

ODYSSEY ORACLE

FINDING POETRY EVERYWHERE

My Closet

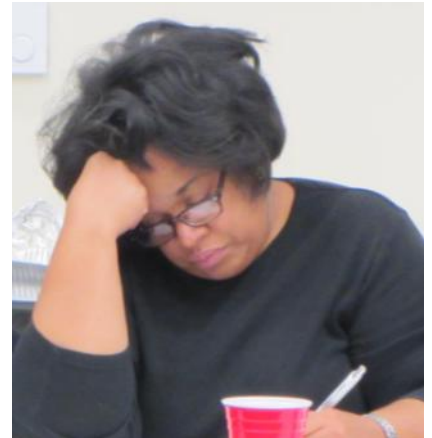
My closet captures my mood
I wake up in the morning feeling
If I should wear red or blue
If I feel dark I wear black but
simple
If I feel light I wear color and am
creative
If I want to feel like a woman,
I'll pull out my high heels.
If I want to feel like a boy,
I'll pull out my low top forces.
The accessories tie it all together.
My closet.

(Britney Sinclair)



What will it take to get ahead?
I used to think it would take me until I was dead.
I've decided that it is my destiny.
Now is the time to set my mind free,
Free while I am here on earth
To pay it forward is what I dream
My journey is
unrealistic, some
may deem.
Once at the top is
when I will scream
"Only the educated
are free!"
That includes me.

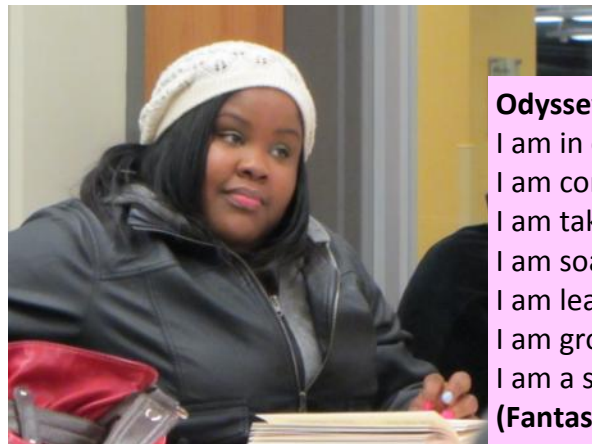
(Jasmine Banks)



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Sketches in this Oracle by Stanley Sallay '07



Odyssey

I am in class
I am content
I am taking it in
I am soaking it up
I am learning
I am growing
I am a sponge

(Fantasia House)

Lord, I don't know why money was invented.
 Why did they come up with it?
 Sometimes I wish we could barter
 like in the days when they wore
 cloth and covered little up.
 Somebody came up with money, and
 now I always gotta have it. (**Eunice Conley**)



The pen of men?
 POWER
 Regurgitation?
 Men of pen
 POWERLESS?
 Depends . . . who holds the PEN!
 (**James Morgan**)

Facebook is like an addiction.
 Every time I go to a computer,
 I start with Facebook.
 No matter what I'm supposed to do,
 I find myself on Facebook.
 I love to read people's comments,
 although some are not perfect.
 I love the way you can connect with a friend
 whom you have not seen or heard about
 for a long, long time. (**Nancy Wambua**)

My Couch

I love my couch.
 It keeps me comforted on lonely nights and long days.
 It's in a perfect spot in my living room.
 It's perfectly placed.
 It's the center of my everything.
 I bet you wonder why I focus so much
 on such a simple object.

Paint brush—
 Dry—hoarse hair, horse hair.
 But when wet,
 a kaleidoscope of color
 is splashing rainbows,
 life in seasoned repose,
 trees with leaves
 capturing the winds. (**James Morgan**)



"Roland Kirk" by James Morgan

My couch is where I held my kids.
 My couch is where I spent many days
 nurturing my sick child.
 Had many laughs and cries on that couch.
 Watched funny movies and TV shows.
 Have also sat in complete silence
 reflecting on my life in that place.
 It's got a comfort to it no other can replace.
 I love my couch just right in its place.
 Many have not understood why I would
 choose this space over a night out
 on the town, or a public place.
 But the security it brings
 cannot be erased. (**Mary Millon**)

Rent

I pay rent and struggle with that,
 Yet I still dream of what it'd be like
 to pay a mortgage, something
 of my own to pass down to my
 children, a place where I am
 the landlord. No one knocking
 on my door to collect rent,
 no more hiding from eviction notices,
 or staying on the landlord's good side.
 (Patrice Smith)



to dream beyond
 her physical state.
 And once a woman
 walks through
 those gates,
 She finds relief in
 making herself a
 clean slate. (Patrice
 Smith)

Locked Up

Women of different colors,
 backgrounds, beliefs . . .
 Women who share the same
 hurts, brokenness, and grief.
 A woman's body may be locked up
 but not her mind, for
 even a Lifer has the ability

When I Lived in the Hood

They say in the hood you should never walk alone,
 They say in the hood that part of the world is no
 good.
 Well, they must not know Jesus, He's in the hood.
 They must not know Jesus, He's everywhere.
 They must not know Jesus, you see He walks those
 streets with me.
 They must not know Jesus, He's my guardian. . . .
 (Angela Jordan-Jackson)

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS



Lying in your arms I feel safe.
 Locked away in a safe.
 Your arms protect a huge yet gentle
 piece of gold.
 Your arms keep me safe from the
 outside world.
 As long as I have you and you have me
 I am safe. (Brandon Williams)

I keep my head up because I hate my double chin!
 I know, I know, we supposed to be glad for the skin
 we in! (Carrie Llerena Sesma)





I thought you was real like pure gold
but you was fake like a chain from a flea market.
Thought my heart was your target
but you had your eyes on what was in my wallet.
You stress me out like a midterm test
but you will never see me sweat.
Like a champion in the Olympics,
I will keep my head up,
like a defendant in a court room
speaking to a judge. (**Derrick McCann**)

I am a waiting pool
just waiting to get out
and do my thing.
I need a time, place, day, a month.
I am waiting to come out . . .
I am waiting, waiting, waiting.
Please can I be myself?
Can I feel the fresh breeze?



Can I smell the spring air around me?
Can I say I love life?
My life is loving, laughing,
longing to be free,
free to choose to love, laugh,
longing to be me. (**Jovenus Price Pierce**)

The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly
When he's good to me, he's oh so good.
When he's bad for me, he's oh so bad.
When he's at war and it gets ugly, he is oh-so-ugly.
When I'm feeling good, he praises me . . . on his
good days.
And at times his bad days seem to go on for years.
Then there are times he becomes so hurtful,
so distant, so terrifying,
It's hard to believe a person
so handsome, so capable of love and so talented



can exhibit so much ugliness.
At times his influence of negativity
bears down on me; itching for a way out.
But I act my age and even slip into regression.
I see him when I dry my hair in the mirror.

El bueno, el mal y el feo . . .

Every day I've made it without him
is another day of him without me.
He lives less than five miles from me
and all the while, even though I'm a grown woman,
I am still this fatherless child. (**China Moon Crowell**)



They call me flat-lander,
A compliment I thought at first.
There are plenty hills here
Though enough to build some thirst.

They call me flat-lander,
Never knew it was me
Until they put my name in the midst of it
Talking about my birth city. . . .

They call me flat-lander,
It's now so funny to me,
When I think about how flat it is,
It's where I want to be. (**Tosumba Welch**)

My Dad

My dad, Tosumba Welch, is a very wonderful man. When I feel down and very sad, he is always there for me, even when times are rough for him, too. I love that every time we see each other, we have a wonderful time. When we're together, I always feel shy, sometimes even a little sassy. Life is amazing with him, and I couldn't imagine it any other way. (**Denaria Rowe, daughter of Tosumba Welch, written in Odyssey Class on April 3, 2013**)

Alleanah Marie

The melody of her song makes me smile
every time I hear her sweet
voice.

She shines like the sun first
thing in the morning,
happy and cheerful, ready to
begin her day.

The tender age of six, but way
ahead of her time.

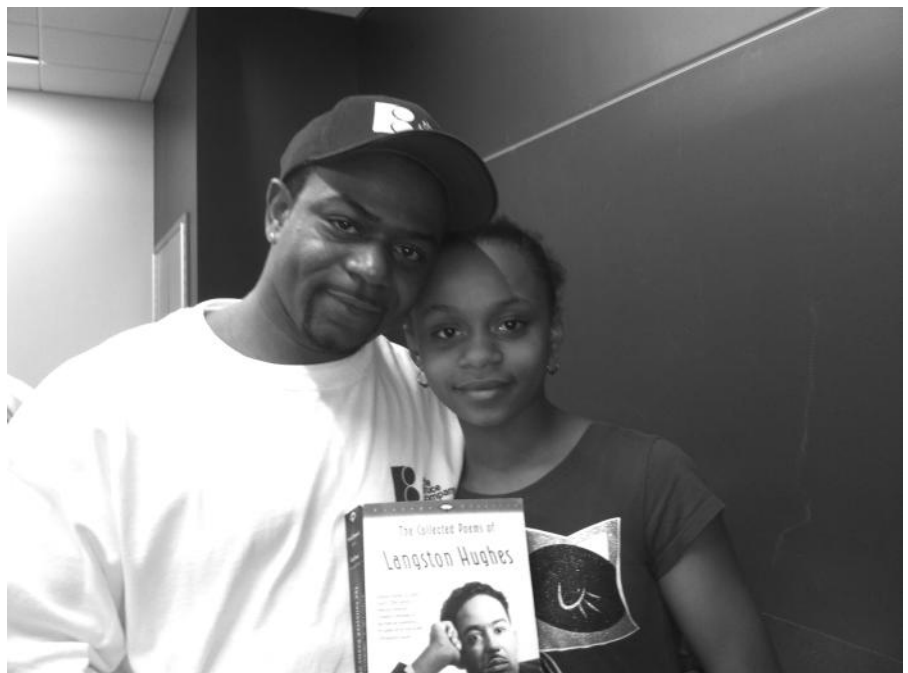
She sings "I Wish It Would
Rain,"

my girl and my deliverer.

Her love consumes my heart
each and every day. I'm
blessed

to have her as my child.

(**Sharisse Hancock**)



CONSIDERING CELL PHONES

My cell phone is my
addiction.
My phone vibrates in my
pocket
even when in reality I have
powered it down.
What is wrong with me?
(**Fantasia House**)

It wakes me in the
morning,
beeps at me throughout
the day.
My cell phone keeps me
connected
to a world I sometimes push away. (**Patrice Smith**)

It's ringing constantly,
usually not who I want it to be.
866 numbers I see so frequently.
It's never the lottery.
It's a distraction when you're bored.
It's an interruption when you're uncomfortable.
It's another bill to pay.
There's someone on the other end saying
"I'm on my way." "I miss you!" "I love you!"
or "Leave a message at the tone."
I'm not always happy to see
my cell phone. (**Sharisse Hancock**)

Who you gonna call? Not Ghostbusters,
but Dominique!
That's right; I carry my cell phone
wherever I go,
and where it leads me, nobody knows.
Breaker, breaker, Dominique's on the
line,
saying she feels good in rain or shine.
Oh, my cell phone I do adore.
It's full of features I can explore.
I never leave the house without my cell
phone



because if I do I feel alone.
I'll know something is missing because I
can't call.
Oh, Lord, what have I done
because I can't reach anyone at all?
(**Dominique Haskins**)

Cell phones ring
Where are you
What you doing
Can you do this
I need that
Why didn't you text me back
Minding my business,

doing my thing,
that cell phone needs to go away.
I don't want you here
while I'm there.
That cell phone needs
to go away. (**Michelle Reams**)

All dressed in purple making sounds, some loud,
getting undivided attention even in a crowd.
Just like the human, you have buttons people
push,
with a silent one that vibrates, like a secret ram in
the bush.
You spread rumors and gossip and you sometimes



get a charge,
Snuggled by hands, some
small, some large.
I used to see you only when
we were at home,
That's when you were a
land line and not a cell
phone.
Now you travel with me
everywhere I go.
No secrets can I have, all
my thoughts you know.
(**Michelle Whitman**)

CELEBRATING STRENGTH

Strength

What is strength?
 Is it smiling through the tears?
 Is it succeeding through the years?
 Is it loving when your heart is broken?
 Is it giving up a token of hope?
 What is strength?
 Is it seeing beyond my faults?
 Is it never losing yourself?
 Or is strength getting back up
 Once you've fallen too many times?
 Strength is you, strength is me.
 Strength is all we can imagine to be. (**Sharisse Hancock**)

No Longer Deferred

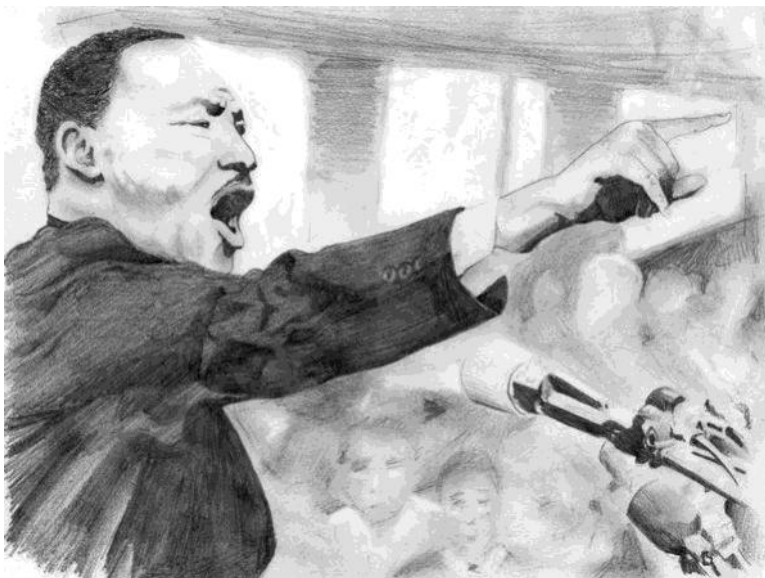
Don't be afraid to move.
 Keep it movin'
 Is it da' fear again?
 Just tell fear to move!
 And keep it movin'
 You gonna get far
 You'll see, you'll be like me:
 No longer deferred. (**LoLita Phillips**)

This man of color
 who was born a slave
 separated from his mother

at an early age,
 full of courage,
 who used his wisdom
 to educate himself
 by using other kids,
 who never gave up,
 always believing in his freedom,
 fought to obtain his freedom.
 Through him many other slaves
 got their abolition.
 This man is my inspiration.
 He never gave up.
 This man of color,
 This man, son of a slave,
 Frederick Douglass. (**Jovite Rayaisse**)

Martin Luther King was a man of the people.
 He sacrificed his life for the sake of other people.
 He went through a lot of troubles trying
 to fight for freedom and rights.
 He set a good example to many.
 He will always be remembered
 for what he did. (**Nancy Wambua**)

He dreamed. It came true. Who knew?
 Dr. King, your vision is alive and well.
 Although we still have work to do,
 we will never forget what you fought, taught,
 and died for. (**Fantasia House**)



MLK: The Change

He who changed the country
 with more than a thousand words,
 who saw the rights and justice
 in a black man's eyes.
 A man where giving up
 wasn't an option,
 a determination to make change
 for his people.
 He whose dream became
 today's reality. (**Amber Turner**)



Socrates, shadow and light, escaping caves.
Douglass, in light, escaped slaves.
Martin saw the "Promised Land,"
Went to the mountain top . . .
Don't stop! (**James Morgan**)

Mr. Hughes, Mr. Hughes,
Oh, how your words soothe me.
With poems so jazzy,
charismatic to the ear,
I listen, I interpret.
Boy, your words I love to hear.

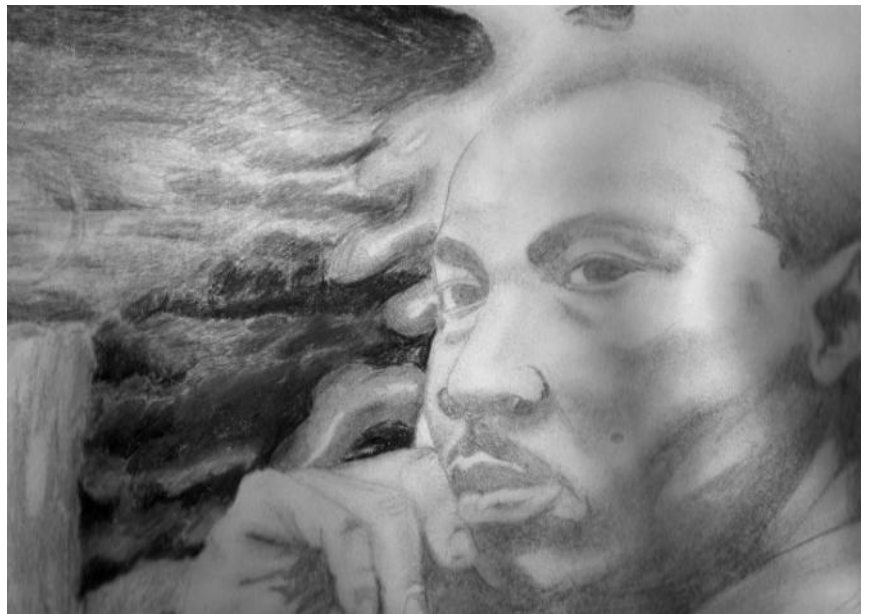
Black girls, black boys,
the power of being black.
Making sure you remind us,
that we do not have to sit in back.
(**Akilah Freeman**)

A White Martin Luther King, Jr.
Can you imagine if there had been

a white Martin Luther King, Jr.? I can.
This world would have been more dangerous.
A white man that really believed in whites and
blacks being equal.
How fast would they have killed him?
Or would they have let him live?
What if us black folks didn't have to
go through all the hatred?
What if we had more opportunity back in the day,
good jobs, nice homes, good schools?
Many of us could have made it.
I just wish that we had
a white Martin Luther King Jr. (**El-Rasheedah Wilson**)

Injustice anywhere
is a threat to justice everywhere.
Why?
It just is. . . . (**Brandon Williams**)

To teach and train a community of people
in non-violent direct action
comes from deep inside of oneself.
It's letting go of who you are
and allowing the belief to rise out of you.
The belief is a mindset that must be taught
about denying retaliation,
denying anger, and denying pain,
producing love, showing joy,
even unto death. (**Munroe Whitlock**)



LOVING LANGSTON HUGHES



Langston Hughes's "Mother to Son" juxtaposes the smoothness of the crystal stair with the tacks. I've read this poem for over 30 years, and it still conjures up incredible images in the simplest ways. It evokes a feeling of overcoming. If you read it as the words of a tired old woman, patiently making her way up the stairs, climbing over life's challenges, you hear the pulse of determination in her words.

"Mother to Son" awakens the feelings of persistence, fervent endurance, and striving for all that we have been trying to achieve. I should never accept obstacles at face value and need to prove to myself and others that I have the willpower to endure. Most mothers want their children to understand that we know life isn't easy; however, anything worth having in life won't be easy to attain. We have endured so that our children won't have to. Maybe if African Americans, especially males, realized how much their ancestors suffered back in the day, they would actually take time to become something more in their lives instead of sinking to violence and drugs. This poem and "The Negro Mother" have inspired me to become something in my life . . . to strive to make proud all my ancestors and all the people who died for me to have the privileges that I now have.

(Eunice Conley)



In "Mother to Son" we have a mother explaining to her son some true facts of life. She explains to him that given the cards she was dealt, she presses her way on to the finish line of life. She has had good days and bad, but she says you must keep trying. She says sometimes she's been places high and low and has done things

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'se been a-climbin' on . . .
So boy, don't you turn back,
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard. . . .
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.*

good and not so good, but she continues to not give up. Life gets hard, but keep moving. Don't come and complain to me because I am still moving forward. Keep moving.

My son and I are going through this now. I had my son at 15, so this story feels like my life. He is 35 in April, and we're always talking about education, living and making a difference, getting the best out of life, pressing to do your best not only for you but for your family. Yes, there are a lot of thorns in the roses of life, but there is beauty. We have to keep doing our best, no matter the cards we're dealt. Be a winner and succeed as best you can in life.

(Angela Jordan-Jackson)

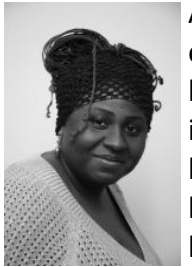
As I started to read "Mother to Son," I envisioned a mother sitting down with her son. A motherly voice played in my head. I'm very aware of how I sound to my son when I sit him down for a talk. "Son, I tell you, life for me ain't been no crystal stair." . . . Even when you don't see what hits you, you still climb. Don't ever give up on what's on top of those stairs.



I can relate to this poem in a couple of ways. I teach my son the everyday basics of how to become a man. My son being a black man has a lot to learn. I being his mother have to show him that to every obstacle there's a challenge. Secondly, I have to remind myself daily that nothing

comes easy. If I want anything in life, I have to go get it. I'm challenged every day with being a single mother. It's very discouraging looking at those steps, but I'm going to keep on climbing.

(Britney Sinclair)



A mom sits her son down and explains life's obstacles. Her stairs of life have had their bumps and tacks, inflicting physical and emotional pain, but she kept climbing. Even through her obstacles, she's found a way to keep going, reaching for more in life. She encourages her son to keep

pushing on, for she's still going on.

My mother often tells me of her own storms and troubles. Whenever I feel like I can't go on, she encourages me, even catches me when I fall and helps me to my feet. "Keep God first" is always her first line of encouragement. She lets it be known it's the only way she has made it thus far.

(Patrice Smith)



Life has trials and tribulations. You will have good times and bad times, but you must strive to keep going and make something out of nothing. She is telling her son that she has been through a lot, but that isn't stopping her from keeping going. I think I relate

because I try to show my son I work hard so he can have the best in life. I try to teach him it's not going to be easy, but if we work hard enough we will make it. **(Shalonda Hilliard-Jones)**





This poem was extremely powerful. It reminds readers to not forget their history and what their ancestors did before them. It reminds readers to be proud of where they come from. Someone before you shed blood, sweat, and tears so

that you and your children could have a better life. As the years have moved forward, it seems as though the younger generation doesn't know their history or care whether they know their history or not. It is our responsibility as parents and relatives of the youth to ensure they know their heritage and are proud of who they are and where they come from.

(Sharisse Hancock)



When I read "The Negro Mother," I understood that there was a black, enslaved woman that came from African lands. She traveled the seas while pregnant, knowing that the seed she holds will be free. She had come here from Africa and

was a slave working in the fields. She had been beaten and mistreated, and her family was sold away despite all the work that she did. She never was given any respect, love, or safety. All through

The Negro Mother

*Children, I come back today
To tell you a story of the long dark way
That I had to climb, that I had to know
In order that the race might live and grow.
Look at my face—dark as the night—
Yet shining like the sun with love's true light.
I am the child they stold from the sand
Three hundred years ago in Africa's land. . . .
God put a dream like steel in my soul.
Now, through my children, I'm reaching that goal. . . .
I couldn't read then. I couldn't write.
I had nothing, back there in the night. . . .
Oh, my dark children, may my dreams and my prayers
Impel you forever up the great stairs—
For I will be with you till no white brother
Dares keep down the children of the Negro mother.*

this she never doubted love of God. He gave her a song and a prayer; he gave her a dream. Despite everything she went through—sorrow, pain, laboring as a slave—, she knew in the end her children would be free. She was able to reach her goal through them being young and free.

Although she went through hell and bore the unbelievable, she kept pushing and never gave up, never stopping. (Amber Turner)



He is telling a group of people who never thought he would achieve greatness that they may be down while he is on his way up. He talks

about trading places.

I chose this poem because those who bullied and harassed me in school will one

Enemy

*It would be nice
In any case
To someday meet you
Face to face
Walking down
The road to hell . . .
As I come up
Feeling swell.*

day see the little gay boy doing great. In high school they were the popular kids; now most don't attend college, have an apartment of their own, or have a job. We have somewhat traded places because they were higher than me in school, but now I am socially and economically smarter than they are.

(Brandon Williams)

Dreams

*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.*

Langston Hughes personifies dreams as if they are life itself. Without your dreams, you have nothing to live for. In "Dreams" I feel the meaning and the purpose of a life with something to believe in. He says it so perfectly poetically:

"Hold fast to your dreams, for when dreams go, life is a barren field frozen with snow."



Life is not worth living if you have nothing to believe in. Today is so different than the time when Mr. Langston Hughes wrote that poem. I

ask myself all the time what I believe in. With science and technology proving history and belief systems wrong, I find myself constantly wanting to know more, continuing to look for something to believe in because that's what keeps me alive.

Not long ago, I started opening my eyes and learning to observe the truth for myself. I began to grow and make decisions for myself, place judgments on beliefs that had been instilled in my head since I can remember. New myths and fears of the unknown scared me and intrigued me as a child. Growing into an adult and having the right teachers taught me to believe in the unknown, for that keeps me thriving and looking for the next great thing. Learning to think for me was the best lesson one could learn. Thanks, Socrates, Dr. King, Hughes, my predecessors and precursors, for you endured conflicts wholeheartedly. You changed history so that I could learn to live, love, and laugh. **(Akilah Freeman)**



Analyzing "Dreams," I feel Langston Hughes was talking about people he grew up with. I feel he saw many people have dreams to do great, but by letting other things get in the way they lost sight of their dreams. By saying, "If a dream dies, it's like a broken-winged bird that can't fly," I

took it as if you let go of your dream, you won't fly to greatness. Langston Hughes also says, "When dreams go, Life is a barren field frozen with snow." I took this as if you let go of your dream, things can get cold and hard, so hold on to your dreams. **(Brandon Williams)**



In "Dreams" Hughes encourages people to keep pushing for the life they want and the goals they've set out. When we lose sight of our dreams, we lose our will. Life becomes a burden, a routine. Because I have already lost sight of a few dreams, I know this to be true. Hope is dry, and I don't aspire to fly anymore. Bitterness, anger, and pain dwell within. This poem is true and is encouraging to me. My life has become frozen with snow, but the difference now is that I'm ready for a new season. **(Patrice Smith)**



Frederick Douglass 1817-1895

*Douglass was someone who,
Had he walked with wary foot
And frightened tread,
From very indecision
Might be dead,
Might have lost his soul,
But instead decided to be bold. . . .*

***Who would be free
Themselves must strike
The first blow, he said.***

*He died in 1895.
He is not dead.*



Langston Hughes declares that Frederick Douglass would have died quickly had he not been strong enough to overpower everyone and everything that he encountered in his struggle for freedom. The poem ends by saying that

Douglass died in 1895 but that he is not dead. There's this song we sang in church years ago that says, "God's not dead, He's still alive! I feel it all over me!" Douglass's spirit is not dead because his strength was so great that Hughes says he cannot die. His spirit remains as strong as ever.

The personal response I have is the poem's purpose is to praise Frederick Douglass. This poem is letting us know that this man will be remembered even though he is no longer with us. He is not dead in our minds because we remember his strength. That remains alive inside of us. (**Dominique Haskins**)

Frederick Douglass had to make life-threatening decisions, and being cautious



and guarded is not who he is. He is daring, fearless, and clear. He understands who he is and from whence he comes; he also understands his adversaries. With freedom as his goal, he needs to be heard. He says to the world I am much more than a

slave: I am a president, an astronaut, a scientist, and a chemist; I am a civil rights leader, a civil disobedient, a school teacher, a law maker, and a citizen with the right to vote.

We hear you, Mr. Douglass, loud and clear. We must make every effort to keep those fetters off us and out of our communities, and it is our responsibility to make that happen. There is a lot of work that needs to be done to keep the freedom that was passed down to us from the people on whose shoulders we stand.

(**Munroe Whitlock**)





In his poem "Justice," Langston Hughes speaks to the injustice of the American legal system and the hypocrisy at its foundation.

Justice

That Justice is a blind goddess
Is a thing to which we black are wise.
Her bandage hides two festering sores
That once perhaps were eyes.

and attitudes of individuals regarding the principles of the creed, and the actual practices of individuals with reference

He tells us that justice is "blind" and that "we black" are "wise" and therefore the victims of this inequality. We're told that "her bandage hides two festering sores." Robert K. Morton in an essay entitled "Discrimination and the American Creed" stated that the "problems



of racial and ethnic inequalities are not expressible as a discrepancy between high cultural principles and low social conduct. It is a relation not between two variables, official creed and private practice, but between three: the cultural creed honored in a cultural tradition and partially enacted into law, the beliefs

to the creed."

This poem in its entirety speaks to the lie of America when it is proclaimed that there is "liberty and justice for all." By using the word "perhaps" in the line "two festering eyes that once perhaps were eyes," Langston Hughes shows he is knowledgeable from personal experience that "Justice" for blacks is an illusion.

My personal response to "Justice" is that I found myself deeply touched emotionally and mentally. In a few brief words I found myself connected to the generations of black men and women who have felt the betrayal of America. From the physical lynchings, dehumanization, and media propaganda, the question that arose in my mind was and is, did the blind goddess Justice ever have sight? (**James Morgan**)



The blindness that he talks about is not blind at all. It is awareness. Infinite eyes can see beyond what is actually right in front of you. He says he sees no color because he looks at a person for who they are, not the color of their skin. He's blind

maybe to the evil things, meaning that he sees them but doesn't let them affect him. That's how he can walk in the dark. Mankind is plagued with the nature of darkness, tortured by what we can't see or understand, thinking it's doomed and hopeless. Some people who are aware that there is also light choose to walk in it, always seeing good or beauty.

I choose to walk with my infinite eyes seeking the light. It's not easy with darkness just as equal, but knowing I have a choice, I am blind to darkness—not ignorant, but not giving darkness any more control over my life. In that sense, I'm blind. (**Carrie Llerena Sesma**)

Blind

*I am blind.
I cannot see.
Color is no bar to me.
I know neither
Black nor white.
I walk in night.
Yet it seems I see mankind
More tortured than the blind.
Can it be that those who know
Sight are often doomed to woe?
Or is it that, seeing,
They never see
With the infinite eyes
Of one like me?*



Dreams that don't and aren't able to leave the mind may shrivel up and stay enclosed within one's

mind. Or they may ooze, eating away at others. The reminder and constant running thoughts and variations of that dream can be so in-your-face and unignorable like an odorous trash can overflowing with fish on a 97-degree summer day.

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?

could just wear on you as you carry it around. Like guilt, it is a burden until you lay it down or it sets you off. We think all the time. When most of us dream, we rarely follow through. We see others and think of what could have been. While coasting through life, constantly in this rat-race, our dreams drift further and further away from our grasp. We need to remember how it was when we dreamed as children; to execute these

Maybe the dream needs to be kept under wraps until the time is right to unleash it from within you and upon the world and others. Then again, it

thoughts without shooting ourselves down within the same breath or thought process.

(China Moon Crowell)

Motherland

*Dream of yesterday
And far-off long tomorrow:
Africa imprisoned
In her bitter sorrow.*



In "Motherland" Hughes talks about a slave who was brought to a foreign country, lacking their dreams. He used the metaphor of the motherland as their native country. It is so hard to see your dream break down and to be imprisoned in another country,

just having memories. **(Jovite Rayaisse)**



I might be lonely when I come into the world. I might be lonely when I leave this world. I am never lonely because my Lord lives in me. He told me so that I would never be lonely again. I have been saved by and by.

This poem made me feel alive. I know I was told so many times I would never be lonely because Jesus is always with me. My faith, hope, and truth is that I will never ever be alone.

(Jovenus Price Pierce)

Hope

*Sometimes when I'm lonely,
Don't know why,
Keep thinkin' I won't be lonely
By and by.*



Langston Hughes in the first line (“I, too, sing America”) shows he is as American as the whites and he can sing the national anthem of America. In line two, he shows because of the color of his skin, his masters send him to eat in the kitchen when the guests come. It

makes him laugh because he gets to eat well in the kitchen and grow stronger. It is segregation because he is black. He says tomorrow when he is free, they will have equality and will be sitting at the same table. Nobody can tell him to go eat in the kitchen. In the last lines he says they will be ashamed to see how beautiful and strong he is. They will regret how they treated him. He is American, too.

(Jovite Rayaisse)



“I Too” talks about white injustice to black people because of their color. The blacks feel like they do not belong in this country, and they are treated as servants. The speaker is growing stronger because he hopes that tomorrow will be better. The whites will see how beautiful the

blacks are and treat them with equal honor. He has hopes for freedom and equal rights.

Everyone in the world is created equal, and every human being should be treated equally. No one should be treated differently based on their skin color. We should appreciate one another for we are all brothers and sisters. The color does not mean anything, for everyone is different in his/her own way. There is no one who is more special than another. **(Nancy Wambua)**

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, too, am America.*



I see that he has been through a lot of troubles because of the way it says, “My hopes the wind done scattered.”

When he looks back through all of the trouble he had gone through, he realizes that even if it was rough, he was still here. He had peace within himself. He made it through all the trials and problems. He was still here after all the troubles he's been through.

(Jovenus Price Pierce)

Still Here

*I've been scared 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!*



words were straight to the point. The words reminded me of my own life and how I feel and felt. My

hopes and dreams never became reality, and I'm tired of being tired. People judge you

before they know you. Langston Hughes wrote, “I'm still here!” For me that meant a lot because I will never give up on me. I'm going to always do what I've got to do to take care of me. I'm never giving up on myself and my dreams. **(El-Rasheedah Wilson)**

The poem “Still Here” stood out to me because the



"Black Clown" by Langston Hughes is one of the most catching poems I've ever read. He made it almost seem as though he was speaking to me personally. I felt those emotions expressed by Mr. Hughes and still do at times: eyes pointing at me, laughing, verbal put downs

making me feel like a clown. Somebody or something was trying to push me back and at the same time hold me down, making sure I feel worthless.

This poem is pointed at every black man, woman, and child, but much more to males since we are the ones viewed as a threat to their survival (especially white males). Even though he was seen as a clown, getting laughed at, he never let anything hold him down. He pulled and tore off the clothes that made him resemble a clown, throwing off the hat that made him look like a fool. Rising from the ashes, he was no longer a tool for anybody's laughter and humiliation. **(Lewis Black)**

Merry-Go-Round

*Where is the Jim Crow section
On this merry-go-round,
Mister, cause I want to ride?
Down South on the train
There's a Jim Crow car.
On the bus we're put in the back—
But there ain't no back
To a merry-go-round!
Where's the horse
For a kid that's black?*



In this poem Langston Hughes has really put a red ribbon on what he experienced in the South because of Jim Crow. In this poem he imagines himself as a child on a merry-go-round. The Jim Crow section means whites-only seats because "white and colored can't sit side by side." In this short poem Hughes has really laid out front the truths of Jim Crow. I can tell that he is a great polemicist with a very neat way to put the truth of any subject, especially dealing with the great South in the days of segregation. **(Tosumba Welch)**

The Black Clown

*You laugh
Because I'm poor and black and funny. . .
I am the fool of the whole world.
Laugh and push me down.
Only in song and laughter
I rise again—a black clown. . . .*

*No land, no house, no job,
No place to go.
Black—in a white world
Where cold winds blow.
The long struggle for life:
No schools, no work—
Not wanted here; not needed there—
Black—you can die.
Nobody will care— . . .*

*Day after day
White spit in my face—
Worker and clown am I
For the "civilized" race. . . .*

*Say to all foemen:
You can't keep me down!
Tear off the garments
That make me a clown! . . .*

*Cry to the world
That all might understand:
I was once a black clown
But now—
I'm a man!*

The Colored Soldier

*My brother died in France—but I came back.
We were just two colored boys, brown and black. . . .
Last night in a dream my brother came to me
Out of his grave from over the sea. . . .
“We couldn’t eat in restaurants; had Jim Crow cars;
Didn’t have any schools; and there were all sorts of bars
To a colored boy’s rising in wealth or station—
But now I know well that’s not our situation:
The world’s been made safe for Democracy
And no longer do we know the dark misery
Of being held back, of having no chance—
Since the colored soldiers came home from France.
Didn’t our government tell us things would be fine
When we got through fighting, Over There, and dying?” . . .
Then his dark face smiled at me in the night—
But the dream was cruel—and bitter—and somehow not right.
It was awful—facing that boy who went out to die,
For what could I answer him, except, “It’s a lie!” . . .*



There are two men who enlisted to fight a war in France, but only one returns. The other dies in the fight for his country. The one who returns lives with the hurt of losing his

brother due to false hopes and complete lies made to them by the government.

My response is that we lose so many lives due to our government misleading the people and the people’s total trust in their elected officials. We need to all become more informed on the things we vote for. We must realize the power is in the people. We just need to get together and take back control. This poem is very powerful.

(Michelle Whitman)

Acceptance

*God, in His infinite wisdom
Did not make me very wise—
So when my actions are stupid
They hardly take God by surprise.*



In “Acceptance” Langston Hughes shows how God accepts all. I know the God I believe in did not make me the wisest, but he gave me hope in becoming wiser. When mistakes are

made, they do not offend or cause surprise, for nobody is perfect. We all make mistakes but have the potential to learn and become wiser. That is the highest acceptance a person can learn.

(Akilah Freeman)

Sick Room

*How quiet
It is in this sick room
Where on the bed
A silent woman lies between two lovers—
Life and Death,
And all three are covered with a sheet of pain.*



This woman is sick and needs to choose between life and death. All three are covered in pain because no matter what you choose, there is always pain, suffering, and sorrow.

You can be on the verge of life and death, but in the end you will always have pain. Even lying on your death bed, there will be pain and sorrow, but it’s a part of what we live and die for. **(Amber Turner)**



“Midnight Raffle” is a story of someone who goes out into the night to spend his money. Whatever was supposed to take place didn’t happen, and now he is left with nothing. He figures he could have just stayed home and at least enjoyed what he had instead of losing it all and having nothing.

I can relate to this poem from my days of hitting the casino. I used to think I could earn more money by winning big, and sometimes I did; other times, I would be leaving the parking lot, cussing myself out for spending way too much money on a hope and a dream. All I had to do was stay at home and keep what I had. This poem spoke to me immediately. **(Mary Millon)**

Midnight Raffle

*I put my nickel
In the raffle of the night.
Somehow that raffle
Didn’t turn out right. . . .*

*I could just as well’ve
Stayed home inside:
My bread wasn’t buttered
On neither side.*

To Certain Intellectuals

*You are no friend of mine.
For I am poor,
Black,
Ignorant and slow,--
Not your kind.
You yourself
Have told me so,--
No friend of mine.*



Reading “To Certain Intellectuals” I think about how many that have wealth stereotype other people. Words like “poor, black, ignorant and slow” can hurt a person’s self-esteem. Many whites were against blacks raising their self-esteem and instead belittled them in any way possible. Words can really stick to someone’s mind

and soul like water to a fish.

Growing up I have faced a lot of racism and injustice from my own kind and from other races. We are so quick to judge

and point fingers at someone because they look like someone in the news or violent movies. This poem opened my eyes to how words can really hurt you. We have to be careful what we do and say. **(Derrick McCann)**



Hughes imagines Jesus coming as a black man and being denied entry into the churches. We’re imagining Jesus as a black man being scorned, dying at the hands of hateful people. **(Dominique Haskins)**

Bible Belt

*It would be too bad if Jesus
Were to come back black.
There are so many churches
Where he could not pray
In the U.S. A.,
Where entrance to Negroes,
No matter how sanctified,
Is denied,
Where race, not religion,
Is glorified.
But say it—
You may be
Crucified.*



This man wants to go out in glory and mortal style. His account of his funeral includes high-pitched scenery, dramatics, and many women. He wants there to be all these women—nothing much of meaningful quality, just handfuls of quantity . . . the girls, the cars, the

overabundance of flowers, the brass band. His main concern is to not die all alone.



Even in death this braggadocio and boaster fears loneliness, but he still feels the need for style instead of substance. Why go through the trouble of having so many women who mean nothing versus that special one or actual friends who won't forget about you once your memory becomes just that?
(China Moon Crowell)

As Befits a Man

*I don't mind dying—
But I'd hate to die all alone!
I want a dozen pretty women
To holler, cry, and moan. . . .*

*I want a fish-tail hearse
And sixteen fish-tail cars,
A big brass band
And a whole truck load of flowers. . . .*

MADISON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA REVIEW

APRIL 7, 2013: RACHMANINOFF "THE BELLS"

By Sharisse Hancock



Yesterday I had a captivating experience. I saw the last Madison Symphony Orchestra concert of the season.

The Madison Symphony Orchestra performed Rachmaninoff's "The Bells." I couldn't help but move my feet and head to the melody of the beautiful music. The performance took me back to a time when I took piano lessons and played classical music. I would go to a festival every year to perform and be scored. I'm thankful this performance took me back in time to a happy place. The music initiated the arousal of many emotions: happy, mellow, sad, and then happy again.

This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. My friend and I were glad to experience this performance. It was the second time for both of us to see the orchestra. The first time I saw the Madison Symphony Orchestra was when my tenth grade band class went on a field trip to watch a performance. I appreciated this performance to much more, mostly because I'm older now and appreciate things more than I did at age 15. I'm so thankful to have seen the last performance of the 2012-2013 season. It was simply amazing, and I thank donor Carroll Heideman for the tickets.

WHO SAID IT?

I am meant to do great things, and the Odyssey Project is an enormous piece in my journey of getting there.

The experience in Odyssey is unmatched by any class taught at any level. I feel like a black sponge that wants to absorb so much more.

The Odyssey is an adventure class.

I have been shown the light and no longer will be afraid of change, afraid to leave the cave and step out into the life of truth.



I'm not in the cave any more, and my mind has been awakened to mental and educational arousal. I am so proud of myself for showing my children, my mom, and a host of other families that you can do it.

I was intimidated by college before, thinking that it wasn't for me after two unsuccessful attempts. This time was success! Now I know I can!

The Odyssey Project has changed my life. This journey has provided me with motivation to push forward.

I look forward every Wednesday to seeing my professors, special guests, and most of all my classmates. They are so funny, some of them, and you never know what anyone is going to say.

Odyssey has given my life a new meaning and direction.

The Odyssey has been a journey that I was determined to complete. But it's not the end. It's only the beginning of a new journey.

I have been blessed to be part of such a class of love. This UW program has saved my life, given me balance and structure, and equipped me for the battles ahead.



My journey in this class has taken me places I know I never would have gone otherwise. I have learned so much not only about great artists and writers but also so much about me!

On my Odyssey journey, I have been appreciated, loved, and looked up to. I was not belittled, ridiculed, hated on, disrespected, or told to be quiet.

In September I came to Odyssey class, afraid to face new people, new experiences. By this time, I feel better and am proud of myself because I have learned a lot. Now I am not afraid to speak loudly in front of people.



will not stop here; it will keep going and will become something called success.

Now I feel like someone who has a better future than before.

The Odyssey Project validates the cliché “the more I read the more I know that I don’t know.”

Now Odyssey has reunited me and my old crush: school.

The Odyssey Project has brought me to new height. It has shown me that I can do and be whatever I want to be, with hard work and determination. I see my life in a whole other way now.



I was homeless; living from home to home. I had enough! Odyssey opened the doors to my new beginning. This is just the beginning of my new chapter in life.

In the past, I always doubted my ability to succeed in college. I never felt smart enough. The Odyssey program helped me to understand that as long as I aspire to achieve, I can make it, and I will make it through college.

Every Wednesday it never failed: I could have had the worst day, but coming here at the end of class I would have a smile on my face. The Odyssey taught me you have no excuse to quit. My journey

