

# Odyssey Oracle

Number 21  
Wednesday,  
April 13, 2005

## The strongest person I know

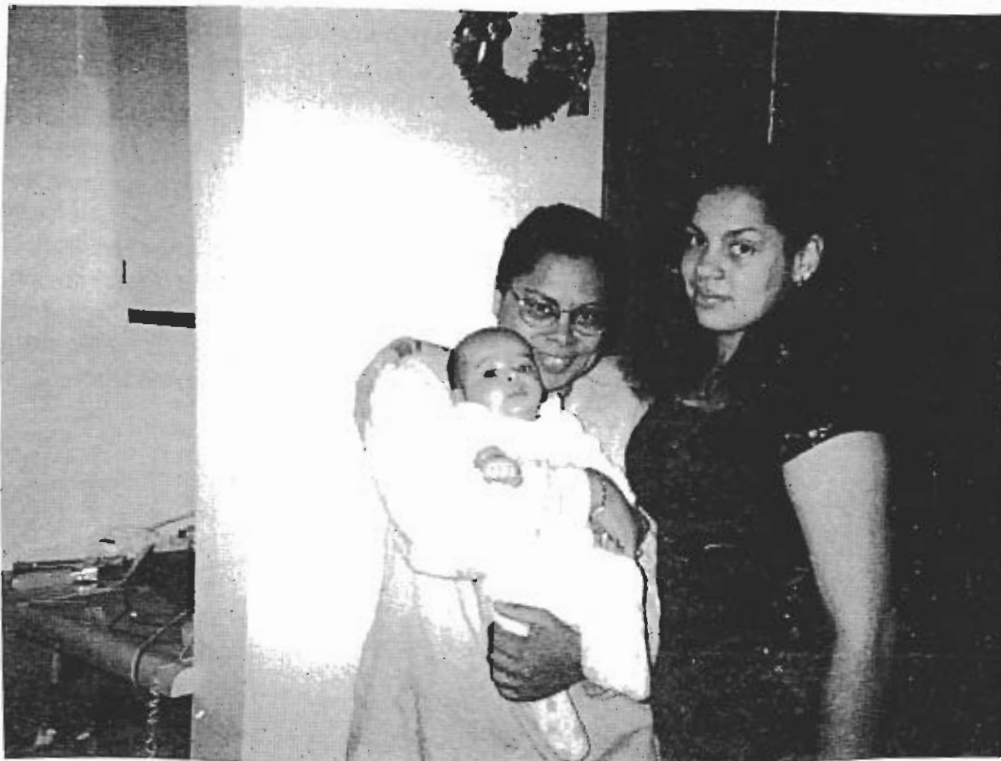
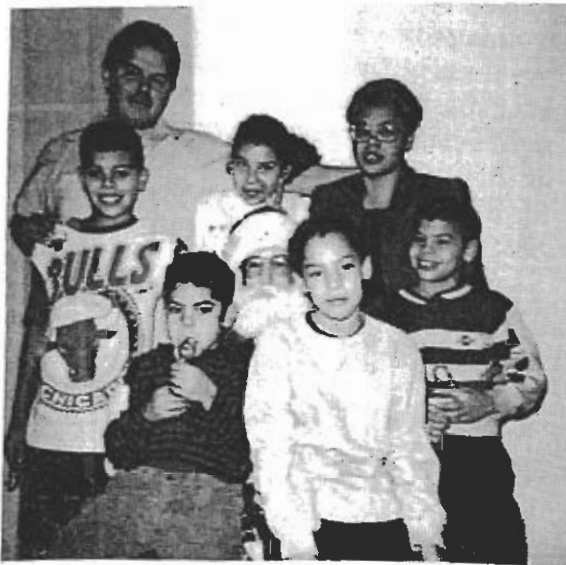
By Joanna Lopez

My mother was born in Caguas, Puerto Rico, and raised with six siblings. Her mother brought her seven kids to New York at a young age; eventually she moved to Chicago. My mother graduated from Roberto Clemente High School and went on to college. She didn't attend long before she met my father. She and my father had five children together. Because my father chose to live the lifestyle of a drug dealer, my mother moved us wherever my father said. From Chicago to Puerto Rico, we came back to Chicago, then to Miami, and from Miami to the suburbs of Atlanta and finally to the suburbs to Milwaukee.

When we moved to Milwaukee, the FBI raided our home. My father was sentenced to 10 years in the Federal prison. After my father went to prison, my mother moved us to Madison. She was a single parent and worked three jobs. We gave her hell growing up, but she stayed strong.

When her son was murdered, she fainted in the hospital. That night in her sleep, my brother visited her; he told her not to worry because he is in a better place and happy.

She became stronger the next day. My father was unable to attend his funeral, and that upset my mother. She was still strong. Almost four years after my brother's death, she lost her husband, my father, to a gunshot wound. I thought she would've lost it by now. Today she is still working and still smiling. She is the strongest person I know.



## Dear Dr. King

### Are we content to wait for a leader?

I was very moved by your words. As a mother of four, I understand your determination to change the world in which we live, to change the minds of the lawmakers and “holymen” of this world. The question that I most have for you is, how do you stay non-violent with all the violence around you? Your answer, I assume, is faith. Even though I too feel compelled to change people’s minds, I feel I lack that faith which I seek. You will never read this letter, but I feel compelled to speak about “Black America” today as I know it. In your letter you talk about how the white clergymen say “Wait! Your time will come”; today our black communities are content to wait. They are looking for the next leader to lead them instead of trying to become the next leader. They are content with this “progress” they truly believe that we have made. They wait and think everything will be handed to them or sent from above with little or no effort on their part. Don’t get me wrong; not all black people have this mentality, but honestly, a lot do. This world we now know has fooled “Black America” into thinking that we have made progress and are “equal” to all other races; this is an untruth. ...I much prefer the outright racist who would burn a cross on my lawn over the closet racist who stays next door and says good morning everyday. You put it best when you say, “lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.” I don’t want to sound like an angry black woman but a disappointed one. I want to show my four children that you can be the next leader right here in your own backyard; you can change lives. ...I must first start with self, and I am happy to say that I am a work in progress. I am a true believer that if you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything.

Sincerely,

**Sherreallum Allen**

Mother of four

Lifechanger in the making

### The time comes to fight back

I am grateful for people like you and Malcolm X. You have taught me that one does not have to always stoop down to the oppressor’s level in order for justice to be served; one can peacefully get his/her point across without using violence. But there does come a time when the oppressor wants to use violence, and more of our people were still being killed for peacefully protesting. We just got tired of being spat on, and it seemed as if nothing was changing, so we starting fighting back. I more agree with Malcolm X’s theory of protesting. ... I still respect you as a Civil Rights leader/preacher/father. You went through a lot during your time here on this earth. ...Even though your death was not in vain, we are still deep into the struggle, and we want to be able to say these words: “Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”

**Camille Soward**

### Walking a mile in King’s shoes

I could only imagine the suffering that went on in 1963: broken promises, hopes blasted, dark depths of prejudice. I realize why you spoke of Socrates’ idea of creating a “tension” in the mind so people could rise from half truths and acknowledge the need for nonviolent gadflies to create a better society.

Dr. King, being a Christian Black man in 1963 was a tough time: speaking up for young people, watching women and girls, men and boys get abused, living day to day not knowing of future bitterness toward your children, hoping and praying that they would stick together and not complement the “order of the violence.” I’m deeply moved by your strong faith that your dream will come true.

**Corina Brown ‘05**

Odyssey

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## To a great spirit, noble and humble soul

To the most humble spirit, noble man, and, forever, the "Great Speaker," Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,

I was deeply intrigued and intoxicated by your honesty and truthfulness to the white Alabama clergymen. It brought tears to my eyes, knowing how much pain, frustration and struggle you've faced. ...I pictured myself in the jail cell with you, observing your every pen stroke, pauses, movements, pacing the floor, positioning yourself to feel comfortable and at ease, your humbleness with prayer after prayer after prayer, crying silently to yourself. I suddenly took a step to reach out to hug you... but it was all a mist. I wish I could bring you forward to this time, wish your voice and presence were with us all today, wish that your assassination never existed.... [S]till you kept your peace of mind, and a piece of your good heart, which you spread through your speeches, marches, peaceful and nonviolent protests. I am truly honored to have written a letter to you.

**LaShaundra Rimson**

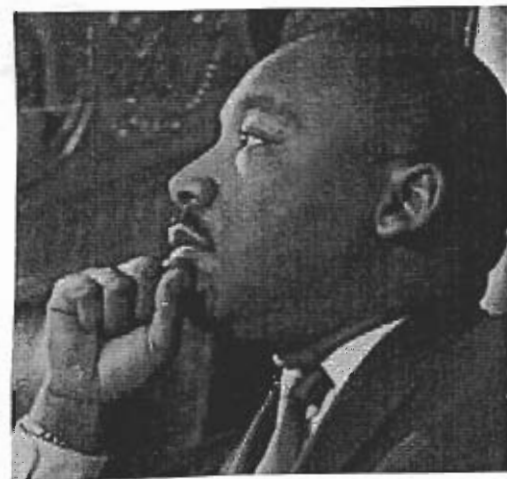
## A personal commitment to fight racism

I met the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's while living in Cambridge, MA. I was 10 years old when you were thrown into jail in Birmingham. Your letter is as clear as clear water from a mountain spring. My father was a minister of the Congregational Church. I remember evenings when black couples would meet with white couples in our living room to discuss issues of racism....

I went to an integrated high school of about 2,400 students. Every month or so, the school would hold a dance. At the dance, the black students were on one side of the room and the white students on the other. At each dance, the black students brought their own dances and moved so rhythmically and beautifully that I desired to imitate them. At the age of 15, I saw the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, a troupe of mostly black dancers. These dancers represented to me what you described in your letter as the "bottomless vitality" of the American Negro. I remember the beauty and strength of the black man who was my jazz dance teacher. African-American men and women were role models for me in dance. I regret, however, that I was not very politically aware because I was so immersed in dance and school.

Throughout my life, I have experienced rejection, discrimination, and abuse for several reasons. Your legacy is awesome, and your fight still continues. I hope that I can fight racism and other -isms in myself and my life and to feel as much of a child as God's as you feel everyone is.

**Martha Grogan**



## An introduction should entice and invite

The introduction to your profile should contain your **thesis statement** (the primary point you want to make about your subject). Ideally, it should make the reader want to keep reading. You can raise questions in your introduction—as long as you be sure to answer them in your profile.

Here are three strong introductions—about a saint, a blues man, and a rapper.

### Mother Teresa served the poor and promoted peace and love

By Silvia Vega

Mother Teresa of Calcutta dedicated her life to serving the poorest of the poor. Her work, which earned her numerous humanitarian awards and acknowledgements, was always driven by an absolute faith. She tried to promote peace and love following God’s will.

### Racism can’t stop blues legend B.B. King

By La Toya Ward

You would think all the hurt and racism that Riley B. King encountered growing up would stop him from accomplishing his dream, but it helped him become one of the greatest blues singers of all time.

### Even in death, Tupac motivates with his words

By Enjoyli Henley

Tupac Shakur’s lyrics are as controversial as his death. His words are empowering, motivational, and thought-provoking. His death is a mystery and a tragedy, shocking to those who loved him.

## Profile Subjects

Sherreallum Allen	Gwendolyn Brooks		Joanna Lopez	Harriet Tubman
Aziel Bell	Roberto Clemente		Farrah Lott	Jane Addams
Aaron Blacks	Bob Marley		Abby Martinez	Emma Lazarus
Corina Brown	Bruce Lee	<b>Second drafts due April 20</b>	Ed Patrisio	Mahatma Gandhi
Daphne Daniels	Ossie Davis		LaShaunda Rimson	Anna Julia Cooper
Terry Fox	Magic Johnson	<b>Final drafts due April 27</b>	James Robinson	Ralph Ellison
Martha Grogan	Alvin Ailey		Camille Soward	Mahalia Jackson
Denise Hardnett	Sam Cooke		Kia Thomas	Alice Walker
Enjoyli Henley	Tupac		El Khanssa Tmiri	Muhammad Ali
Charles Hill	Jesse Owens		Silvia Vega	Mother Teresa
Juliane Hughes	Georgia O’Keeffe		Latoya Ward	B.B. King
Michelle Kimbrough	Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz		Michelle West	Martin Luther King, Jr.