describe Odyssey in one word I would choose *revolutionary*. (**Cherri Sorrells**)

Odyssey for me is a magical place where teachers understand my background. (**Grisel Tapia Claudio**)

Odyssey takes us on a journey to better ourselves. (**Felica Thomas**)

Odyssey has brought peace into my life and given me an outlet. (**Avé Thorpe**)

Odyssey instills hope, confidence, and knowledge into us all. (**Jessica Tucker**)

Odyssey has given me a foot into a door of a mansion of possibilities. (**Johnnie Walton**)

I love Odyssey and how we are able to freely express ourselves and interact with others. (**Kyisha Williams**)

Odyssey is helping me find myself in ways I never thought possible. (**Sukai Yarbo**)

# EXPLORING EMILY DICKINSON

*Fame is a bee.  
It has a song—  
It has a sting—  
Ah, too, it has a wing.*

In this poem, Dickinson talks about all the sides of fame. "It has a song" means it can be beautiful, with different melodies. "It has a sting" shows us the ugly and painful side of fame. The last line, "Ah, too, it has a wing," means that fame comes and goes; it is not always certain.

This poem reminds me of how celebrities are famous just for a while but all of that fades away. It just makes me feel that fame is not always good, and it is not forever. Eventually those things don't matter in the end. (**Susana Gomez**)

There is no ship like a book. Nothing is as powerful as written words accessible to all. Frederick Douglass taught us that literature can be the universe. Once you have the knowledge there is nobody who can take it away.

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

My personal response to this poem is that I am in the same boat as my Odyssey classmates in which we are all disadvantaged

adult students of color with different backgrounds looking for the opportunity of education. (**Grisel M. Tapia Claudio**)

*Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise*

*As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind—*

The connection between lightning dazzling children and the importance of a shocking truth seems relevant even today. It's a sort of satire with the cautionary message about cheeky subject matter, urging readers to keep their words interesting regardless of honesty. "Infirm Delight" seems like the fickle nature of people with the swaying opinion being the majority, so to appease you must have that "superb surprise." Looking at the poem in its entirety, I get the feeling of a bedtime story, just with a twisted moral.

Given that we live in an age of "fake news" and "alternative facts," this poem still holds true. The little white lie laces sentences from Capitol Hill to the playground, all because it's what gets the right reaction. This kind of work could easily be an editorial in some political paper today because of the biting, sad truth behind it. That's why I think it's one for all of us to remember. (**Anthony Jefferson**)

*God made a little Gention—  
It tried— to be a Rose—  
And failed—and all the Summer  
laughed—  
But just before the Snows*

*There rose a Purple Creature—  
That ravished all the Hill-- . . .*

Sometimes you have to wait your turn to shine. Others will laugh, but when it is your time to shine, everyone will be quiet. This reminds me of "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer." Everybody laughed because he was different, but there was a day when Santa needed him!

People may laugh at my dream now, but if I keep doing what I'm doing and am patient, nobody will be laughing later. (**Kendra Atkinson**)

*If I can stop one Heart from breaking  
I shall not live in vain  
If I can ease one Life the Aching  
Or cool one Pain*

*Or help one fainting Robin  
Unto his Nest again  
I shall not live in Vain.*

In this poem, I believe that Emily Dickinson is speaking about a life lived without love being a life lived in vain. She speaks about empathy and compassion, which seems like an easy accomplishment or concept, but unfortunately having others in your life who genuinely care and want to help is extremely

hard to come by. This life is hard, and once people have allowed the hardships in life to harden their hearts, it's also hard for them to receive this compassion. A broken heart, a life of aching, a robin fainting are all images that display defeat and despair.

After reading this poem, I realize that although life is rough for me, I would find comfort in helping others while I go through hard times, or perhaps I can be a testament to those that are experiencing the same hardships that I've been made to face. If I just go through these experiences and keep silent about them, allowing my heart to harden because of them, then I haven't fulfilled the purpose of my suffering, which is to grow compassion for others. (**Avé Thorpe**)



# SONGS OF OURSELVES

## Song of Ngina

I am Ngina  
 I am kind-hearted  
 I am a beautiful QUEEN of three kids named  
 Javonta, Alexis, and Isiah  
 I am a go-getter and go out for what I want  
 I have endured trials and tribulations but I  
 continue to move on  
 I am from a different galaxy  
 I am a daughter of Indian culture  
 I am a dreamer  
 I am a believer  
 I am a Biller Coordinator  
 I work at Meriter Hospital



## Song of D'onna

I am D'onna. I am a child of the Lord,  
 one who prospers through the journey He has planned for me.  
 These tribulations get to me as I try to succeed,  
 but I am on top of the world so nothing can stop me  
 from becoming my dream and staying focused in the game.  
 I am wise by the mind, but I could never define it within myself  
 until I began my journey. I am full of fun, respect, and love  
 ready to pour out onto this world upon these people.  
 I am who I am and I have a calling upon my life  
 that I am ready to live up to my highest potential.



## Song of Kendra

I am Kendra Atkinson.  
 I am full of attitude, ready to burst like a volcano.  
 I am like a butterfly ready to view the world.  
 I am a book full of life.  
 I have worked at many places doing the same thing.  
 I guess you can say my passion is caring for other people.  
 I went from Battle Creek, MI to Madison, WI.  
 These are places I feel most comfortable.  
 My family's main languages are Norwegian and Marshallese.  
 This is a little glimpse of me.  
*Kommol tata* (thank you very much in Marshallese)





### **Song of Simone**

I am Simone.  
I am a mom.  
I chase around a  
toddler while  
sometimes  
falling asleep with  
Cheerios in my  
hair.  
I forgot what  
sleep was.  
My daughter's laugh became  
my favorite sound.

I am creative.  
I love piecing words together  
and making them into  
art.

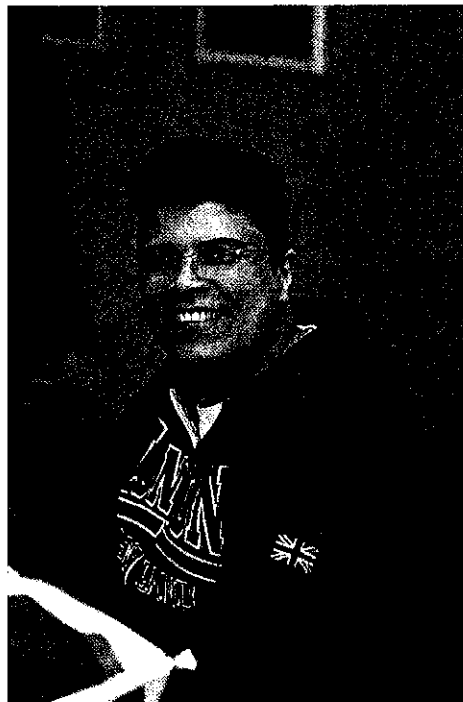
I am compassionate.  
I love people  
and enjoy seeing  
others learn to  
love themselves  
as I also learn  
to never forget to  
love me.

I am a fireball.  
I say what I mean  
and mean what I say.  
I am strong,  
overcame obstacles  
without looking  
how far it was  
going to take me.

I am love.  
I love hard sometimes,  
too hard.

I am smart.  
I used to believe  
I wasn't, but  
Odyssey has made me  
know I am.

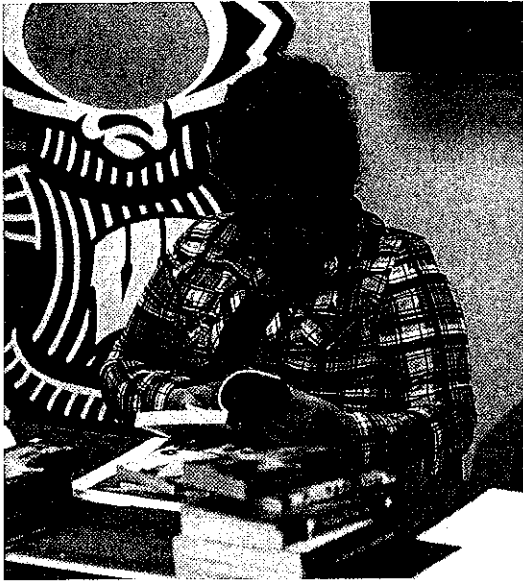
Odyssey has made me realize  
I am so much more  
than I believe I could have ever been.



### **Song of Joy**

I am Joy - full of life,  
I love to laugh and take  
the step that will make or  
break.

I rise tall and proud  
like coconut trees reaching  
for the sky.  
No matter what goes by -  
hurricanes, floods, strong  
winds,  
I stay strong and planted.



### Song of Belem

I am Belem Calixto,  
a weird name with no meaning  
but honorable and unique.  
I was born in a town that, like my name,  
is unique, and proud I am  
to have been born in Temascalcingo.  
Daughter of a hard working woman and man  
that every day show me that with hard work  
everything is possible.  
Green, white, and red are my colors that I never  
forget and that I proudly carry in my heart,  
and if someone asks me where I'm from,  
I proudly say that I am from Mexico.

*Mi nombre es Belem Calixto  
Un nombre raro and sin significado  
Pero unico y portado con honor  
Nacida en un pueblo que al igual que  
Mi nombre es unico y orgullosa estoy de haver nacida  
En Temascalcingo.*

*Hija de una mujer y hombre trabajadores  
Que todos los días me demuestran que con arduo trabajo  
todo es posible.  
Verde, Blanco y Roja son mis colores que jamas olvido y  
con mucho orgullo llevo en el corazón.  
Y si alguien me pregunta de donde soy, de Mexico les  
digo con orgullo y con honor.*

### Song of Maria Cardenas

I am the writer of my future.  
I am happy, crazy, funny.  
I am loved, I can love, I will love again.  
I am trying to find myself while rediscovering myself.  
I was lost, but I think I am almost found.  
I was gone for a long time, and it seemed impossible  
until one day I felt that the blindfold was ripped off.  
Since that day I can finally breathe.  
I'm alive, and I don't ever want to go back.



**Song of Maria Dary**

I am Maria-Teresa  
 raised by my mother  
 with the features of my father.  
 Two people created me,  
 One woman made me.  
 City after city, he  
 ran from the word that I  
 ran to:  
 Family.

Created by a culture  
 different from my surroundings.  
*mezclada pero pura.*

Never seen for who I really am  
 simply because my skin doesn't match  
 my first language.



I am named after a strong  
 independent woman.

I am fearless,  
 as she was fearless.

I am caring,  
 as she was caring.

I am Maria-Teresa.

I am two-sided.

My brown skin emerges in the  
 sunlight.

I have two homes,  
 separated by water,  
 But never distant in my heart.

**Song of Lawana**

I am Lawana, my family's youngest  
 I am Black, dark as velvet  
 I am Beautiful as can be  
 I am Loved by many  
 I am Likeable to plenty  
 I am Strong. I never stop.  
 I am Strength, the energy that fuels my flame.  
 I am all of who I am because my hometown  
 community deep in the heart of the south side  
 of Chicago's Englewood Neighborhood made me!

When all are asleep,  
 I am awake.  
 When you are not feeling well,  
 I am there to instruct and educate.

When you are weak,  
 I am there to pick you up.  
 When you are crying,  
 I will be right there to wipe away your tears.

I am dedicated to help  
 I enter to serve  
 I exit knowing I have  
 done all I can to help you.  
 I am Lawana.



**Song of Susana**

I am Susana  
 a Mexican woman  
 brought at a young age  
 to a foreign land.  
 Lost in translation:  
 Español or English?  
 wanting to belong to a land  
 but would the land want me?  
 I came to the USA at eight years old,  
 so young I can't even remember  
 my own home.  
 I don't have that longing to return;  
 my home is here.  
 I don't know if one day I will go  
 back to Mexico, but if I do, I hope it  
 is with open arms.

*Soy Susana*

*Una mujer Mexicana  
 Traida a una tierra  
 extranjera de niña.  
 Perdida en lenguaje  
 ¿Spanish o inglés?  
 Queriendo pertenecer  
 a una tierra pero  
 la tierra me querra?  
 Vine a USA a los 8 años, pero  
 no recuerdo mi barrio.  
 No tengo anhelo de regresar.  
 No sé si algún día  
 regresaría a México,  
 Pero espero que ese  
 día me reciban  
 Con los brazos  
 abiertos.*

**Song of Marisol**

I am Marisol  
 A hard working woman  
 proud of her heritage  
 proud of her language.  
 I give the opportunity  
 to others to learn other  
 cultures, to learn other  
 languages.

I am Marisol  
 Daughter, Sister, Wife, and Mother.  
 I'm your friend if you let me be.  
 If you are my friend,  
 you become a part of  
 my family.

*Soy Marisol.*

*Una mujer trabajadora  
 horgullosa de su herencia  
 horgullosa de su idioma.*

*Doy la oportunidad a otros  
 de aprender otra cultura  
 y otra idioma.*

*Soy Marisol  
 hija, hermana, esposa  
 y madre. Soy tu amiga  
 si me permites serlo.  
 Si no me habres las  
 puertas te lo perderas  
 porque cuando eres mi amiga,  
 te combietes en parte de mi familia.*



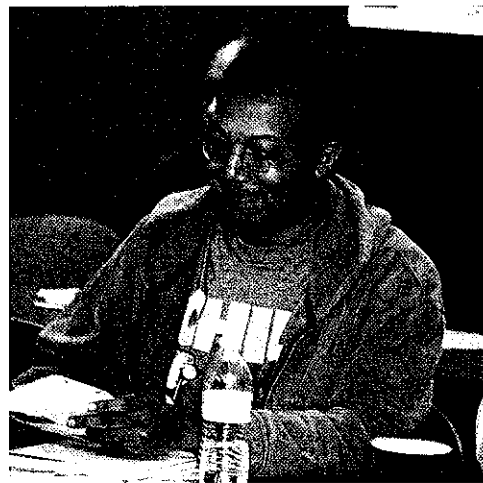
### Song of Asha

I am Asha Green.  
 I am the mother of Ashzianna, Parish, and Londynn.  
 I am a beautiful black Queen  
 I am a believer in one's self.  
 I am noble.  
 I am a lover.  
 I am an amazing person.  
 I am the people.  
 I am a reflection of my children.  
 I am Asha Shariah Green.

### Song of Anthony

I am Anthony.  
 I am a mix of races and styles.  
 My rhythm flows to the beat of a  
 different drum.

From menial laborer to millennial man,  
 I've tread paths both beaten and fresh.  
 These glasses are a representation  
 of my philosophy,  
 magnified to see the nuances  
 that make us truly  
 human.



They can never say Anthony took the world at face value.

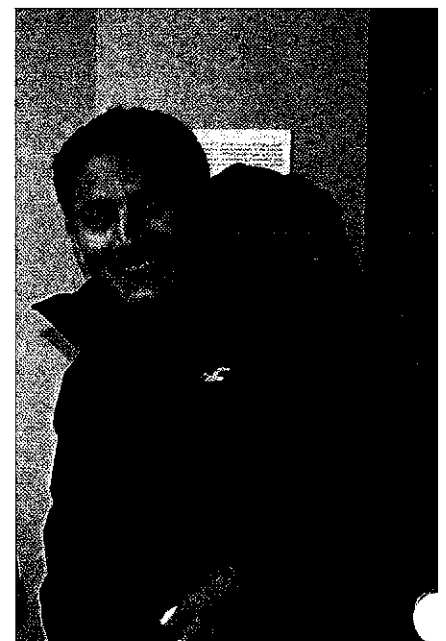


### Song of Nathaniel

I am Nathaniel Lake.  
 I am space  
 expanding and collapsing  
 into myself  
 smashing my ideals  
 as supernovas birth stars.

### Song of José

I am a son of Chiapas  
 and of her beautiful nature.  
 Son of hardworking parents,  
 brother of the south coast  
 and my sister the most beautiful land.  
 The rain brings me a big family  
 that I will never leave again.





**Song of Ahmad**

Who am I?

Yes, I am an ambitious Syrian immigrant,  
showing confidence in himself in a different atmosphere.

I ride this wild journey.

My own fate has stood still for me.

Just because I am a Muslim man,

I'm not an extremist, not awkward.

Can't you just like me because I am me?

I think so!!!

What is life without AHMAD ☺ NAHAS?

Just think about this life without ME!!! ☺

**Song of Musab**

I am the son of two great rivers

I am from Babylon

My aunt's great date tree (*Al Nakla*)

I am from Iraq

**Song of Victoria**

I am Victoria

I am brave

I am feisty

I am loving

I am annoying

I am mean

I am strong

I am a mother

I am wise

I am a fighter

I am a dreamer

I am determined to be a great example for my kids.

I am the mother of Myla and Mario Drone.

I am a fighter of Crohn's disease.

I am a hard worker always  
wanting to move further in life.

I am a believer that there is some  
good in everyone.

I want everyone to succeed in life.

I am a helper to the needy.

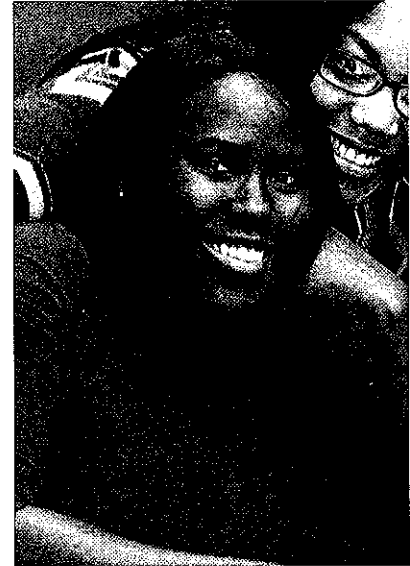
I am realistic.

I am LOVE!



**Song of Cherri**

I am Cherri.  
 I am hungry for knowledge  
 Optimistic and open to face challenges.  
 I am curious to find out what the world has in store for me.  
 I love to lose myself in tales of fiction.  
 I am living the greatest story ever told.  
 I love to laugh and I love to cry.  
 I am motivated by my children.  
 I am the song that never ends.

**Song of Grisel**

I am Grisel  
 I am a proud Mexican  
 From my native Puebla, Mexico  
 I'm from the city which is well known as "The Beautiful City of Los Angeles."  
 I'm from the city where you will find a church in every corner.  
 My beautiful country Mexico.  
 My country's flag with sparkling colors  
 The beautiful colors; green, red and white  
 Green represents hope, the hope for a better country  
 White represents purity, the purity of nature and wealth.  
 Red represents blood, the blood spilled by my ancestors fighting for our independence.  
 The independence that we celebrate each year on September 16  
 with beautiful dances, delicious traditional food, music and  
 lots of good vibes and energy...  
 My beautiful Mexico, I carry you in my blood and in heart.

**Soy Grisel**

*Soy orgullosamente Mexicana  
 Soy de mi natal Puebla, México  
 Soy de la ciudad mejor conocida como  
 "La Bella Ciudad de los Angeles."  
 Soy de la ciudad donde encontraras una iglesia en cada esquina.  
 Mi bello país México.  
 Mi bandera con colores resplandecientes  
 Esos bellos colores verde, blanco y rojo  
 Verde representa esperanza, la esperanza de un mejor país  
 Blanco representa pureza, la pureza de su naturaleza y riquezas.  
 Rojo representa sangre, la sangre derranda por mis ancestros  
 luchando por nuestra independencia.  
 La independencia que se celebra cada 16 de septiembre  
 con bellos bailables, deliciosa comida típica, música  
 y mucha buena vibra y energetica ...  
 mi bello Mexico, te llero en la sangre y en mí corazon.*





### **Song of Felica**

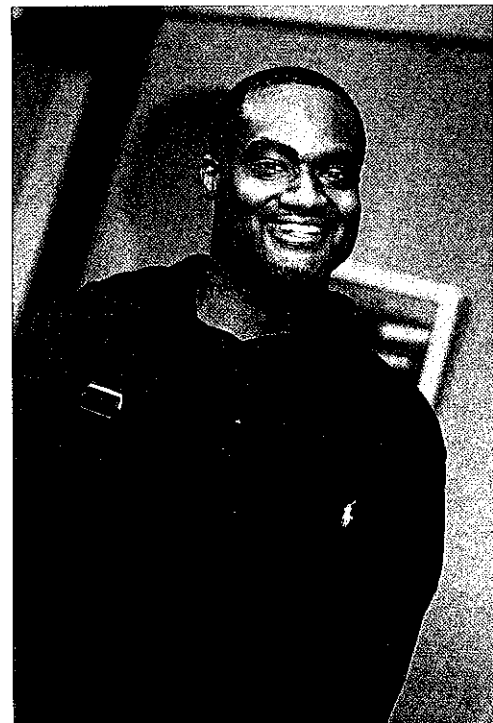
I am Felica.  
 I am noble  
 Containing fine personal qualities  
 I am a mother.  
 I am she who conquers  
 and does not subside.  
 I am kind-hearted and loving.  
  
 I am from a different era, often  
 Feeling lost in this time.  
  
 I am of a song flowing  
 Together in lyrics that make sense.  
 I simply am. . . .

I am Felica.  
 The mother of Jamarius, Markeria, Markarian, Markayla, and Zaire.  
 The daughter of Linda and Harvey.  
 Fannie's oldest grandchild.  
 Linda's only child and Harvey's first daughter.  
 I am a graduate of Greenwood High School.  
 EMT Certified, health and life insured licensed.  
 I am she and only she can be me. . . .

I am not the color of my skin  
 but the content of my character.  
 My shade of brown will never let me down.  
 Broken, beaten, and mentally abused,  
 I broke the chains, and I no longer will be used.  
 Free at last, Free at last.  
 I praised God because I freed myself... at last.

### **Song of Johnnie**

I am Johnnie. The lover of the spirit. The father.  
 The buffet of ideas in my mind is enough  
 to have the world full.  
 The mirror and the reflection,  
 The water and the jar that carries it.



**Song of Jessica**

I am Jessica

I am a daughter of a strong island woman  
who never had a single selfish bone in her body.

The best role model of a mother,  
the footsteps I hope to follow in.

I am a mixture of what some would say brown and white.

I may not know my language but I still represent Filipino  
pride!

I am an outcome of my trials and tribulations.

I've thought I had it all but had the rug torn from below me.

I am a luminous book that yet has no ending  
that constantly keeps you guessing.

I am my son's keeper.

I will never let anything hurt him.

I will never let anything hinder him from learning and living.

I may sometimes be my own worst enemy.

I doubt my own strengths and abilities,  
but I will never let it stop me.

I will overcome!

**Song of Sukai**

I am Sukai Yarbo.

Daughter of Demba, a courageous farmer from The Gambia, West Africa,

Mother of Murio and Aunt to my favorite girl, Tima.



I love cooking and sharing food with my friends and family.

I am multicultural, a blend of three different African tribes,  
Mandinka, Fulani, and Wolof.

I come from a big family, and each one of them means the world  
to me in a special way.

I can be very shy, but I turn into a loving puppy once the ice is  
broken.

I love being a mother to every little one under my watch.

I love to spend time with my sisters, and we support each other  
in the most necessary way.

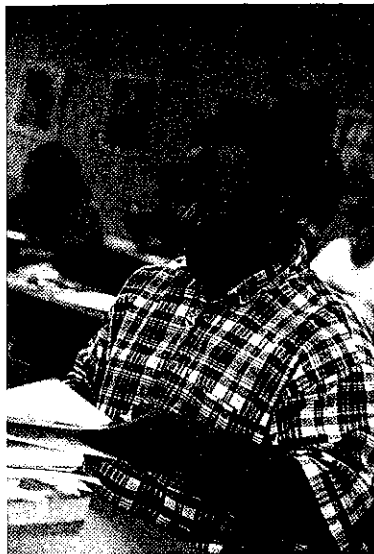
I am very passionate about looking for the best in others.

I love writing and am mostly an introvert.

I appreciate diversity, and new cultures amaze me.

I could go on and on, but I also shy away from expressing myself  
because I am an introvert.

I feel like I could have done more, but am still here hoping to get  
there. (Sukai Yarbo)



### **Song of Spencer**

I am S.P.E.N.C.E.R.

I'm **S**ensual as a dancer

**P**oised with the moves of the street

**E**lectrifying while the beat pulsates through my chest

**N**ovel and **C**ool while the music sets me in motion

**E**rotic yet **R**eserved when

I let the groove get in.

### **Song of Alyanna**

**A**dventures of my

**L**ife have

**Y**et to guide me

**A**gainst the

**N**efarious world.

**N**ow after going through

**A**dversity building

**M**emories I will never forget

**A**fter all the bumps in the

**R**oad.

I'm

**E**merging to find

**C**ourage to face what

**O**verwhelmed me

**O**verjoyed now with

**P**urpose for my life

**E**very

**R**oad leads home.



# CREATIVE CORNER

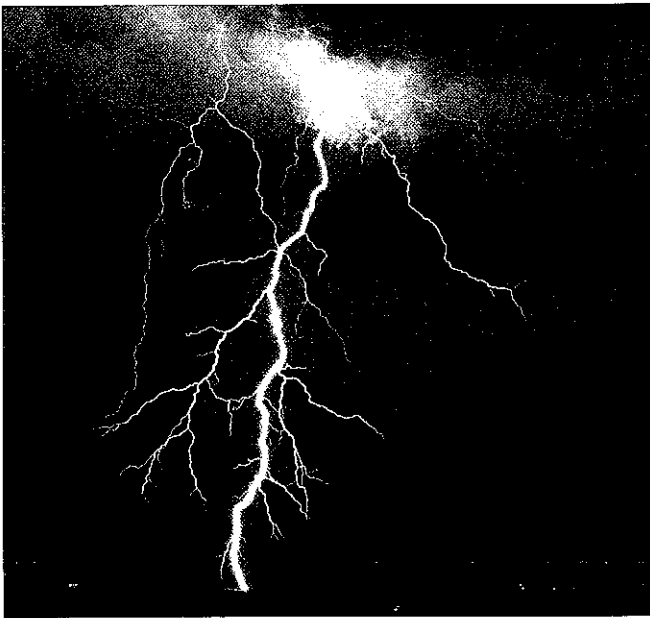


## **The Purple Saint: Remembering Lydia Swift, My Grandma** **By Spencer Gamble**

My grandma was a saint among all saints. She successfully devoted her time equally between the church, her children, and grandchildren. She even had the endurance to add great-grandchild to the mix. She was as pure as the snow and worth her weight in gold.



Though I hadn't kept in contact with her as much as I should have in adulthood, I will never forget the unconditional love and support she gave me in my turbulent teenage years. She took me in without question when I became too unruly for my mother to bear. She nurtured and guided me in a way no one else could. She was patient with me and gave me the freedom I needed to combat my teenage angst. For this, I can say without a doubt that, though her body is gone, she never once left me. I'm still that clueless, rebellious 16 year old that she loved so dearly. I will never forget the lessons she taught me. She was my guide to recognizing my saints.



## **I am Lightning** **By Avé Thorpe**

I am a bold of lightning, quiet yet strong.  
My power is fierce, I can weather the storm.  
Suddenly flashing when the world least expects it,  
Though the storm stands alone, my strength's what perfects it.  
When I come into purpose, the world will never know  
My silent bolt of power can destroy or help grow.



## **Music** **By Sukai Yarbo**

I am music.  
You hear me,  
You feel me,  
You connect with me.  
I may mean everything to you  
and nothing to another.  
I may mean bliss and joy  
or pain and misery.  
I hold a certain rhythm  
but a different meaning  
to every other.  
I touch your heart and soul  
for better or worse.





### **"Riding Along"**

**By Anthony Jefferson**

When I take a step back and look  
and realize all that it took,  
the road ahead seems to be paved for miles.

A speed bump here,  
a fork in the road there,  
I map the checkpoints by reviewing my trials.

Over the horizon I cruise,  
speeding towards an achievement worthy of news,  
collecting cultural "bumper stickers" of all types.

My destination is still up in the air.  
It really wasn't considered to be fair,  
but to see things clear, I'll just replace the wipers.



### **"The Giant Woman at the Chazen"**

**By Sukai Yarbo**

She is obvious.  
She is colorful.  
She stands tall.  
You can't miss her.  
Her presence is captivating.  
I feel short right next to her  
with her perfect posture  
and big hair.  
You can't miss her deep  
stare and long neck.  
The giant woman in the  
middle of the room.

### **"What is Love?"**

**By Kyisha Williams**

What is love?  
Is it the beautiful butterflies  
or is it a ton of lies?  
What is love?  
Is it pain or pleasure?  
What is love?  
Is it materialistic things  
or is it two people playing behind the scenes?  
What is love?  
Is it a hug?  
Is it a kiss?  
or is it simply sharing something intimate?  
What is love?  
Is it laughs and smiles  
or pain and tears?  
Does it depend on the number of years?  
What is love?  
Is it a comforting feeling that puts you at ease  
or is it the sound of the sea?  
What is love?  
Is it me, is it you?  
Because we all seem to be confused.  
or maybe love is  
something easily abused.







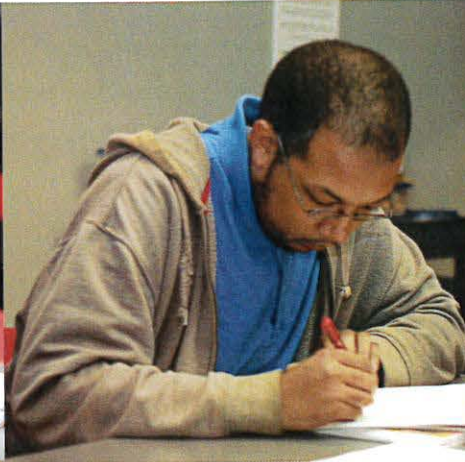
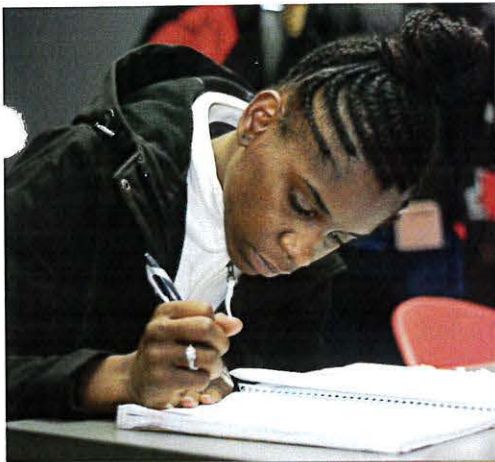
**"Madonna and Child" of Guidoccio di Giovanni  
By Simone Bell-Perdue**

I am a mother  
I strive to protect  
My precious baby  
I am a mother  
I am a lion  
If I need to be  
I am a mother  
I keep my precious baby  
Close to my heart  
I am a mother  
My precious baby and I  
Are connected at the heart  
She knows the sounds  
Of my heartbeat from the inside  
I am a mother  
I felt flutters, kicks, punches  
I am a mother  
I carried you for nine months  
I am a mother  
I got up every two to three hours  
When all you wanted to do was  
Be skin to skin  
I am a mother



**I Am a Diamond in the Rough  
by Asha Green**

I am a diamond in the rough.  
The greater the pressure is applied,  
the greater my beauty will soon shine.  
I cannot fold under pressure but must perfect my craft.  
From high temperatures, pressure, and minerals,  
you cannot rush the beauty of making diamonds.  
I will soon emerge from the rough  
as a bright, elegant, rare diamond.  
I will soon be shining bright.



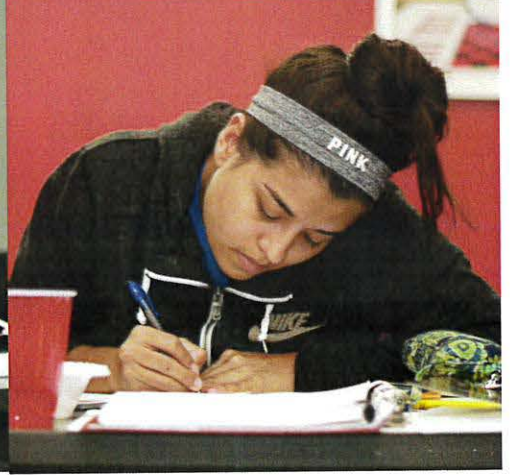
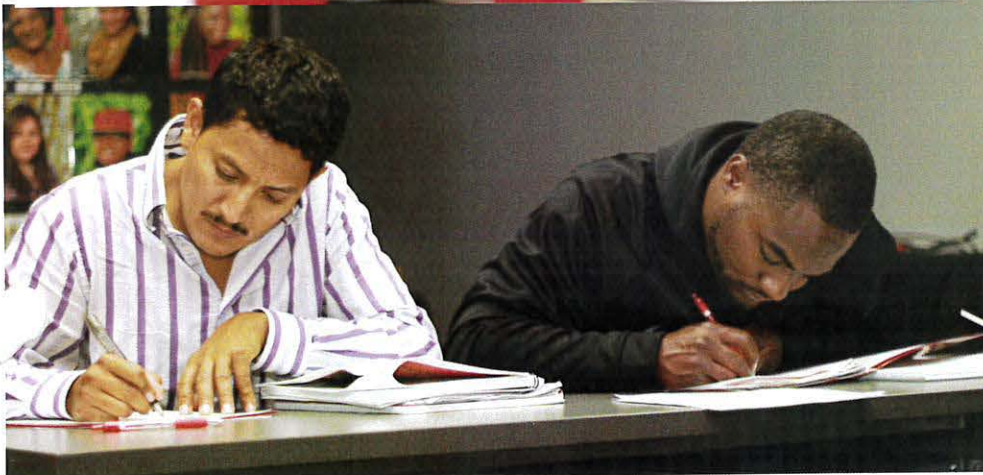
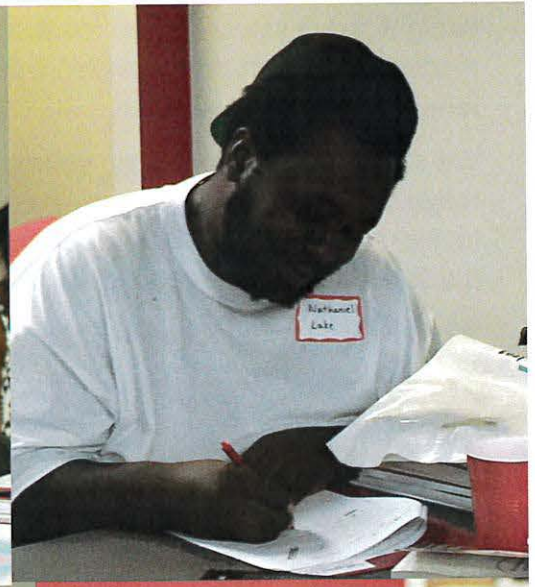
### Odyssey Poem

By Anthony Jefferson

Odyssey is the pencil of life with which  
we can erase past regrets and rewrite our future.

Every "word" formed solidifies our resolve, those periods  
at the end a proud stamp of success.

Sentence by sentence, we forge a new tale.





# SONG OF THE ODYSSEY CLASS OF 2017

*Inspired by Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself"*

We are the Odyssey Class of 2017.

We have lived in Madison, Chicago, St. Paul, Detroit, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Miami, Phoenix, and "the streets," and in Malaysia, Jordan, Aman, Syria, Trinidad, Tobago, the Gambia, England, China, Colombia, and Mexico's Puebla, Chihuahua, Juarez, Temascalango, and Chiapas.

Our ancestors were born in Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois, Louisiana, Arkansas, and in Texas, and in Italy, Ireland, Lebanon, Spain, Germany, Colombia, Venezuela, Holland, the Gambia, Norway, Mexico, Colombia, Syria, Iraq, Portugal, India, and "somewhere in Africa,"

Speaking Spanish, English, Arabic, Patois, Hindi, German, Portuguese, Norwegian, Marshallese, Mandinka, Holofo, Fula, French, Creole, Basque, Naquatt, Otomy, Sign Language, and Slang,

Calling themselves Baptist, Muslim, African Methodist Episcopal, Catholic, Lutheran, Apostolic, Shango, non-denominational, and agnostic.

We have worked as an Uber driver, waiter, bartender, personal trainer, store clerk, pharmacy technician, hip hop instructor, special education aide, African restaurant host, in-home child care provider, snow remover, babysitter, cashier, nursing assistant, shelf cleaner, hot dog cook, gas station attendant, golf course waitress, stay-at-home mom, cheesemaker, mover, bank teller, telemarketer, grocery bagger, straight jacket sewer, frozen meat stocker, fisherman, McDonald's cashier, wig store worker, hair braider, medical transportation provider, t-shirt designer, custodian, floor sweeper, school bus driver, and Latino family resource coordinator.

We are humble, caring, busy, strong, kindhearted, peaceful, fun, funny, black, proud, thoughtful, religious, loving, fun, courageous, energetic, passionate, helpful, introverted, intellectual, compassionate, loving, sweet, adaptable, harmonious, ambitious, capable, determined, Dionysian, creative, confident, quick, forgetful, hardworking, large, active, wise, silly, outspoken, and shy.

We are the Odyssey Class of 2017.

