

YEAR 19, ISSUE 9

APRIL 2022

ODYSSEY



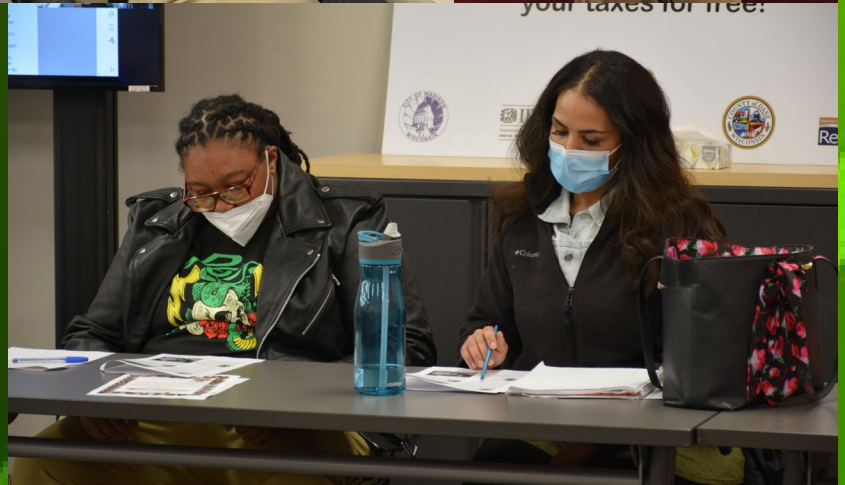
ORACLE

DREAMS AND POEMS



Contents

Song of the Odyssey Class of 2022	2
Songs of Ourselves	3
We Have a Dream.....	13
Dreaming wiith Langston Hughes ...	19
Moved by More Langston Hughes....	23
Making Metaphors	34
Graduation Invitation	40



Emily Auerbach, Co- Director/Founder; Oracle Editor
Kevin Mullen, Co-Director
Emily Azad, Program Manager; Photographer
Christina DeMars, Coordinator; Oracle Assistant
Beth Auerbach, Oracle Designer
Hedi Rudd '12, Photographer

emily.auerbach@wisc.edu
kevin.mullen@wisc.edu
emily.azad@wisc.edu
christina.demars@wisc.edu

608-712-6321
608-572-6730
608-590-5862
608-580-5948

www.odyssey.wisc.edu



SONG OF THE ODYSSEY CLASS OF 2022

We are the Odyssey Class of 2022!

We have worked as an office cleaner, lifeguard, bartender, cook, chef, cashier, barista, cosmetologist, construction worker, waitress, optical technician, in-home caregiver, farm hand, youth organizer, camp teacher, call center representative, special education teacher assistant, case manager, nursing assistant, playground aide, childcare provider, author, vendor, Metro driver, forklift operator, dietary aide, and case manager, holding jobs at GM, Culver's, McDonald's, Dunkin Donuts, Popeye's, Papa Murphy's, Walgreens, Taco Bell, and Madison Children's Museum.

We hail from Madison, Wisconsin; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Gary, Indiana; New Orleans, Louisiana; from Mexico City, Veracruz, and Pijijiapan in Mexico; from Jamaica; and from Xela, Guatemala,

With ancestors coming from Spain, Bamako, Mali, Senegal, Nigeria, Germany, Hungary, and Mexico; from Maricopa, Arizona; Booneville, Indiana; Little Rock, Arkansas; Lexington, Kentucky; Durant, Mississippi; St. Louis, Missouri; Las Vegas, Nevada; Cincinnati, Ohio; Peoria, Illinois; Jackson, Mississippi; Selma, Alabama; Phoenix, Arizona; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin,

Speaking Spanish, English, German, French, Yoruba, Nahuatl, and Bambara,

Worshipping as Catholic, Presbyterian, Apostolic, Baptist, Muslim, Lutheran, Sanctified, Nondenominational, spiritual with energy vibrations, voodoo, and hoodoo.

We call ourselves patient, stubborn, hopeful, sleepy, cute, loving, quiet, nurturing, observant, helpful, caring, perceptive, bold, loud, quiet, curious, inquisitive, strong, warrior-like, discombobulated, ruined, wise, clumsy, funny, tall, short, small, busy, shy, mindful, knowledgeable, lazy, stubborn, rowdy, determined, outspoken, persistent, hardworking, respectful, helpful, empathetic, reserved, patient, indecisive, overcaring, sweet, and gentle.

We are the Odyssey Class of 2022!



SONGS OF OURSELVES 2022



Song of Erendira

I'm Erendira
 Ere for short
 I'm Mexican
 I'm a hard worker
 I'm a fighter
 I will get a degree
 I'm Erendira
 Ere for short **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**



Song of Mechele

I am Mechele
 I am a daughter of a queen
 I am a daughter of a king
 I am the color of roasted almonds
 I have birthed six princes
 I have birthed one princess
 They are my legacy
 They will pass on my higher standards of kings and queens
(Mechele Williams)



Song of Helena

I am Helena
 I am my father's wildest dreams
 I am my mother's quiet and calming spirit
 I am the wild card that you didn't expect
 And the rose that grew despite neglect
 I am loving, strong, and powerful
 I will be wealthy, healthy, and successful
 I am a mother to an African prince
 And a beautiful brown sister willing to help her community
 I am vibrant like the beautiful Miami sunset
 For my empathy runs deep like the deep blue ocean
 I am imperfect but perfect in the image that God created me
 For I am me
(Helena Lee)

Song of Crystal

I am Crystal
 I am a queen
 I am a single mom of an amazing girl
 who is smart, kind, and strong.
 I am determined, I am focused, and I am driven.
 I am ready for my greatness.
 I am me, Crystal. **(Crystal Johnson)**



Song of Yasmine

I am Yasmine
 My father was European
 My mother, a granddaughter of a former slave
 I am a natural born nurturer,
 affectionate, attentive,
 and always putting others before myself
 I am a mother
 raising a prince and princess
 to break barriers
 I am Yasmine **(Yasmine Dobbins)**



Song of Amanda

I am Amanda
 A mother of three smart, beautiful children.
 I am a queen conquering her goals.
 A student in Odyssey making a way out of poverty.
 I am a woman who was taught never to give up on
 my dreams.
 I am a child of God.
 I may not be perfect, but I will always make an
 effort to succeed in life.
 I am Amanda. **(Amanda Bell)**



Song of Jermaine

Born here of parents born here from parents
 I am Jermaine, son of Ericka Booe, the last Booe in the family.
 I am the second oldest of four, but I am the shortest of four brothers.
 I am Jermaine, the most talented at basketball, but the slowest runner.
 I am Jermaine. I once could bench press 350, now I would be lucky if I could lift 250.
 I am Jermaine. I wear a size 15 and can't shop in the mall. Actually, I haven't been able to shop in the mall for shoes since I was 16.
 I am Jermaine. Still 'til this day, I have people who come up to me and say, "Man, a 330-pound 'Maine should not move up and down a basketball court like that."
 I am Jermaine. **(Jermaine Booe)**



Song of Reginald

I am Reginald Rausea Moore,
 son of hundreds of kings and queens.
 Some were not allowed to read.
 Now I'm a multi-published author,
 their wildest dream... **(Reginald Moore)**



Song of Kayanna

I am Kayanna
 A mother of two beautiful black baby girls
 I am the daughter of a strong, independent black woman.
 I am a caregiver, a student, a person.
 I am a child of God.
 I am 4'11", petite with brown eyes, black hair, and beautiful skin.
 I am Kayanna, an African American citizen!
(Kayanna Branch)



Song of Jonathon

I am Jonathon
 I'm inclined to paradoxes
 while I refuse to be defined or confined to any pair of boxes
 I often muse, so people get confused thinking I'm spending time idly
 when the truth is I'm just contemplating sublime ironies
 is truth absolute or true love resolute?
 or are they both cruel mirrors that leave the soul destitute?
 I cherish virtuosity or what's impossible logically
 I was birthed from above, so the heavens always pique my curiosity
 heavenly bodies in earthen vessels
 so is life just a lesson meant to test you?
 or an attempt to resurrect you?
 tears rise in floods
 as I struggle to remember love is the life blood **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

Song of LaRonda

I am LaRonda
 I am the baby triplet
 I am from Fisher Street to Parker Place
 I am 'girl, yo mama fried chicken is the best'
 I am loud but shy
 Brown-skinned mama bear. **(LaRonda Morris)**



Song of Ericka

I am Ericka
 I am a black woman
 I am an only daughter, a twin sister, and a mother of men
 I am a nurturer of all
 I am patient, shy, and observant
 I was silenced by life but am learning to find my voice
(Ericka Booe)

Song of Michelle

I am Michelle.
 I am energy that flows from within.
 The carrier of seeds planted along the way.
 A mother who's a nurturing vessel.
 A sailor embarking on an eternal journey.
 A pupil.
 A vegetation.
 A work in progress.
 I am the beauty of the deeper roots within
 and surrounding me. **(Michelle Mack)**



Song of Katrina

I am Katrina
 I am cool, calm, collected
 I am a mother of two
 I am a sister of two
 I am giving
 I am loving
 I am caring
 But most of all I am a child of God **(Katrina Collins)**



Song of Kimari

I have a heart of gold and beauty.
 With this heart, I love the Lord.
 With my faith in Him, I walk a steady, straight,
 narrow path.
 In my journey on this path, I seek His face.
 Knowing the Lord,
 I inform others of his goodness.
(Kimari Rogers)



Song of Brandyn

I am Brandyn
 A proud father of a beautiful girl
 A son who wants to make his parents proud
 A brother who loves his siblings and misses the old days
 A friend who does not get out much
 A dreamer who wants to find something to cherish
 A loner who does not want to be alone
 A man who is still learning to be a man
 I am Brandyn. **(Brandyn Bess)**



Song of Talaisha

I am Talaisha
 I am the daughter of Telana and Nigel
 I am an overachiever
 I am the one who hates to bake but loves to cook
 I am a “Mommy” but also a “Mama”
 I am determined and outspoken
 I am Talaisha
(Talaisha Goodwan)



Song of Jessica

I am Jessica
 I am short but strong
 I am a Spanish speaker
 And sometimes I feel like I do not belong
 I am not a faker
 I am proud of me
(Jessica Saldana Ortega)



Song of Cinderrria

Cinderrria is from the Chicago area.
 She's smart as a librarian
 I was so sad at my grandma's burial
 I have several cousins Aquarius
 Homelessness is my barrier
 Hysteria is my number one trait
 The more the merrier, I love a big family
 Thank God, I don't have malaria
 I can't sing so this song is hilarious
 I have a mentor named Marion
 I wish I could find a golden chariot
 I want to go to Marriott
(Cinderrria Hardwell)



Song of Naquila

I am Naquila, I am built strong.
 I am a nurturer, maternal by nature.
 I am soul and R&B music, on the right day I am hip hop.
 I am intelligent, intellectual, intuitive.
 I am one of a kind, I am rare.
 I am growing, evolving, and blossoming.
 I am on the path to my greatest self.
 I am imperfect and I approve of all of me.
 Hello, Naquila.
(Naquila Taylor)



I am CapriLatrice
 I am a melanated queen raising a king
 I am the mother of Jamarion no name
 I am the definition of imperfection
 I am my own competitor
 I am a mother striving to be the best at everything
 so I can teach my son anything
 I am a daughter, sibling, niece, and soon-to-be wife
 I am a baker, cook, and learner
 I am an outspoken person, I am a helping person
 I am an amazing person
 I am CapriLatrice, not Miss Perfect
 I am striving to be more than the before me
 I am a melanated queen raising a king
 I am the mother of Jamarion no name
(Capri Booker)

Song of Mashell

I am faithful, loyal, and honest.
 I like to talk trash and spend time with my family.
 I love taking trips and taking time out for self-care. **(Mashell McCarter)**



Song of Will

I am Will
 Son of Will Jr.
 Son of Jerriesene
 A creator,
 A protector,
 A humanitarian,
 A product of love,
 I am Will. **(Will Nunn III)**

Song of Cynthia

I am Cynthia
A mother to Laila
I am strong and independent
I am a go-getter
I am fun and kind
I am a traveler
But first I am a mother **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**



Song of Mariam

I am Mariam
Mother of Mahayla
I am a protector
A provider
A nurturer,
I do it all,
I am a mother. **(Mariam Maiga)**



Song of Ontario

I am Ontario
I am a father,
A brother,
A son.

I wear many titles.
I am a lover, not a fighter. **(Ontario Frazier)**





Song of Yael

I'm Yael
 Son of immigrants
 Salesman by trade
 inquisitive at heart
 immigrant from Mexico
 curious and quiet
 Have a tenacious soul
 & an analytical mind
 Rationalist & pragmatic
 Lover of the arts
 I am Yael **(Yael Jimenez)**

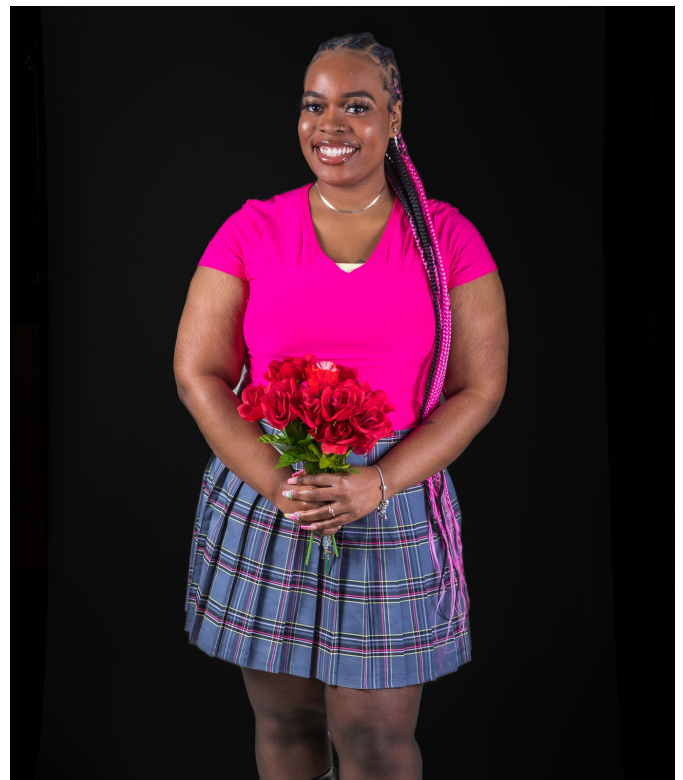
Song of Zaria

I am Zaria, a deeply shining light,
 Somewhat merry and bright.
 I am Zaria,
 Epitome of beauty in my own wonderful way,
 Speaking strength and black excellence
 every step of the way!
 I am Zaria, so real and true!!!
 Being loyal is an understatement if I have love for you.
 I am Zaria,
 One who has so much grace and beauty and love.
 My name means fairest maiden in the land in Arabic.
 I thought I'd mention it just because
 I am Zaria,
 A woman of big hopes and dreams
 who believes that I deserve all that I hope for.
 I am Zaria. **(Zaria Hunter)**



Song of Cylinthia

I am Cylinthia, strong, brave, insightful.
 I am Cylinthia, the survivor, the innovator.
 I am Cylinthia, a mother, daughter, sister, and aunt.
 I am Cylinthia, the beautiful and courageous.
(Cylinthia Olle)



WE HAVE A DREAM

After reading Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, Odyssey students wrote their own paragraphs and poems starting with the four words "I have a dream."

I have a dream...

I have a dream that Martin Luther King's dream speech in 1963 was not an end, but a beginning, as he stated. Unfortunately, in 60 years, we've not moved far. We also are forced to create rude awakenings to be heard.

In a way, King's dream has been seen. Slave owners' descendants have formed brotherhoods with descendants of slaves. Little black boys and white girls are brothers and sisters. Mississippi now has black mayors and police chiefs.

In other ways, King's dream is sometimes a nightmare. We are still far too often judged by our color of skin instead of our character. Systemic racism is still bad as ever. Police killing and arresting blacks is at an all-time high, and it's been a long 60 years since MLK was declaring 1963 as the beginning. The end seems so far away.

(Reginald Moore)

I have a dream to give my daughter all the things I didn't have growing up. I'm currently in the process of buying my first house. I never had a house with a yard, but my daughter will. I have a dream of finishing school, to be able to walk the stage. I have a dream to move up in my current job; I love the financial world and I think it's something I'm good at. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

I have a dream where I wake up with a house on the hill and married to Giselle. I have a dream that on that same hill, my mom is my neighbor. I have a dream everything I said will happen. Why? Because I have a dream. **(Jermaine Booe)**

I have a dream that someday, my kids won't suffer from the things I suffer from. They will be wealthy. They won't be afraid of the police. They will be treated with love and respect from every color of human on earth. I have a dream that my kids will



learn from most of my mistakes and live a decent life. **(Kayanna Branch)**

I have a dream that one day our black parents won't have to have a conversation with their black and mixed-race children that explains to them that in society today you will have unjust experiences. Even though there were leaders that were beaten, jailed, and even killed, you will still experience moments of prejudice. Even though there are past and current leaders who have had peaceful demonstrations, worked to have laws passed, and even educated themselves and gotten placed in powerful positions, you will still experience discrimination. Even though the way has been paved, the people in power have been told, and data have been collected, measured, and evaluated, you will still experience another race being privileged over your black race.

It won't be until the day when white people honor the plan of equality, diversity, and inclusion that black people will feel we've actually reached the goal of freedom—when wealth is divided equally amongst all; when quality education and good health are accessible to all. It won't be until unjust experiences stop happening that black people can rest and enjoy life as defined as a human right and instinctively a God-giving right. **(Ericka Booe)**

I have a dream that the world would look into a child's face and not categorize them by the color of their skin, not under a mask with a smiling face, not behind closed doors, and not within an actively corrupt government.

I have a dream that everyone would see each other as a brother and sister in Christ. I have a dream that people would see past the pain, agony, suffering, and poverty, but see the hope, truth, and ending result of God's word.

I have a dream that we stop hatefully judging our fellow neighbor, causing confusion and strife within our nation. I have a dream about generations and our children that strangers would treat them the way that they want their children to be treated.
(Kimari Rogers)

I have a dream that there will be no suffering in this world. I have a dream that everyone is living comfortably in their homes. I have a dream that the earth went back to its beauty when the animals were not suffering because of human greed. I have a dream that everyone has equity in their life.
(Erendira Giron Cruz)

I have a dream that one day people will not be judged by the color of their skin, that their knowledge will not be discounted because the color of their skin, that their economic status not be judged by the color of their skin, and for them not to be placed in a color category because of the color of their skin.
(Mechele Williams)

I have a dream that one day my children will not have to worry about anything, their fears are washed away, their self-doubt is a thing in the past. I have a dream that my people are no longer afraid for their lives or my brothers are judged by the way they look or the way they carry themselves; when it really means all men are created equal.
(LaRonda Morris)

I have a dream that one day I will complete my goals and graduate from college. Money will no longer be an issue. My sons and grandchildren will no longer have to worry about housing, money, or

bills because my family will be working on generational wealth. We will no longer be at the tail end of life; we will embrace being at the head. My dream is through GOD and education we will have a better life leaving drugs, alcohol, depression, low self-esteem, and any other hindrance behind.

(Mashell McCarter)

I have a dream that one day everyone will get along, that kids can go outside and play without the worry of harm happening to them. I pray we stop discriminating by the color of our skin and go off of what's within.
(Mariam Maiga)

I have a dream to raise my daughter, Reagan L. Montgomery, to be the best, the greatest, the kindest, sweetest, bravest, loving, honest, redoubtable, invulnerable, invincible... I have a dream that Reagan will stand for something, stand for someone/s/. STAND...

I have a dream that as long as I'm alive, I will push Reagan to her full capacity, to focus on her greatness and to be determined to fulfill her dreams; to become a leader, to become an idol, to be recognized, to become spoken about, to become a legend—the first black female president of the United States of America.
(Crystal Johnson)



I have a dream one day all of my goals will be accomplished. My children will see how far Mommy made it in life, through the toughest battles. I have a dream that I will be an inspiration to other mothers and women who think troubles will last always.



I have a dream that I will conquer all that has seemed to knock me down, but like Maya Angelou, I will always rise and be on top. I have a dream that I will be heard and that my words will encourage all people around the world today. **(Amanda Bell)**

I have a dream . . . that one day I will be happy, one day I will wake up and the world will be less cruel, that I won't have to worry about if my daughter will be looked down upon because of the color of her skin, and that I will be able to walk my daughter happily and proudly down the aisle for her to be wed. **(Brandyn Bess)**

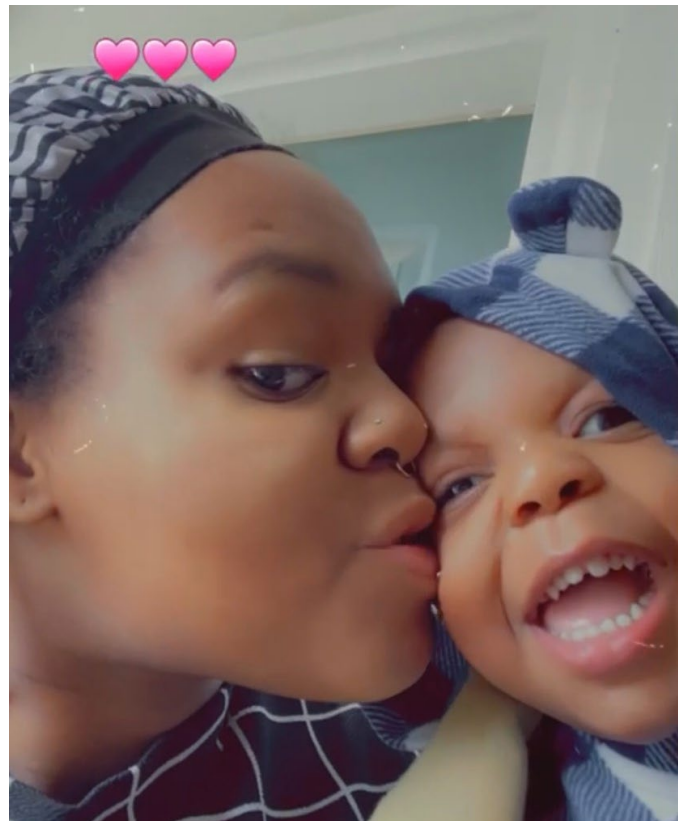
I have a dream that one day we will be free from systematic racism and one day we will achieve the goal of justice system reform. I have a dream that one day we can see each other as human beings instead of black or white, or rich or poor. **(Naquila Taylor)**

I have a dream that I have longed for since the year of 2017, a dream I no longer know the outcome of or whether it will be true, a dream I'm sure most parents wish for: that one day my son will begin to crawl and then to one day walk, may have been as fast as lightning. I have a dream my African American son will be so polite, handsome, smart, walking tall because his mother took the time to make sure he was raised and taught right.

Somewhere along the line, my dream was crushed. That son of mine needed prayers and a miracle just

so he could stay alive. In just a blink of an eye, my son was mistreated in his own home, just how my people before me were beaten. I could swear as I ran home, I had to have talked to God one million times in just a two-minute run. Can you imagine a limp body struggling to cry? His whole life flashed before my eyes.

Today, as of 2022, I have a dream that is so deeply rooted in someone enduring the pain he's caused Jamarion no name (side note, Jamarion has his last name) because he's guilty of wrongful deeds. He tries to pretend as if he's sorry, but he's rude. Right in the midst of my dream is justice. I can see it so vividly, which makes me sick. All I miss is a tricycle with my son on it saying "Mommy! Mommy! Look!" with a victory hug because he's learned it. In an eye blink, now that African American son of mine is long and handsome with a list of dos and don'ts behind him, a list of cans and can'ts with him, and a mother who's going to always have to fight for more for him—a polite, smart, walking tall son because his mother took the time to make sure he was raised and taught right. **(Capri Booker)**



I have a dream to be at total peace in life, to have the family, home, cars, and clothes of my wildest dreams! I have a dream to be everything that I ever wanted to be, to be successful, to be a nurse, to own my own business, and to become an English teacher. I have a dream to accomplish everything I put my mind to and set out in the universe! I have a dream to have an abundance of beauty in my life, that all the things that I hope for and dream will come into fruition, and that my cup will be ever flowing! I have a dream that I'll meet a man or that a man meets me and we share the same hopes and dreams and are willing to work towards them to create the best version of a black loving family that there is ever to be! I have a dream that my kids some day will look up to me, that my graceful, beautiful, and peaceful aura will always speak into their hearts and souls from the day they're born! I have a dream that my hands of prayer speak life into them and unto all of their life's journey! I have a dream that at the end of it all, somebody sees me for everything I'm supposed to be, that I am, and always sees me for me. I have a dream.

(Zaria Hunter)



I have a dream that I will break generational curses and build generational wealth for generations to come. I have a dream to break broken promises and false narratives of what they should be. I want my children to be successful in all they want to obtain. I have a dream to accomplish my dreams and goals, to be a great example for my children. I have a dream to make a difference in this world. My dreams are my goals that I WILL ACHIEVE. I am ready for all the fails and lessons as well.

(Cylinthia Olle)

I have a dream that equality will come soon.

I have a dream that blacks won't get gunned down by the police.

I have a dream that black women and black children get good healthcare.

I have a dream that black men get treated equally to white men at their jobs.

I have a dream that one day men and women will get the same pay.

I have a dream that life will take on prejudice and racial inequality in schools.

I have a dream single parents receive a nanny.

I have a dream single moms receive free manicures and pedicures.

I have a dream that gas prices go down.

I have a dream that Section 8 workers have more compassion.

I have a dream that probation officers have empathy.

I have a dream that people stop generational hate.

I have a dream that people stop trying to one-up someone based on financial stability.

I have a dream that dress code won't be how you are viewed in the workplace.

I have a dream that government assistance programs don't separate families.

I have a dream that systematic racism ends.

I have a dream that the generational curse from the pain of our ancestors is not passed down.

All right, this is the end of my Dream. **(Cinderria Harwell)**

I have a dream that I never entered the Matrix
that before I was thrust into this convoluted war I understood the basics
that time trying to identify a racist is actually time wasted
because if you don't see the methods they employ, then you're powerless to change it
you see, because at that point your captor might as well be faceless
I have a dream that financial literacy isn't a conspiracy
by the wealthy to stealthily hide what freedom means deliberately
I have a dream that love will expand the consciousness of the collective people
so we could see through the undetected evils
I have a dream that happiness is something people didn't feel
like they had to go to sleep to get
most of all I have a dream that having a dream didn't sound like rhetoric.
(Jonathon Adeyanju)

I have a dream that one day all
little boys and girls can be
leaders and inspirations to a
new day and age.

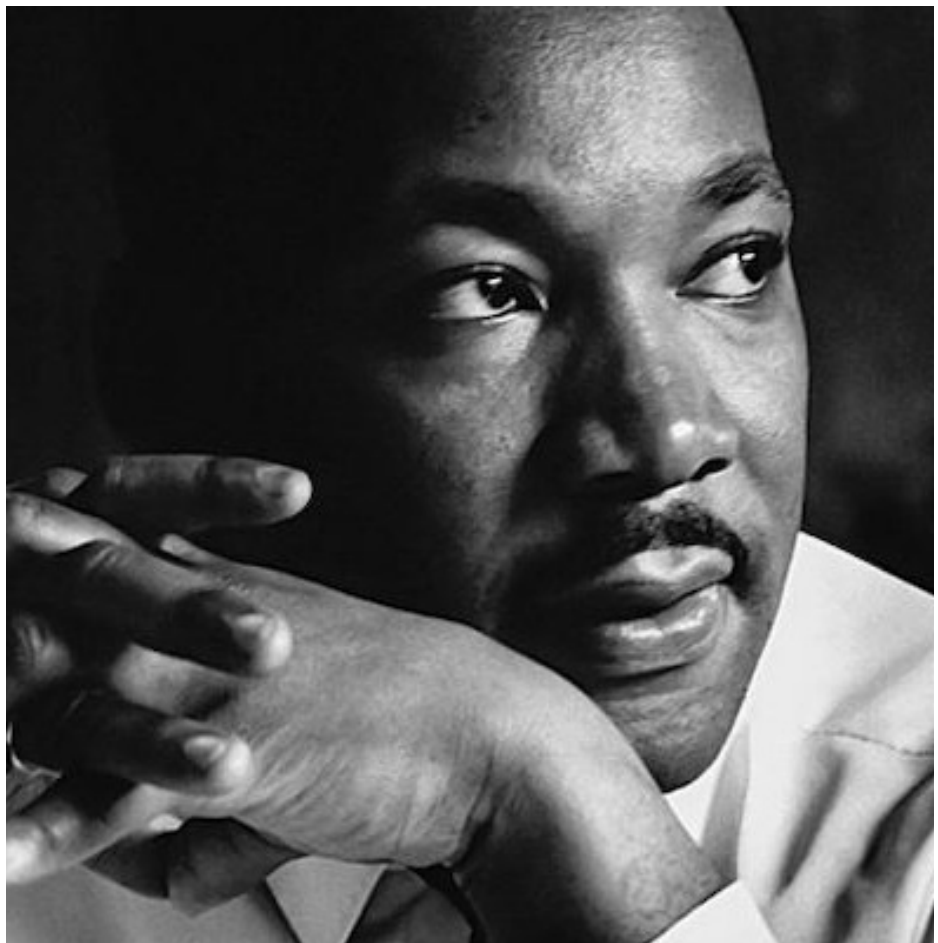
I have a dream that your
country, my country, our country
will not see one another as
opposite opponents but with
the love of God.

I have a dream that peace will
be sought and put in the
forefront of our nation.

I have a dream that poverty will
no longer lead to desperation
but help us build an economic
evolution, where brothers and
sisters can grow together.

I have a dream that we will be a
nation that is the true definition
of what unity stands for.

(Michelle Mack)



I have a dream that people will love each other as they love themselves.

I have a dream that people need to give respect as they want to be respected.

I have a dream that people will stop killing so people can live as long as God intended for them.

(Katrina Collins)

I have a dream that one day I will be successful. I will be carrying my master's in one hand and holding my son in the other.

I have a dream that I will walk across the lights and that bright stage as victory and not obstacle.

I have a dream that I will be able to help young African American men and women through the struggles of their mental, emotional, and physical health, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity.

I have a dream that I had a light so bright that I will shine in the face of oppression and racial disparity and cast it away to shadows that it came from.

I have a dream that I will not only be successful, but my children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren also will be successful.

Mental illness, emotional abuse, physical abuse ends with me.

I will be different from ancestors, but I will never forget I am their wildest dreams.

My grandma raised me to be the queen I am today and told me that my dream is never too big in the eyes of God.

I have a dream and I am going to share it with the world

Because that was why I was created by God. **(Helena Lee)**

I have a dream that my daughter will be living in a world with gender equality.

I have a dream that we will have a country where women's rights are respected.

I have a dream of having a world where women's pay gap does not exist.

I have a dream that women's consent law is implemented.

I have a dream that my daughter will be the next president of the United States.

I have a dream and the ability to turn my dreams into goals. **(Jessica Saldana Ortega)**



DREAMING WITH LANGSTON HUGHES

Because the Odyssey Project focuses on helping students not give up on their dreams, everyone was asked to respond to Langston Hughes's short poem "Dreams."

I think Langston Hughes is saying that dreams are the lifeblood of the soul, and more importantly, that dreams are an integral part of our nature, something hardwired in our DNA. Without them, we will not function as we should; life will become desiccated as we lose our purpose. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

Personally, I think Langston Hughes's poem "Dreams" is saying if you have dreams in life, go out and chase them. Things may get hard in life, but never give up on your dreams. I have always had a dream that my kids' lives would be better than mine was growing up. I always dreamed about going to the University of Wisconsin. It may not seem that my dreams are coming true, but they are. I learned to keep faith and continue believing that there is still hope. In the poem, I love how he says, "Hold fast to dreams." Hold onto your dreams and no matter what, never let your dreams fade away (die).

(Amanda Bell)

Langston is basically saying, in his own words, follow your dreams or at least try and follow them because a dream that dies means you're left with a life with no lift, no drive, no power. When you give up on your dreams, your life turns into a broken, empty shell, which no one wants to live in. I agree with his metaphors; if you look at a lot of successful people in life, you can see that they followed their dreams. No matter the challenges and hardships they faced, they fought to keep their dreams alive. **(Brandyn Bess)**

Dreams

By Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

I think Langston Hughes is saying life without dreams is life that stands still and does not move forward or progress. He compares life without dreams to a broken-winged bird and a barren field frozen with snow. He is saying there's no moving forward and that life is empty and still.

(Ericka Booeey)

I think he meant, don't let your dreams die! If you don't have any dreams, you may be wandering in that endless circle, like me. I kind of have a picture of my dreams, but it's not all painted. One day it will be.

(Jermaine Booeey)

Langston Hughes isn't saying the dreams most people may be thinking; he's talking about your dreams of becoming someone, the dreams of becoming more than the typical. When Langston wrote this, times were different. In those times, a black person's dreams were just that: only dreams, and forever a fantasy. Dreams of a black person could never be achieved. A bird who is wounded can't fly; if you can't fly, you can't eat. You just sit and suffer. A bird who can't fly has no purpose. If no slave dreamed of running away, he or she would just be in the field sweating away or freezing, working and picking still. No life, no happiness, just "masta' said."

If I too let go of my dreams of being more than a mother, I wouldn't be in Odyssey. All my dreams were deemed over to me once Jamarion's life changed. I would no longer be a butterfly if I traveled back to before Odyssey. I would still be an egg. **(Capri Booker)**



I believe he is saying hold onto your dreams; don't let them just fade or die away. When dreams go away, life is like a broken-winged bird (they can't fly). What is a

bird if it can't do what it was here to do—fly? For myself, reading this makes me want to keep going. Sometimes when my dreams take too long to come to life, I lose sight of things, but when I give up it's like a broken-winged bird. I have to keep going and know that my dreams will only be fulfilled when the time comes. **(Kayanna Branch)**

I think he is saying, hold onto what you want to do in life or what you believe in. Don't let anyone stop you or take it away. How I can relate to this poem is that I felt that I can't go back to school at a later age. I am back in school and didn't let negative thoughts stop me. **(Katrina Collins)**

What I think Langston Hughes is saying about a life without dreams in this poem is to never give up on them. Dreams are necessary in life because with dreams you have no limits. In a world where things can seem so bleak and grim, dreams are your release. If you go through your life and just live it without following your dreams, that's not living; that's settling.

I really love his use of metaphors because although this is one of his shorter poems, it is so impactful. When you think of the life of a bird, if it has a broken wing, you can almost assume that it will die because the bird's wings are essential to its survival. Without their wings, birds cannot try to find food or escape the danger of being prey. I think that it was very clever of Langston Hughes to compare dreams to a broken-winged bird. The same goes for the second stanza of the poem. The visual of a barren field frozen with snow just shows how lifeless and unproductive your life can be if you let go of your dreams. It's almost a waste of your life if you do not go out and follow your dreams.

I think the poem "Dreams" applies to my life because it's kind of like a wakeup call. I have a lot of projects that I started and haven't finished. A lot of them I have started in memory of my brother but have failed to follow through, and they kind of have withered away since then. I wouldn't necessarily say that they have died, but it's been hard because other obstacles have gotten in the way and prevented me from proceeding with my dreams. I don't want my dreams that I have had to die, so I need to find ways to breathe life back into them again. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**

Most of us are molded in life by everything around us and lose sight of what our dreams are. Furthermore, we lose sight of what our passion is, which in this life, it is easy to do. If it's financial problems with no support system, this leads us to becoming unhappy and even regretting life and taking it out on the world. Dreams are important because it keeps that thrill and approach we need to reach our victory joys. Reaching that peak when people doubt you or say you should not become whatever makes you happy is one of the best feelings, once accomplishing it. **(Ontario Frazier)**

Langston's poem of dreams talks about sadness. Life without dreams is depressing. Even if the dreams don't come true, still holding onto them is better than to have nothing. **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

Life without dreams is bland, sad. You need to keep things alive. Have hope. Dreams die, but only if you let them. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

I believe Langston Hughes is saying you can't settle for less; you must allow yourself to dream big. When you have a dream it's the motivation you need to push yourself hard, to blossom from the old and into the new. Settling for what's in front of you only makes you stand still in life; creating a dream and wishing it into your life gives you the strength to make it.

I can relate to Langston Hughes's poem "Dreams" because for a long time I didn't know what I wanted to do in life; I just believed if I worked, I would get what I need, but I never dreamed of making it too far because of where I came from. Now that I have

given myself a dream of becoming a nurse and one day being able to buy my family a house that we can call home longer than for their childhood, I push myself to the extent. I motivate myself with daily reminders of the happiness I will bring not only myself but also my children who look up to me daily. Because of that one big dream I started with, I have a thousand big dreams. I'm going to achieve every one of them. I seem to grow every day.

(Talaisha Goodwan)

Langston Hughes is saying life without dreams is hopeless. He references a bird who has a broken wing. He also references a barren field with frozen snow. I can relate this "Dreams" poem to my life because my goal is a house. I talked to the bank and once they heard my credit score, they said I don't qualify. So I lost my hope and settled for less. I started to get comfortable in my circumstance. This poem has more meaning to my life because it's true. When I'm motivated, I can overcome anything. On the opposing hand, when I'm not, I will settle. **(Cinderria Harwell)**

Langston Hughes wants us to hold onto dreams, and if dreams die, life would be different. We wouldn't be able to grow. We can't bloom or go anywhere, just stuck in one spot or moving slow. For instance, life is a barren field that is there with nothing on it. Life is like a broken-winged bird. Life would be helpless. **(Crystal Johnson)**

When Langston Hughes wrote the poem called "Dreams," he wanted to inspire us to dream big and to follow our dreams no matter where it may lead us. If we live a life without dreams and go day to day without dreaming, we're missing the chance to be happy and live life. Dreams mainly give us hope for a better future. Dreams give others a chance to envision themselves and have better perspectives.



This poem really connects with me because if I would've given up on my dream of furthering my educational career and listened to what other people were telling me, I think that I would be very depressed and always wonder "what if" throughout my life. Dreams have created the person I am today. Dreams make life worth living. **(Helena Lee)**

I believe that Langston is saying that when you lose sight of your dreams, they become undernourished, leaving behind empty shadows for generations to come. Without dreams, hope is lost and there's nothing to live for.

For me, I feel like when I lose sight of my dreams, I can feel hopeless. I have nothing to strive towards and have lost sight of the vision. I feel like if I don't have clear vision of my purpose, then I'm just living. God has a plan for us all; it's just defining what that is. We're all a part of the past, present, and future. **(Michelle Mack)**

I think Langston Hughes is saying, without dreams, life would be boring and miserable. Even in bad situations, sometimes dreams are all that keep your faith alive. This relates to my life because "dreaming" is what's giving me the drive to want to do better in life. Dreams allow me to see how I would love my future to go before I even get there. **(Mariam Maiga)**

Langston Hughes's poem "Dreams" means strive for your dreams so one day you do not have a bunch of regrets of what you should have done. Without dreams, you are left with no hope. **(Mashell McCarter)**

I think the poem means what your life is like if you don't chase after your dream. Let your dreams come to life no matter what. Don't let your dreams go. **(LaRonda Morris)**

I think Mr. Hughes is simply saying, appreciate and keep ahold of our dreams. In my opinion, dreams can be important in multiple ways. The first, I believe that dreams can give out warning signs; I believe that we humans are energy, and the universe has its own way of creating intuition. Another thing is, I believe it can be a whole different world and experiences given how you dream. Some can create a whole different reality that they can visit recurrently. All of my dreams remain intact as far as goals, and I hold them at the forefront of my motivations. This helps keep me focused even when things seem unachievable. **(Cylinthia Olle)**

Langston Hughes is saying without dreams life is stagnant and still; there is no forward motion. Dreams are the motor that drives our ambitions.

I can relate to this because I consider myself a big dreamer. I feel like if I didn't dream, I wouldn't know how to change my reality. My life would be still. There would be no spark or fire in my eyes or belly. When I was younger, I would often dream I could do something, write it down, repeat it, and practice it, and before you know it, I was doing it. **(Will Nunn)**

For the first metaphor in stanza one, Langston Hughes means that a broken-winged bird's only means of transportation, survival, and functionally is to fly, but if it cannot fly it will die.

For the second stanza, Langston Hughes describes a barren field with no life because it is frozen with snow. Anything that grows from the ground will not



grow with frozen snow, just as if you let go of your dreams there is no life.

When I view my own life, as in this pivotal moment, I was hoping that the Odyssey Project would help me start my own business. Lately I've been doubting myself, but when reading this poem, I can exactly relate to it because if I don't hold fast to my dream, it will die and I won't be able to soar and fly. **(Kimari Rogers)**

Langston Hughes's poem is about the ability and desire to accomplish goals and dreams. Also, he is trying to tell us how life would be without dreams, comparing it with an injured bird, and how life can end or be frozen at any time. I relate to "Dreams" because so many times I stopped enjoying things just because they were not right for others, but were right for me, and I chose me. I do believe in setting out goals and working hard to accomplish them but also enjoying the way. I do realize that life is right now, not yesterday, not tomorrow, it is TODAY! **(Jessica Saldana Ortega)**

In this poem I feel Langston Hughes is saying that without dreaming or having a desire for something, life lacks substance or a reason to live per se. Throughout life, everything evolves and you need a dream or a desire in order to evolve or become or create a greater version of something. I can relate to this poem for example by becoming a part of Odyssey or deciding to go back to school to follow my dream so that my life and my children's lives can evolve. I wouldn't have made that decision without having a dream. **(Naquila Taylor)**

He is telling you that if you have no dreams, you will have no hope. There will be nothing that you will be looking for in life. You need to keep your mind open and have dreams. Dreams are what keep your life moving.

I am able to relate to this some due to unforeseen things that have happened in my life. I need to keep hope. I become grateful for all my small blessings. I have seen people take small blessings for granted. I dream to keep the future of mine alive. **(Mechele Williams)**

MOVED BY MORE LANGSTON HUGHES

Students chose another Langston Hughes poem besides “Dreams” to respond to and relate to their own lives.

As I Grew Older

It was a long time ago.
 I have almost forgotten my dream.
 But it was there then,
 In front of me,
 Bright like a sun,—
 My dream.
 And then the wall rose,
 Rose slowly,
 Slowly,
 Between me and my dream.
 Rose slowly, slowly,
 Dimming,
 Hiding,
 The light of my dream.
 Rose until it touched the sky,—
 The wall.
 Shadow.
 I am black.
 I lie down in the shadow.
 No longer the light of my dream before me,
 Above me.
 Only the thick wall.
 Only the shadow.
 My hands!
 My dark hands!
 Break through the wall!
 Find my dream!
 Help me to shatter this darkness,
 To smash this night,
 To break this shadow
 Into a thousand lights of sun,
 Into a thousand whirling dreams
 Of sun!

Langston Hughes’s poem “As I Grew Older” says chase your dreams, no matter what obstacles may

be in front of you/stopping you. Overcome those barriers and do what makes you happy no matter what it is. Nothing is easy in life, like I never thought I would attend the UW. Well, look, 31 years later, I’m here and thriving. All those barriers/walls that were against me are gone.

I chose this poem because it’s raw and very much real. We are shaped by life to forget our true passions in life due to rules and regulations. We need to work and pay bills if we do not have a great support system; for survival we just get a job to maintain everyday life. It can kick in highs and lows, good and bad, which can ultimately push our dreams away forever. But the beauty of life is if you truly want it and have time on your life clock, go for it. No matter your age, never stop striving in your race until you cross the finish line.

(Ontario Frazier)

Color

Wear it
 Like a banner
 For the proud—
 Not like a shroud.,
 Wear it
 Like a song
 Soaring high—
 Not moan or cry.

I chose the poem “Color.” I think he is saying, be proud of who you are and how you were born. Be proud of the skin you are in.

I chose this poem because it is short but gets to the point. Be proud of how you were born no matter the color, gender, and appearance. Just wear it proudly. **(Mariam Maiga)**

Still Here

I been scarred and battered.
My hopes the wind done scattered.

Snow has frizz me,
Sun has baked me,

Looks like between 'em they done
Tried to make me

Stop laughin', stop lovin', stop livin'--
But I don't care!
I'm still here!

Well, in "Still Here" we say the meaning when we say the name. He's telling us no matter how hot the sun is, he's still here. No matter how cold the winter can get, he's still here. He does a really good job painting that picture in your head that he's still here.

I really feel like I understand this poem. It speaks to me. There have been many times I had to prove why I'm still here, like when I had to show I can play basketball with the best or when I showed I can play football with the best. I had to show them it doesn't matter who does or who doesn't believe: just know, I'm still here.

(Jermaine Booeey)

"Still Here" means no matter what is thrown at me, no matter my circumstances, I'm still here. The images he expressed were when he said, "Snow has frizz me, sun has baked me."

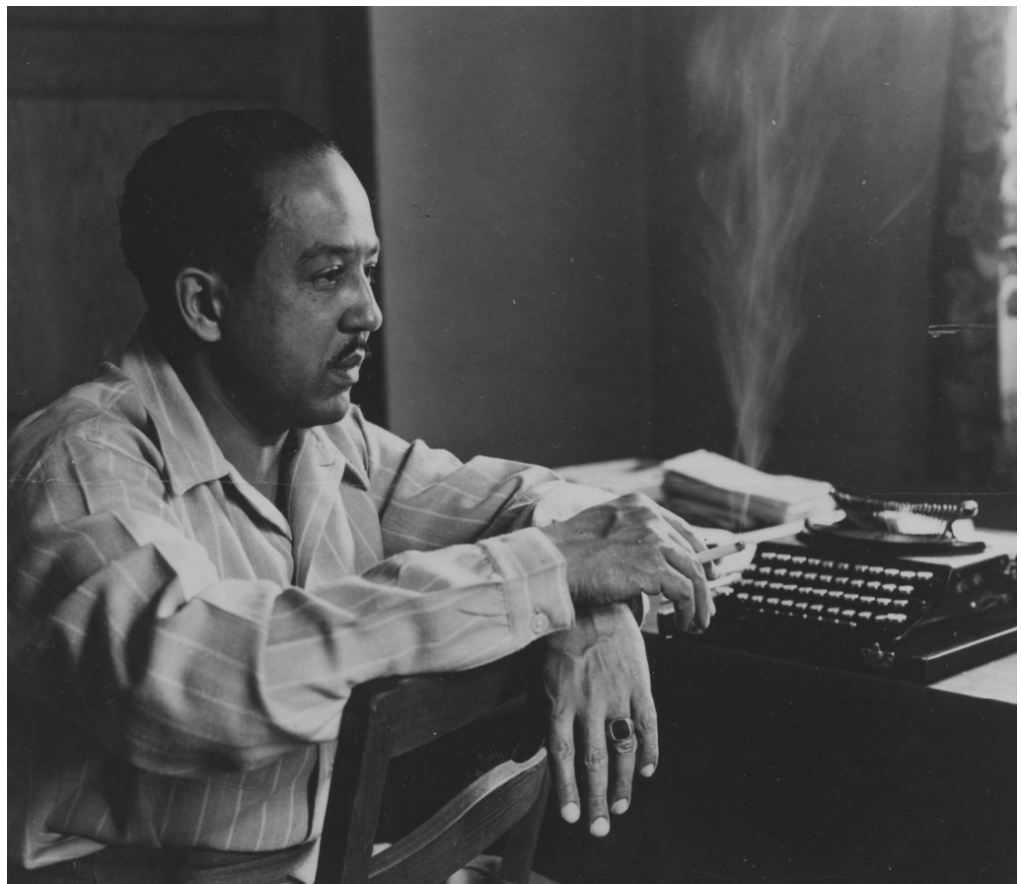
I chose this poem because it was very powerful. It made me feel very empowered, like I can do anything I put my mind to. I took from this poem that no matter my circumstances or what you throw at me, I'm still here.
(LaRonda Morris)

I believe the poem "Still Here" is saying that even if life throws you too many challenges and rocks are being thrown at you, you still stand there and keep telling those challenges, "You are not knocking me down! I am still here!" Enjoy life and make it fun, no matter what you're going through.

I picked this poem because I think it's important to always view life in all its wonder, even when it's hard to still be there, loving and laughing about it. Just live life to the fullest, telling everyone that you are still here. **(Erendira Giron Cruz)**

His poem "Still Here" reflects weariness through struggle and clarity after overcoming. He is talking about how sometimes things turn out bad one by one. It is like when we say, "Nothing bad could happen to me because I'm already in a dark hole," and then something bad happens.

This poem reflects a little bit of my life because I have been through a lot and can hardly believe that I am alive. At some point I was about to give up, but the strength comes out of nowhere and here I am fighting. **(Jessica Saldana Ortega)**



Go Slow

Go slow, they say-
 while the bite
 Of the dog is fast.
 Go slow, I hear-
 While they tell me
 You can't eat here!
 You can't live here!
 You can't work here!
 Don't Demonstrate! Wait!-
 While they lock the gate.
 Am I supposed to be God,
 Or an angel with wings
 And a halo on my head
 While jobless I starve dead?
 Am I supposed to forgive
 And meekly live
 Going slow, slow, slow,
 Slow, slow, slow,
 Slow, slow,
 Slow,
 Slow,
 Slow?
 ???
 ???
 ??
 ?

I think that Langston Hughes in "Go Slow" was trying to say that people will try to tell you to slow down in life and not move so fast. Some people will try and control the narrative of your life by telling you where you can live or work. But you should follow your own path, he states: "Am I supposed to be God, or an angel with wings?" You should challenge the narrative and follow your dreams. He states, "While jobless I starve dead? Am I supposed to forgive?"

I chose this poem because a lot of people have told me to slow down in life and be patient, and there have been people who have told me not to follow my dreams. There have also been people that have helped me find my path along the way. Sometimes I struggle in life, in figuring out what I want to do,

asking why am I here? So I do think sometimes going slow is a good thing because it allows you to be in the moment and enjoy the now of life.

(Brandyn Bess)

One Way Ticket

I pick up my life
 And take it with me
 And I put it down in
 Chicago, Detroit,
 Buffalo, Scranton,
 Any place that is North and
 East—
 And not Dixie.
 I pick up my life
 And take it on the train
 To Los Angeles, Bakersfield,
 Seattle, Oakland, Salt Lake,
 Any place that is
 North and West—
 And not South.
 I am fed up
 With Jim Crow laws,
 People who are cruel
 And afraid,
 Who lynch and run,
 Who are scared of of me
 And me of them.
 I pick up my life
 And take it away
 On a one-way ticket—
 Gone up North,
 Gone out West,
 Gone!

In "One Way Ticket," what he was saying is that he would pick up and move all his life anywhere north or west, but not south. He was afraid of the people in the south, and Jim Crow was still around.

This stuck out to me because my mother did that: moving your whole life and leaving for somewhere that has opportunity. Circumstances were different, but I can only imagine what it's like up and leaving somewhere you have been your whole life to move to a whole new place. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

God to Hungry Child

Hungry child,
 I didn't make this world for you.
 You didn't buy any stock in my railroad.
 You didn't invest in my corporation.
 Where are your shares in standard oil?
 I made the world for the rich
 And the will-be-rich
 And the have-always-been-rich.
 Not for you,

I believe Langston Hughes gave the poem "God to Hungry Child" its title to represent how people like CEOs act as if they are God and have all the power over the poor, hungry, helpless community. I chose this poem because it speaks to me and what I still suffer from today. I have fewer opportunities and live in poverty for the reasons he stated. My family "didn't buy stocks, invest" and they are not rich and will never be rich. So sometimes I suffer in this world due to it being owned and ruled by the "rich." It should not be this way but it has been since before I was born. "I didn't make this world for you" made me emotional because that's really what the rich think. They believe we want to be poor; they think we should overlook it or maybe we are just lazy. They don't understand or take the time to understand how poverty is passed down through generations. It's sad and stressful but yet we still get through it. **(Kayanna Branch)**

After reading and analyzing this poem, I think it means that this world does not satisfy the soul of the hungry child. This world was not made for the hungry child, but for the bounty of the kingdom of heaven. Langston Hughes speaks metaphorically about the riches and gains of this world. He expresses worldly things of human creation and systems that we use to function economically to get by. For example, he mentions

corporations, railroads, and oil, which are some things that are used for the economic functionality of this world.

Langston Hughes, in my opinion, was very clever when writing this poem. I immediately noticed the metaphorical and creative way that he expressed the glory of the kingdom of heaven versus the economic systems of this world. I selected this poem because the title itself grabbed my attention. The word "God" in the title isolated the entire poem because it is not worded within the poem itself. Without the word "God" in the title it would take away the entire meaning and substance of the poem referring to a "hungry child." **(Kimari Rogers)**

Convent

Tell me,
 Is there peace
 Behind your high stone walls—
 Peace
 Where no worldly duty calls—
 Or does some strange
 Insistence beckon
 With a challenge
 That appalls?

The Langston Hughes poem "Convent" really resonated deep within me. It is almost as if he's articulating my soul's deepest yearning— "is there peace"? And the way he frames it as if peace is in some faraway place that he's trekked to, wondering

if he's finally found it, stirs something deep and primordial. I've often arrived at places in my life where I wondered is there peace? Have I finally found it—a place where no worldly duty calls?

But in one way or another, the strange insistence of life beckons and implores with a challenge that corresponds to somewhere deep in my heart. Although I know it must be, it definitely appalls at times. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**



Only Woman Blues

I want to tell you 'bout that woman,
My used-to-be—
She was de meanest woman
I ever did see.
But she's de only
Woman that could mistreat me!

She could make me holler like a sissie,
Bark like a dog.
She could chase me up a tree
And then cut down de log—
Cause she's de only
Woman that could mistreat me.

She had long black hair,
Big black eyes,
Glory! Hallelujah!
Forgive them lies!
She's de only
Woman's gonna mistreat me.

I got her in Mississippi.
Took her to Alabam'.
When she left
I said, God, hot damn!
You de last and only
Woman's gonna mistreat me.

The poem "Only Woman Blues" caught my attention by the words he wrote: "woman that could mistreat me." I took from his poem that he was very in love with a woman. Since his love for her was so strong, she had the ability to mistreat him, and he would obey. Even when he's letting her go, he doesn't seem to really want to. That woman gave him a run for his money and a love he will never forget.

This poem showed me a strong love that a man has for a woman. Being with someone that tells you they will love you to death and doing it are two different things. I have known men that become someone totally different once they start dating. They allow the woman to walk all over them. The man doesn't see it. He will also get upset if you try

to point it out. They have totally lost themselves. Yet, their love is so true for that woman.

(Mechele Williams)

Mean Old Yesterday

That mean old yesterday
Keeps on following me.
The things I've said and done
Haunt me like a misery.

What I did last year—
How come it matters still today?
The snow that fell last winter's
Melted away.

I thought you'd done forgotten
What happened way last week,
But when I saw you this morning,
You turned your head and would not speak.

Memory like an elephant,
Never forget a thing!
Well, if you feel like that, baby,
Gimme back my diamond ring.

As I read through "Mean Old Yesterday" I started to feel as if he was talking about his life and his past mistakes. He talks about yesterday, last year, last week, and the past winter and how that impacted him in the present moment. I couldn't really tell if he was talking about his fiancée or was literally asking for his life back at the end (Gimme back my diamond ring).

In my reflection to the Langston Hughes poem, I feel like I can relate in many ways. Sometimes I feel like in life, the healing journey can be hard. He made me think of how I sometimes hold onto the things that I say that I've let go. There are certain triggers that can set you back to a time or place. I guess they call that trauma. As he says, that mean old yesterday keeps on following me. Trying to live the new life at times seems hard, but also brings hope. As the bible says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." **(Michelle Mack)**

I, Too

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I think that the poem "I, Too" by Langston Hughes means that he too has dreams. He too is important, is valuable, has aspirations, and is part of America. Langston Hughes starts off the poem with "I, too sing" and ends with "I, too am America." I think he tries to say that there has been a constant battle for people with a darker complexion to be part of America. They are constantly put on the sidelines and forgotten about.

In the second stanza, he doesn't talk about being regretful about the treatment that he endures but of the progress he makes in light of it. Then he goes on to say that the time will come, and when his day comes, he will be at the forefront, sitting with everyone else at the table, included for once. When the progress that needs to be made is made, nobody will dare to marginalize him again. As a positive externality, the world will also see how beautiful he really is, not judging him and being prejudiced against him. Once they see how beautiful he really is, they will be ashamed of how they treated him.

I chose this poem because I feel like it speaks to me as well. Maybe I don't have as much opportunity as

others, but that's no reason to give up. There is always light at the end of the tunnel and there is always a silver lining. Just because I don't have it now, it doesn't mean I can't have it in the future. There are still some good things that can come of this. The poem made me feel really good because it made me have hope for the future. You can always see it in a positive way and think half full instead of half empty. **(Yael Jimenez)**

Black Panther

Pushed into the corner
Of the hobnailed boot,
Pushed into the corner of the
"I-don't-want-to-die" cry,
Pushed into the corner of
"I don't want to study war no more,"
Changed into "Eye for eye,"
The Panther in his desperate boldness
Wears no disguise,
Motivated by the Truest
Of the oldest
Lies.

"Black Panther" points out the injustice in the world and how a Black Panther felt when he was pushed, had nowhere to go, and was tired—tired of being harassed and treated like dirt. He doesn't want to challenge the power of those that are privileged. He begins to get courage to become violent because he can't put on that face of being pushed around and disrespected. His mask is coming off and he can't hold back his frustration. There is no equity and it's been this way for centuries. Changed into "eye for eye," he was ready to challenge their power and fight because he had enough.

My takeaway is that back in the Black Panther era, there was so much hatred towards blacks, injustice, violence towards people who just wanted to live freely and peacefully and raise their kids to be great despite the hardship but couldn't. I am disappointed that my people's family had to go through this, and it's sad because it's still happening. **(Crystal Johnson)**

"Ku Klux"

They took me out
To some lonesome place.
They said, "Do you believe
In the great white race?"

I said, "Mister,
To tell you the truth,
I'd believe in anything
If you'd just turn me loose."

The white man said, "Boy,
Can it be
You're a-standin' there
A-sassin' me?"

They hit me in the head
And knocked me down.
And then they kicked me
On the ground.

A klansman said, "Nigger,
Look me in the face ---
And tell me you believe in
The great white race."

"Ku Klux" is the poem I chose. The poem explains basically how the white men treated black males before they had any voice. They belittled him, asked questions, received answers, and deemed them jokes or clown answers, then beat him. This group of whites hated black folks just because of their skin. Langston Hughes used racial injustice and white supremacy in the poem.

I chose this poem because it shows just how mistreated we were, even if we did nothing wrong. A black male was taken, then asked questions, and when he answered, he still got kicked and mistreated. This was to show how much of a man he wasn't and who was in charge. This poem made me sick to my stomach because no matter what we do, it's wrong. In my everyday life, we can

do nothing right. It's always wrong in some way, whether it's Jamarion or just me gaining weight: I'm always wrong and judged. **(Capri Booker)**

Ma Lord

Ma Lord ain't no stuck-up man.
Ma Lord, he ain't proud.
When he goes a-walkin'
He gives me his hand.
"You ma friend, " he 'lowed.

Ma Lord knowed what it was to work.
He knowed how to pray.
Ma Lord's life was trouble, too,
Trouble ever day.

Ma Lord ain't no stuck-up man.
He's a friend o' mine.
When He went to heaben,
His soul on fire,
He tole me I was gwine.
He said, " Sho you'll come wid Me
An' be ma friend through eternity. "

To me, the poem "Ma Lord" is stating that the lord is a good friend who takes her/his hand and walks with them in life. Ma Lord's life was trouble as well as hers/his was every day. Ma Lord is not a stuck-up man, nor will he judge you. He is my friend through eternity.



In this poem, Hughes used an image of his soul on fire, and also Ma Lord walking, holding his friend's hand.

When relating this poem to me personally, I must say that I am a strong believer in God. "Ma Lord ain't no stuck-up man and he ain't proud" really got my undivided attention. God don't brag or talk down on what he do for his people. He just came into our lives at the toughest time in life. Life isn't easy, but you must keep faith and not give up on anything you want to accomplish. **(Amanda Bell)**

I Dream a World

I dream a world where man
 No other man will scorn,
 Where love will bless the earth
 And peace its paths adorn
 I dream a world where all
 Will know sweet freedom's way,
 Where greed no longer saps the soul
 Nor avarice blights our day.
 A world I dream where black or white,
 Whatever race you be,
 Will share the bounties of the earth
 And every man is free,
 Where wretchedness will hang its head
 And joy, like a pearl,
 Attends the needs of all mankind-
 Of such I dream, my world!

I chose "I Dream a World" by Langston Hughes because of how powerful the poem is and how it is still relevant in the world we live in today. When Langston Hughes wrote this poem, he dreamt of himself in a world where he saw no racism, greed, or abuse of power. He only saw love, peace, and freedom for the people living here on earth. It was like he had a mirror and was looking into his real reflection and what he wanted the outcome of the world to be in his eyes, instead of the mask he puts on every day to survive in world so cruel and heartless.

He uses positive metaphors like "Where wretchedness will hang its head / And joy, like a pearl..." to describe how he hopes the corrupt government will see past their evil ways and find peace and happiness in giving to those in need instead of blindly pointing the finger and taking from those who are struggling. He also uses another metaphor, "Where love will bless the earth...And peace its paths," saying the only way to move forward is to love to each other and care for each other so we create peace for future generations. But we must work hard in order for our children and our loved ones to have better lives.

I chose this poem because I see myself wanting to create a better world for my son. I want my son Sekani (due in July) to live in a world of love, peace, and happiness. I want him to grow up and live a better life than I did, where he doesn't have to live in constant fear that the color of his skin is more of a threat to a scared police officer than actually having a conversation. I want to live in a world where I'm understood, cared for, and loved instead of being perceived as angry, lazy, and a systematic gold digger. I want to live in a world where I don't have to code switch every time I'm around my white peers versus when around my black peers. For the fear of acting too white or too ghetto will cause me more emotional damage than physical. I want to stop living inside my head and overthinking every little negative thing that someone does to me. I want to be free from my anxiety and depression because they are the biggest liars and barriers to my success. I want to be free, and I want my children and grandchildren to be free.

(Helena Lee)

My People

The night is beautiful,
 So the faces of my people.

The stars are beautiful,
 So the eyes of my people.

Beautiful, also, is the sun.
 Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people.

I read "My People" by Langston Hughes. I think Mr. Hughes was comparing the beauty of life with the beauty of his people. The image that I get from the poem is beauty, and it is powerful.

I chose the poem "My People" because it was powerful to me. Mr. Hughes compares the beauty of life with the beauty of his people. The people are bright like the sun and the stars. They are all intelligent and smart. The people are beautiful inside and out. All are God's beautiful creation.

(Katrina Collins)

Harlem

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

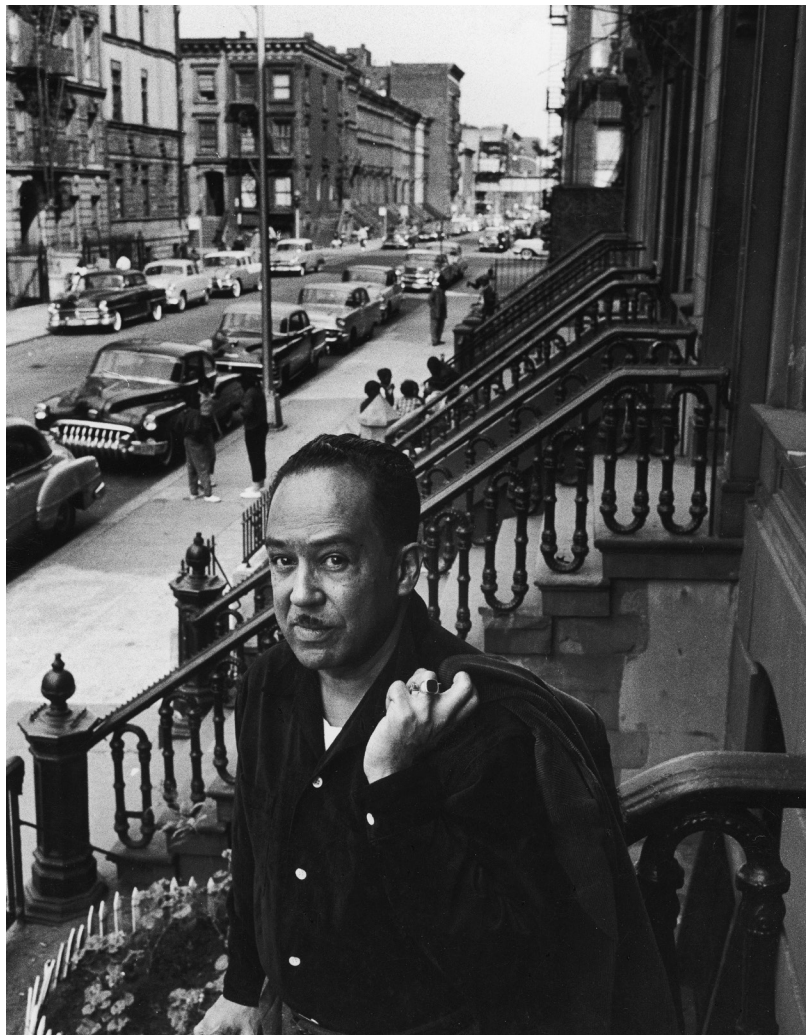
Or does it explode?

I have always loved “Harlem” by Langston Hughes because I feel it has so much power and I love the evolution of the poem in itself. What I can interpret the poem to mean is that one is possibly asking themselves what happens to someone’s dream if the dream is postponed. Does it just shrivel up and die like a heat stroked person, lost in a desert out in the sun? Does it begin to rot and decompose like dead flesh and then leak out with pus or bodily fluids? Will it smell awful, like rotten meat that’s sat out in the hot sun for over twelve hours? Or will it instead get all crusty and dry like too-old candy that you find at the bottom of your old purses? Maybe the dream is just too much for them to carry and weighs them down with the defeat. Or does it erupt with tremendous intensity and demand action be taken?

I really love this because it shows this author in so many different stages and being so conflicted with their own answer to the question if they were to have to put off their dreams. It gives me a kind of push once again to just explode because of how this poem starts. Hearing those few outcomes makes me want to take more action with my dreams and things that

once brought me joy before I had lost my brother. It’s like I don’t want to shrivel up in the sun or decompose and leak out bodily fluids. I’d rather take action and make my dream a reality.

I think what also drew me to this was that it’s kind of like Langston Hughes’s “Dreams” poem, just making sure that you should follow your dreams because dreams are definitely necessary for your life. I feel as if having something that truly makes you happy deserves to be followed through with. Having something that you can do as your release is good for your mental health and overall well-being. I just know personally that I have seen a decrease in my mental health and attitude since I’ve stopped doing things that bring happiness in my seemingly meaningless and dark life. It’s important to me to be present and a better mother/partner for my family. **(Yasmine Dobbins)**



Mother to Son

Well, son, I'll tell you:
 Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
 It's had tacks in it,
 And splinters,
 And boards torn up,
 And places with no carpet on the floor—
 Bare.
 But all the time
 I've been a-climbin' on,
 And reachin' landin's,
 And turnin' corners,
 And sometimes goin' in the dark
 Where there ain't been no light.
 So boy, don't you turn back.
 Don't you set down on the steps
 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
 Don't you fall now—
 For I've still goin', honey,
 I've still climbin',
 And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

The poem I picked was “Mother to Son.” The mother was letting her son know life wasn’t a crystal stair. This meant everything that she worked for, she worked hard. There may have been times Mom wanted to give up but she had to work extremely hard. When Mom said, “but all the time I been climbin’ on,” that hit home. I’m fighting homelessness right now and also attending the Odyssey Project. In addition, my daughter has weekly Odyssey Junior Zooms. I’m climbing out of this hole.

The poem shifts with “I’ve been turning corners and sometimes going in the dark.” A dark depression tried to cover my life, but I just keep moving. All I did was put my glasses on and I pushed through. When the mother said, “So boy don’t you turn back,” it reminds me that I can’t let my daughter give up on anything. I don’t give up, I fight. I get in

the boxing cage and fight. Lastly, “when you find it’s kinda hard, don’t you fall now. For I still going honey,” that is exactly what I’m doing: fighting these obstacles. **(Cinderria Harwell)**

As a “boy’s mom,” I completely understand “Mother to Son.” I felt every pain and every ounce of love. I can feel the tiredness and the will to push forward. I am what they consider to be low income yet my children are happy. I do the best I can with what I have, and my children smile every day. The only criticism comes from me. I am my worst critic; my children am satisfied yet I am not. I always push forward to create better opportunities for my children, which is why I am completing odyssey. **(Cylinthia Olle)**

The poem I chose was “Mother to Son.” What I get out of this poem is a mother telling her son that life has not been easy for her. She has been through difficulties and situations that were new to her, still striving and learning to never get comfortable in one position.

I chose this poem because I have four sons and I sometimes find myself quoting the words in the poem, “Don’t you fall now for I’ve still goin honey, I’ve still climbin.” **(Mashell McCarter)**



In “Mother to Son,” a mother explains to her son that life is not always easy and sometimes can become very hard. She contrasts her life with crystal stairs. She describes the types of stairs she has encountered. She is comparing the tacks, splinters, torn up boards, and stairs without carpet to those rough times in her life.

She encourages her son to keep climbing, reaching, and turning corners. She is encouraging her son to keep going despite the rough times he will encounter. She encourages him to not look back on those rough times and to keep moving forward because life keeps going on.

Being a parent of four sons, I found this poem really resonates with my parenting style. I’ve spent a lot of time cautioning my sons about being a black man in this world and how that makes the world more unjust than it already is for others. I’ve taught them that the quicker they understand this, the better they will understand situations they encounter and be able to navigate through those situations like stereotyping, discrimination, and racism. This poem reinforces the lessons I’ve taught my black sons. **(Ericka Booe)**

To me, the “Mother to Son” poem means it was a mother preparing her son for life. The images Hughes uses to express his idea show the mom explaining the hardships she went through, such as describing the floor that she had growing up. She also explains by describing how she felt sometimes like “going in the dark when there is no light.” She was letting

her son know that sometimes life will be hard, and you never know how things will turn out. But in this world, you have to be strong. Her message was to let her son know no matter how tough things may get, don’t give up and keep pushing because life for her also “ain’t been no crystal stair.”

I chose this poem because I can relate to it in many ways. I have two sons of my own, and I have stories I would also like to share with them once they are a little older. I also feel it is very important to prepare your children for life so they can know how they should face the obstacles that may come because we all will go through obstacles. The title “Mother to Son” also stood out to me because it can be very scary to be a woman to raise a man. No offense to anyone else, but it is especially scary to raise young African American men. I plan to read this poem to my children as well as tell them my story and many others as it relates to growing up, getting older, and preparing them for life and their future.

(Naquila Taylor)



Sketch by Stanley Sallay, Odyssey '07

MAKING METAPHORS

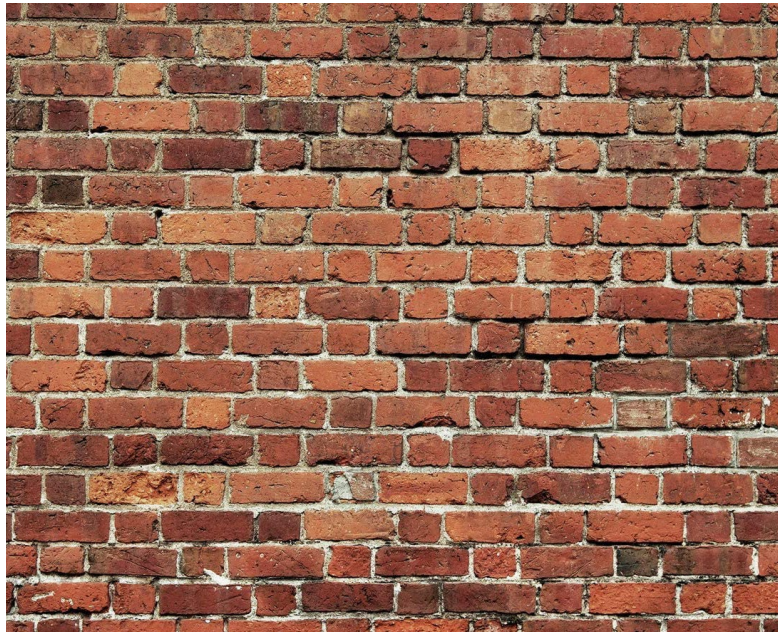


Music is alive in my ears.
I can feel its heartbeat,
and I can feel its soul,
it makes me shiver,
and it helps me grow. **(Brandyn Bess)**

Love is a sport.
You have your players,
An object,
Rules and regulations
And common goals.
(Yasmine Dobbins)

Life is a brick wall:
It can hit you hard if you're not watching.
(Jermaine Booe)

Parenthood is School/Homework. Learning something new can be scary, let alone continuing education at an older age group than the typical college age group, which can strike fear into one, much like having children or a new lover. All babies are not the same, so you really have to put your all into studying/learning this baby/learning material. Both are hard to juggle, no matter when they occur. You will never be ready for either unless you have a large amount of wealth. You just dive in and you do the best you can. **(Ontario Frazier)**



What you use your fuel for...
The fuel we eat is our energy to compete.
Fuel is meant to be shared with families and friends.
From the cupboards of your homes to the ride in your car.
Quality is an option depending on how much you want to invest.
The energy you digest gives you the room to progress.
(Michelle Mack)

Love is a magic trick
So fun and engaging in the beginning
Then with a blink of an eye
You've been bamboozled.
(Mariam Maiga)

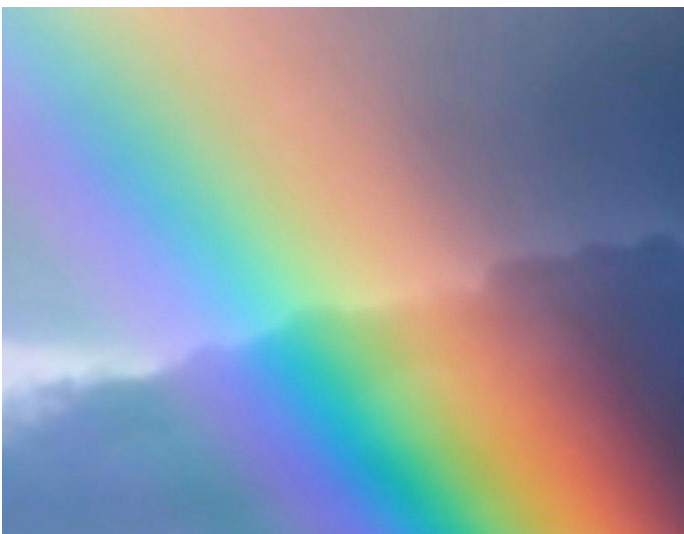


My mind is a tornado
Whirling around
Shuffling all my thoughts
Not being able to bear them to the
ground
But in one instant all my thoughts drop
Being still as can be
I look in the rubble and there's always
one thing sticking out to me
My mind has stopped twirling and
whirling away
Very settled like a perfect spring day
(Mechele Williams)

Toddlers and their temper tantrums in
their terrible twos are tornadoes: they
arrive with rage and on a mission to
break through any and everything in
their way, but once they calm, an
enormous sun and a beautiful rainbow
arrive, and the earth is sound again.
(Naquila Taylor)

Sleep is heaven to me.
There's peace and a beautiful feeling of comfort.
The feeling of content and relaxation,
what a heavenly feeling. **(Mashell McCarter)**

Life is a mystery
There are clues
But things don't add up
So much cannot be solved
(Talaisha Goodwan)

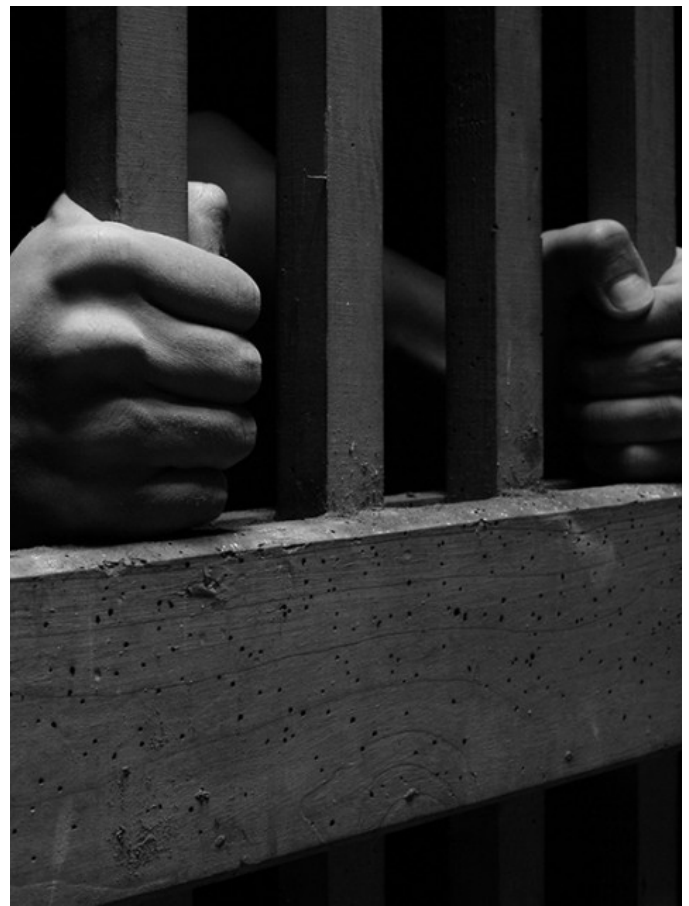


God and a rainbow
They are colorful.
They are powerful.
They are loved.
(Katrina Collins)



My teenage daughter is a remote control. She has an off and on button, just like a remote. Changing channels, you get a different picture, just like my teen daughter's attitude changes. Turning up the volume depends because my teen's volume or attitude gets louder and louder with her physical movement. When I mute her, she goes to her room. And when she's tired, she turns herself off; bedtime. Sometimes I lose my remote in the cushions of my cold leather couch, but I'm not going to lose my teen to the cold cruel world. I'm working to help her channel and remote herself. **(Crystal Johnson)**

Prison is a living nightmare.
A reality constructed out of your deepest fears,
your deepest insecurities.
You wake everyday wondering if you're dreaming.
You go to sleep feeling like you have finally awakened.
Sweet deception,
Until you wake up and you're dreaming again.
Prison is a living nightmare. **(Jonathon Adeyanju)**

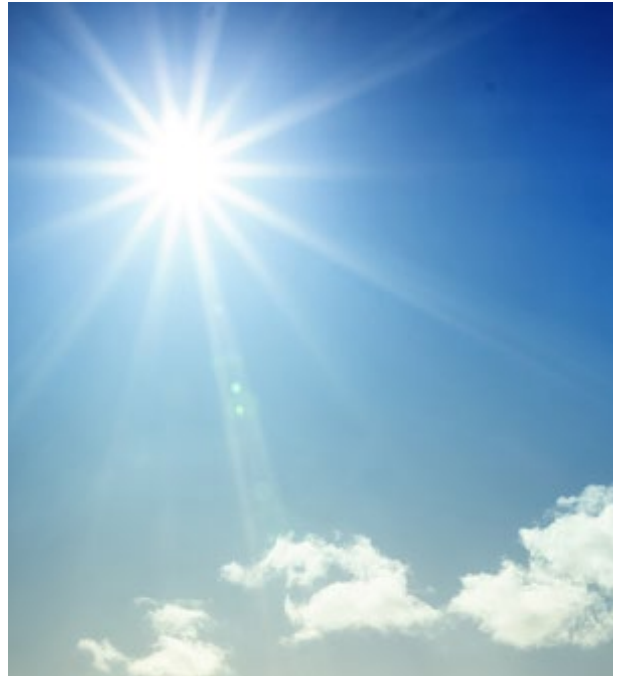


Parenthood is a jungle. You just never know what's coming next where the lions terrorize the pack. **(Cynthia Gonzalez)**

Success is jumping up, just to come back down,
just to jump back up again, while continuing to jump
in one place,
exhausting the individual with a never-ending
vicious cycle. **(Kimari Rogers)**

The pastor's sermon is a sun shining bright
 Before the sermon my spirit feels heavy and dark
 After the sermon my spirit feels light and bright
 The pastor feeds and restores my spirit
(Ericka Booe)

Social media is a drug.
 It has an addiction.
 It has everyone's attention
 For example, I can start a small business
 One day and be poor.
 Through social media I can use it
 as a market that people adore
 Everyday someone could reach out to you in many ways.
 They may not have been able to in other days
 So now I end this stance
 To say leave social media
 While you have a chance. **(Cinderria Harwell)**

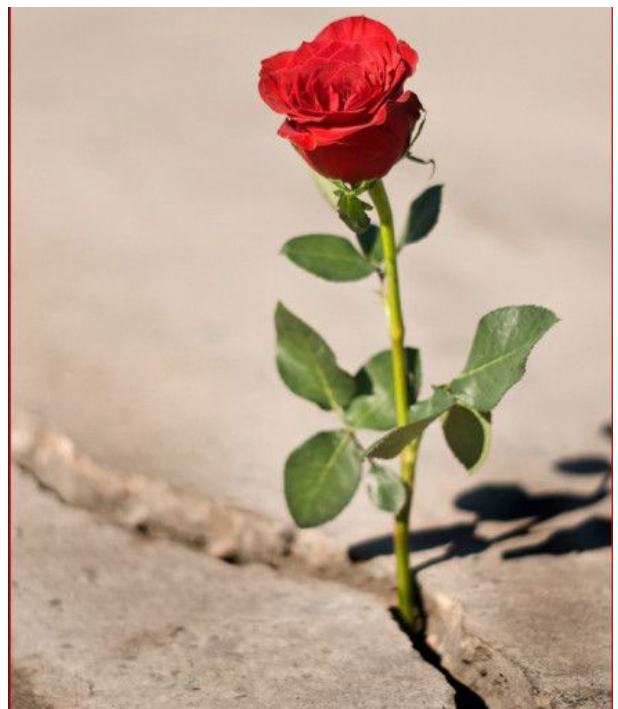


My little boy's eyes are big seas
 He is my reason for being here
 He is my king
(Jessica Saldana Ortega)

Love is love
 Love is a beautiful flower
 but hurts like a thorn
(LaRonda Morris)



I am Tupac's rose that grew from concrete. Living in a concrete society and being a person of color, the odds are set against you. While trying to navigate through trauma, depression, anxiety and a learning disability, I still beat the odds, just like the rose did by growing in the concrete. I always try to find the brighter side to things even though times were rough, and I never lost hope in having a better future, even when family and friends turned their backs on me. **(Helena Lee)**



I am but driftwood in the ocean,
I flow until I become a part of the blue.
(Will Nunn)

Cell Phones are Drugs
Once opened hard to close
Hard to gauge the right dose.
Until you realize what you've indulged
the consequences continue to bulge.
Once a satisfaction, now a distraction
I hope it doesn't limit our interaction.
(Yael Jimenez)

Odyssey is a journey.
Sailing seas, taking it day by day
to find out just how much closer
we are to our destination,
excited to get to where we're going
yet noticing just how far we came!
(Zaria Hunter)



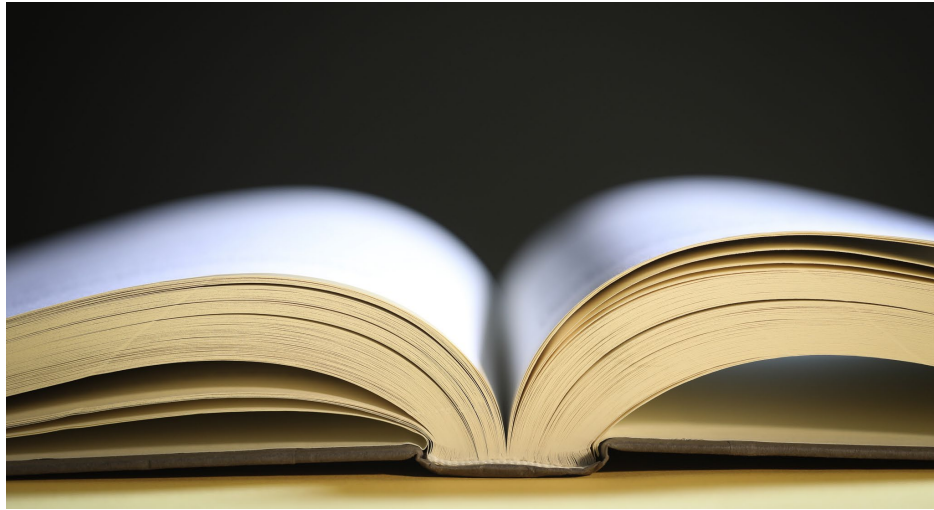
Depression is a clogged sink. At first, you can manipulate depression by hanging with friends. After they leave, you see it was never resolved. The memories, the pain become all you know. Every good memory gets backed up by three bad. You're literally stuck inside your own prison, being held captive. Everything you're going through can never be returned. You'll always walk back into it.
(Capri Booker)

Love is water. You need it;
however, it can be too
much. It can be strong and
powerful; it can be slow
and frightening. But it's
much needed to be human.
Like water, love can hurt. It
can hit you like a pound of
bricks and be gone or do
damage as quickly as the
blink of an eye. So, you see,
love is water: you simply
need it to survive.
(Cylinthia Olle)



Reading a book is having a dream. You are in a story mentally, but physically you are not. You can see everything happening as you read each page or as every minute goes by in your dream, but it's not your real story. It didn't happen to you in real life. You live in a different time zone, but you know when you're done reading you'll wake up and you will be back to your own life.

(Kayanna Branch)



This snow is a cloud
It's puffy
It's white
And it's a big blanket.

(Erendira Giron Cruz)

Parenthood is knowledge.
It is a process, but you learn as you go.
It can get rough, but you must stay strong.
Parenthood is teaching your child right from wrong.
It is your chance to show your children they too can be successful. **(Amanda Bell)**

Pain is the blood flowing through my veins. It's a part of me. It has consumed so much space in my heart, I may as well be heartless. Instead, I get numb and create imaginary happiness so I can live in this poetic tragedy we call life. **(Cylinthia Olle)**

Odyssey is a stew. Individually the ingredients won't do much, but collectively the carrots, onions, bell peppers, and tomatoes all combined with potatoes and broccoli make a delicious victory feast. **(Reggie Moore)**





Odyssey Project
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Please join us for a powerful evening!

ODYSSEY CLASS OF 2022 GRADUATION CEREMONY

**Great Hall, Memorial Union
800 Langdon St, UW-Madison Campus
Wednesday, May 4, 2022
6:00 - 7:30 PM**

You are cordially invited to attend the inspiring and memorable graduation ceremony for students of the UW Odyssey Project Class of 2022. Please join Odyssey co-directors Emily Auerbach and Kevin Mullen along with other Odyssey faculty and staff in celebrating students' successful completion of six UW credits in English following two semesters studying challenging works of literature, American history, art history, and philosophy.

Free and open to the public, the program will include recognition of Odyssey supporters, remarks by UW Chancellor Rebecca Blank, readings by graduates, refreshments, and music. For information about attending in person, COVID measures, or attending online via Zoom, visit odyssey.wisc.edu/graduation.



"The Odyssey Project is one of our best examples of the Wisconsin Idea in action."

—Rebecca Blank, UW-Madison Chancellor and winner of the 2022 Friend of Odyssey Award

