

A learning tool for students of the UW-Madison Odyssey Project

Odyssey ORACLE

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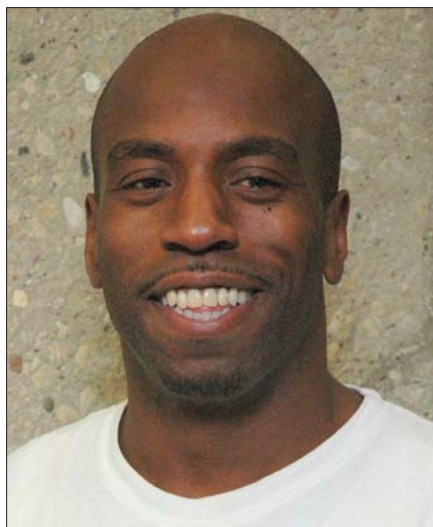
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Congrats,
Class of 2008!
odyssey.wisc.edu

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Some Odyssey students are just starting their journey, attending college courses for the first time. Others like myself started college but for whatever reason didn't finish. "Nontraditional" describes the class the best. Odyssey is more than academic. For me, it opened up a whole new perspective on a variety of subjects. . . . The Odyssey Program is a life-changing experience.
(Dwayne Blue)

To make an end is to make
a beginning.
The end is where we
start from . . .
We shall not cease from
exploration
And the end of all our
exploring
Will be to arrive where we
started
And know the place for the
first time.
—from T.S. Eliot,
Four Quartets, 1943



*Romare Bearden's
Roots Odyssey*

Oracle Call and Response



Song of the Odyssey Class of 2008

The Song of the Odyssey Class of 2008 left me overflowing with both pain and pleasure from deep down within my most inward existence of emotions. I read the song and feel all the love so deeply seeded, rooted, and planted within my Odyssey journey of love. . . .

This Odyssey journey, I am told, is only the beginning. . . . According to Webster, Odyssey is defined as “a long wandering journey or quest.”

So here I stand on the edge of my tip toes ready to dance through the next open doors into the next ballroom towards my long wandering journey-quest of even greater change, freedom, and love that Odyssey will lead me to dance confidently, gently, and humbly. **(Sherri Bester)**

While reading it, I felt like I was flowing on the Nile River on a boat, and at each stop I

would pick up each of my fellow classmates. Our destination would be the graduation stage. It's so amazing how everyone is so different yet we have the same goal: to get a higher education.

I enjoyed reading the part that describes ourselves. As I was reading each adjective, I could put a face of my classmates next to it. I am proud to be one of the Odyssey Class of 2008. **(Josephine Lorya)**

I liked the poem titled “Song of the Odyssey Class of 2008.” It was inspired by Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself.” . . . This piece was a collaboration of different individuals coming together to form an extended family. **(Debby Loftsgordon)**

The Song of the Odyssey Class of 2008 is a song of achievement, joy, friendship, some sweat, regrets, tears, love, hope, transparency, and probably the sweet melody of a bright

future. I’m proud of you all—I’ll miss you. God be with you. **(Haroun Omar)**

It’s amazing to see the many places we’ve come from, where we lived, the languages spoken, our denominations, jobs, etc. . . .

While answering the questions [on the survey], I wondered to myself what could you possibly do with this information, Emily, and why you even wanted it. Well, lo and behold, who woulda thunk that you would come up with something like this?

If trust was ever an issue (and it hasn’t been), it’s not anymore. There is definitely a method to your madness (smile). **(René Robinson)**

Candy Introduces her Son

Candy’s son reminds me so much of when I was Stephen’s



age. I had an outrageous temper, skipped school, and hung around bad people who I thought were my friends. I got into legal trouble at age 18. Stephen, it's never too late to shape up. Start making things easier now because 13 years from now you'll wish you had. You are lucky to have such a smart and wonderful mother. Make her proud!
(**Severn Anderson**)

This article was very heartfelt. I too have a son who I lost to confinement, and smoking and drinking when he wasn't locked up. All I can do is be there if he needs me and hope that just with a little time with him knowing he's loved, he'll turn that corner.
(**Jack Crawford**)

I am happy that Stephen saw his mistakes and has now changed. I was amazed when I read what he had to say. I also think that the timing is perfect. I don't think it's too late at all. He is still only 17 years old, and now that he has seen his mistake, he will have a better life. My advice to him would be to forget about the past and not to pay attention to what other people think of him. Keep moving forward, not making those same mistakes again.
(**Nosihle Lukhele**)

Still Responding to The Bluest Eye

Hats off to Lydia Diamond for her stage adaptation of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. It made us think about emotions some of us didn't know we had. The play was disturbing. The

characters made you think about yourself and how you felt about racism and its abuse. It was good for the class to go. When I read their responses, I think what wonderful writers we have become.
(**Rockameem**)

It was my first play I've ever been to, and it was excellent. There was a lot of pain I felt, almost wanting to cry. I know my mother lived during this time period. When my mother would get her hair permed and I would sit there and watch, I couldn't figure out what was wrong with her hair the way it was.
(**Jack Crawford**)

We all have things about us we would like to change—maybe not all of us, but most of us—, such as hair texture, height, skin tone, eyes, nose, lips, weight, speech, athleticism, etc.

Some things like speech, discipline, endurance, and punctuality we can change with practice, constancy, and belief. Others we cannot change, like skin pigment. Things like that are gifts from THE CREATOR, and we should be proud and grateful for those kind of differences—not proud in the sense of race superiority or material/financial superiority, but awed by those differences because they speak volumes about the complexity, diversity, and unity of the universe. I love you, Bro!!!
(**Haroun Omar's Response to Dwayne Blue's comments on The Bluest Eye**)

I was touched by everyone's

responses to *The Bluest Eye*, but RJ hit me with "places that had been buried so deep in the pit of my soul." I also have some things that are so deep that I'm afraid to visit them for fear of uncontrolled emotion and pain. . . .

As a child I was molested by an older family member from about the age of three until I was 11 years old. My childhood was plagued with feelings of fear, loneliness, self-blame, and anger, and being so light-skinned didn't help. I hated myself and tried to commit suicide at age 6, then again at 11.

I held on to that hate for many years, not trusting anyone, projecting my anger towards others.

Although I had pushed memories and feelings deep down, they had indirectly affected the type of parent that I would ultimately become. My children don't have play-dates, sleepovers, or go to birthday parties if there are going to be any male adults present. I have been treated for depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and insomnia due to nightmares. All I ever heard was "forgive and move on," but for me that means to accept what happened.

I am not at that stage yet, and don't know if I ever will be, but I have learned that the blame lies solely in the hands of the one who did those vile acts.

After seven children and 36 years on this earth, I have come a long way, with even farther to go.

I have to be conscious of decisions I make regarding my children so as not to smother them or take away those fun

experiences that should be had by all children. As a family, we talk about everything; there is no such thing as a shameful subject in my house.

Most importantly, I have learned to accept myself. The things I went through have enabled me to be more open with my children and hopefully to educate others about incest, low self-esteem, and adolescent suicide.

There was one a time when I WAS Pecola Breedlove, but by the grace of God, I'm here, and I'm not goin' nowhere!

I know why the caged bird sings.

My message to everyone is don't let events or people mold your personality or dictate your behavior because we have all been exclusively engineered by GOD!

(Valerie Williams)

***Mutual Admiration Society:
Odyssey Writers Admire Each
Other and the Project***

"The Odyssey"

The Odyssey now has just begun. Now we are on the hunt. What one must have is a fierce tenacity, a tremendous desire to stay alive every day. Education is the key for all doors to open.



Let us not therefore judge one another anymore, but judge this—that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fail in his brother's way. I am my brother's keeper.

A rational intellect is what is needed now. It is better to coin a new term with a precise meaning than to use old ones with misleading distortion.

We must rethink everything in order to have a clear future. We must make ourselves over. Overcome yourself on all levels, to make a life worth living for you, yours, and everybody else. We must make a life, not wait to live.

The power of love: unwavering, straight to the point, caring but unmoved. Rethink everything. The power of love for life will keep us on the hunt for the way.

In these most dangerous times we need that power, yes, and the ability to use the power to become healers of the nation, organizers of major changes. Now the Odyssey begins.

I feel like Peter standing next to Jesus on the mountaintop on the day of Jesus' transfiguration.

Peter looked at Jesus and said, "Lord, it's good to be here."

(Rockameem)

I enjoyed reading all the articles about funding the Odyssey Project. . . . It seems like yesterday when I



walked through that door and saw Emily and Coach.

I know that when I'm awarded my degree, I plan on funding this project. Just like past funders made it possible for me to receive books, curricular materials, pens, pencils, a hot meal, and great professors, I plan on passing on this amazing gift to someone else. Thank you!

(Albert Watson)

I fell in love with Sherri's article when I first began to read it. I basked in the warmth of her writing. Her first paragraph was inviting, descriptive, and filled with great visual imagery. This is something I lack in my own writing. I wish I could write more like Sherri.

(John Shields)

My most gently wise, brilliant, and thoughtful brother, John Shields: you captured my heart and provoked it to skip a scattered beat with your words of hope. Perhaps Langston Hughes and you should partner up on writing a poem together with the way you broke it down and made it plain, my brother. . . . You encouraged me to keep on holding on to my dreams right at



a time that I needed to hear those words whispered throughout the stormy winds blowing deep down secretly within my heart, my mind, my body, my soul, and my spirit.

(Sherri Bester)

Great job, Sev! I was very impressed with your exactness in revealing what the Odyssey Project had done for you. Your writing flowed and covered every aspect of what we have experienced on this journey. Paraphrasing Socrates' Allegory of the Cave was an excellent idea. What better way to get your point across? There's an old adage that says, "What comes from the heart, reaches the heart." Your message reaches the heart.

(René Robinson)

I actually enjoyed Severn's informative, well-written article



on Japanese wood block prints. What impressed me most, however, was that Severn used his winter break to continue his educational journey. Instead of forgetting about school for several weeks, he caught up with Professor Phillips at the Chazen Museum.

(John Shields)

One article I liked and admired was René Robinson on why Odyssey should be funded. She wrote about a poem by Emily Dickinson and refers to the word "Hope." We all need a little "hope" now and again, including myself. I just want to take a personal moment to thank Emily Auerbach for believing in all of us, the class of 2008, and giving us the "courage to hope."

(Debby Loftsgordon)

It has been a joy to see Nosihle go from being shy and quiet. Now she has this strong voice and a new self. Bless! It's a tribute to herself. She has matured and become an active participant in class. Her most cherished work is coming. In Nosihle, you can see the Odyssey at work. Like

Langston Hughes and Martin Luther King, Jr., don't wait, Nosihle. Change tomorrow today. Live your truth, with love of self. Bless!

(Rockameem, the oldest '08 student, to Nosihle, the youngest)

When Sherri said, "You open up a package of the moon and stars and place them within my reach . . . as a whole new world . . . of hope-filled stars and moonlight guidance," I envisioned myself in a space shuttle, taking a vacation, touring all the planets, being able to actually touch the moon and then pour a bucket of hope. Sherri has a unique style of writing that even the blind can be taken on a journey through it.

(Josephine Lorya)





Sev, my heart truly goes out to you and your sisters. I'm sorry for your loss and hope you can reach your other sister because what a terrible way to live with anger in our hearts. We all have to find a way to let go of that because if we don't, how it can bring us down. I can tell that you're a very loving and passionate person with a good heart. Regardless of whatever mistakes you have made in the past, I know that didn't make you a bad person.
(Candy Gonzalez)

Sheriah, you hit the nail on the head! If you're not part of the solution, you're definitely part of the problem. You wrote, "If you cannot see the very same problems in America today that Hughes wrote about in 'Let America Be America Again,' then you have not been

paying attention." Well, I felt the exact same way when I read the Preamble to the Platform of the Populist Party, which was written over a hundred years ago. I continue to read it over and over because it is so very hard for me to conceive that the same thing is going on today. . . . My favorite:

"From the same prolific womb of governmental injustice we breed the two great classes—tramps and millionaires."

(René Robinson)

Naomi's response to Langston Hughes' "Mother to Son" was very touching. I agree with Naomi when she says that this poem reflects both the hardship and suffering in life as well as the support and love his mother had for him. What Naomi's grandmother told her about education is exactly what my mom stresses to me. . . . No one can ever take your education from you.

(Josephine Lorya)

I liked Jessica Bhan's response to "Mother to Son." It was very personal and deep. I too lived with my mother for a time. It was during the twilight of her life. I'm glad that I was there during that time so I was able to learn the lessons she had to impart to me.

(Justin Wilson)

Haroun, I found your article amazing, and it left me hungry for more facts and experiences of your homeland. You are an extraordinary writer because I was inside the story as you described your boat race for the Bushman's trophy. Your description of the beauty there made me want to rush there right away—I tried and tried to see it in my mind.

Thank you for sharing your "lost boy" experience with us. I'm so glad you found your way back to "freedom." I hope I'm privileged with another opportunity to learn more about your home county of Nigeria.
(Ozanne Anderson)

Thank you, sweetest sisters Kegan and Emily, for all the hard work and faithful love that it took to create and recreate all these wonderful, marvelous, brilliant Odyssey Oracles!!! . . . I feel like a student reading my senior yearbook as I look into the faces of my Odyssey family captured on a picture spread across the last page of my Odyssey Oracle in beautiful rainbow colors. I ask myself, "Where is the pot of gold at the end of this rainbow?"

A gentle voice whispers back from deep down inside me, "There is no end to this rainbow: only a pot of golden, flowing, everlasting change, freedom, and love of an Odyssey that dreams and breathes hope into the lives of a family formed forever."

(Sherri Bester)



Editorials in Progress

In the weeks to come, look for more polished drafts of these and other Odyssey editorials to appear in local newspapers and/or be delivered over the WORT radio on Radio Kiosk or Community Access hour.

Another Roadblock By Jack Crawford

Criminal background searches for tenant screening become just another roadblock for people with past criminal drug convictions who are trying to better themselves and turn away from crime. It has become increasingly difficult for them to secure the most basic necessities of independent living, a job, permanent housing, and access to public resources and assistance.

Permanent housing makes it more feasible to secure and maintain employment. If one has an address to put on a job application, a W-2, and a place to bathe and sleep and eat, it's really all the tools one needs.

In Madison, Wisconsin, most private landlords conduct their own criminal background checks and review public access court records over the internet before renting to an applicant. Felons with past drug convictions are barred from most public housing assistance programs for five years after their conviction.

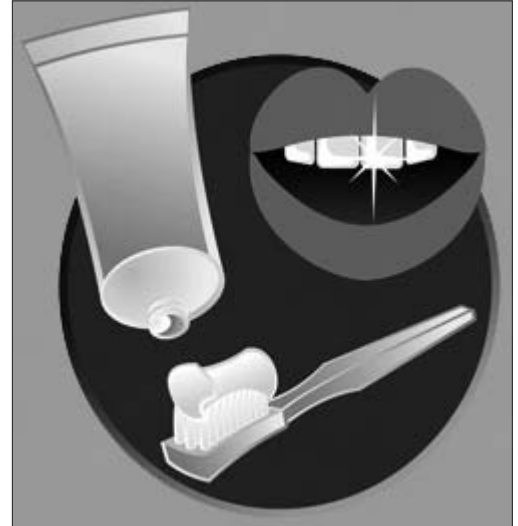


There are no laws to stop landlords from denying these applicants housing and discriminating against them. It is a well known fact that people can change if they so desire. They have a right to change, but discrimination and denial of housing based on people's past conduct doesn't lend support or foster change so they can avoid recidivism and become an asset to themselves, their own families, and our communities.

Affordable Dental Care? By René Robinson

During the month of February, I experienced unrelenting pain caused by not one but two cavities. The nights were long, as the pain seemed more intense when I would lie down. My only source of relief was old-fashioned remedies: Gargle with half water, half peroxide or warm salt water. Well, that got old, and it got old real quick.

However, not having dental insurance or money to go to the dentist, I wondered what to do. Suddenly I remembered reading and retaining an article in the *Wisconsin State Journal* a few years ago about affordable dental clinics. Something inside warned me that I would need this information. So the next day I looked in my desk drawer and yes! There it was, right in front of



me, the list that I so needed right now. I was ecstatic—still in pain but ecstatic.

Now the list consisted of four offices: American Dental Association, Meriter's Max W. Pohle Dental Clinic, Access Community Health Centers, and Affordable Dentures. My pursuit began.

American Dental was crossed off immediately because it had a Chicago area code. Next was Meriter's Dental Clinic, which I assumed to be somewhat expensive, so I skipped down to Access Community Health Center and made that much-anticipated phone call. My ecstasy soon diminished: no new patients until April and no emergency protocol in place. My only recourse was to call every morning in hopes of a cancellation or seek relief via Urgent Care or an Emergency Room.

Slightly disappointed and baffled, I hung up, called

Meriter's Dental Clinic, and could not believe the words coming through the phone! It was as if I was listening to a recorded message: No appointments available for new patients, no emergency protocol, etc. I was appalled. I then contacted Affordable Dentures only to find they aren't affordable at all: \$20.00 consultation fee and \$70.00 for a mandatory x-ray, due at time of visit.

So utilizing my only recourse, I sought treatment via Urgent Care. I received prescriptions for an infection and pain. I was then advised to seek treatment at Access or Meriter. Go figure: right back to square one!

And that to me is a problem. Most dental offices have a slot or two set aside for emergencies. Therefore, it's very difficult for me to understand why affordable dental places, typically for lower-income individuals, don't. Do we not have emergencies? Does that not matter? Do we not matter? An inquiring mind wants to know.

And a poetic mind observes:

It seems a shame that one must wait through agony and pain, when all it takes is a stroke of a pen to jot down my name. A slot each day set aside for an emergency just in case. . . .

Helping Our Youth

By Ronnie Jones

It's Monday morning. Kortni arises from her somewhat sleepless night only to begin a restless day! She wakes up to emptiness. As she walks out the door, thoughts creep through her mind on how she hasn't seen her

mother in over a week.

As Kortni walks into school 30 minutes late, Principal Whatshisname instantly greets Kortni with an in-school detention for her third tardy this week. An overwhelmed Kortni loses all respect for the principal and snaps! The principal escorts Kortni, suspension papers in hand, out the door and back to the never-ending emptiness she just left!

Kortni doesn't stand alone. Our youth suffer from overwhelming amounts of stress: school demands, problems with friends, family relationships, changing schools, changes in body, family financial problems etc. We can all recall that famous saying, "If you can't stand the heat, then get out the kitchen!" Try comparing it to today's youth. People, it's hot! Our youth can't get out without help from us! YOU CAN HELP!!!

"Just like an Angel" and "Heaven Sent" are two organizations in their early development stages that are being formed to provide our youth with the tools to defuse everyday stress, become confident and self reliant, unearth their personal power, and help modify the value of themselves, family, and their community.

How do we honestly expect our youth, our future, to make it when we are doing nothing to help? To learn how you can help, please contact Ronnie Jones at Justlikeanangel08@hotmail.com.

Financial Aid Struggles

By Sherri Bester

I came to UW-Madison

in 1980 through the Summer Opportunity Program in need of an education like a fish in need of water. A financially challenged student excited to start a college education after my successful high school graduation, I was on top of the world ready to dance at the Cinderella Ball! It was my desire to finish school and to live a life of purpose and financial freedom. My goal was to end up satisfied with a job in my career of choice while I stood in a position to give back good to the world all around me.

With a deeply rooted desire to become an independent woman who lived far beyond the pathways of life's financial struggles, I continued to dance the dance for the King's favor. Step by step I did as I was expected until my glass slipper suddenly broke at the peck of a dance spin of personal passion. Bowing out gracefully in perfect surrender, I dropped out of school, but the student loan payments kept their hourglass sprinkling stardust frantically. Off flew a young, foolish, wild, gentle dove determined to simply survive the immediate viewpoint of her destiny in flight.

I came back to UW-Madison in 2007, a half a century later, through the Odyssey Project, and there is no change possible without a second chance. A financially challenged student determined to achieve a college education after the discovery of all the twisted roads and endless mazes poverty leads one into, I am now in search of financial gain and freedom as well as the fulfillment of my goals to give



back and help those all around me including those like me drowning on dry ground all over this desert, each one of us thirsty for a simple drink of a second chance of freedom.

Here I stand on my oak tree branch of hope: an older, wise, fierce, gracious owl ready to take off in purposeful flight. "An Associates degree brings thirty percent more in earnings than a high school diploma. Those with a Bachelor's degree average more than double what folks with a high school diploma make." These reasons alone are enough for me to send out a white flag to the financial aid systems to ask you to set up a repayment program of past student loans for students instead of blocking our journey to continue. For example, I could be given a second chance to make payments towards past student loans through my gifts and talents to a program providing my services to UW-Madison Child Care Agencies. Please help free me of the financial chains that hold

me captive and give back to me the blowing wind in my wings to fly back into flight.

A Perspective on Destructive Force By Kevin Schoen

One of my classmates said, "My mother used to tell me all the time I was like a volcano because I kept things inside, not sharing my feelings.

She also said that

one day I would erupt and it would not be good."

When I was a kid, my Dad taught me how to cast metals. Everything about casting is dangerous, including the sharp tools for carving models and the ovens and torches, which run 1800-2200 F degrees. It always amazed me how such destructive power, when harnessed, could produce such objects of beauty.

Even the earth cannot keep in her deepest hottest anger. It will one day seek expression. The volcanoes we know as the Hawaiian Islands are just such an expression: immeasurably destructive power harnessed and tempered by cold pacific waters. Consider their beauty and majesty.

In casting, soft wax is rationally molded, carved, or hammered into a beautiful expression or model. When an object is cast, hard, unyielding, heavy, and obstinate metal

is forced to conform to the will of the artist, as he or she melts it into obedient flowing liquid before pouring it into a mold that contains the imagination of the artist. It could emerge a beautiful silver calla lily.

After casting, the artist allows the silver in the calla lily to resume its heavy, unyielding, obstinate nature, and never tells the secret of its moment of weakness. The silver never knows that all those who see it, see it as an object of beauty. It is completely oblivious to the fact that its former persona has melted away. A diamond was once a rock that was too hot to hold; yet without creative imagination and the earth's fiery hot molten core, mankind would never know its incomparable beauty.

We are all full of this capacity for beauty and destruction. Depending on how we choose to express what we hold, history will remember us as artists or little more than angry lava from the bowels of the earth.



Don't Be a Wannabe

By Justin Wilson

I remember how difficult school was for me during my young teens. Frequently I would be dressed in second hand clothes and subjected to endless verbal disparaging by my peers. I remember walking down the halls of my school being talked about and laughed at because my clothes came from K-mart or some such cheap store. In all the media you see today, images are being crafted by the wealthy and foisted upon those with less.

It is sad how many people fall for these well crafted stereotypes and gleefully follow in the footpaths of lesser and wicked beings. Yes, my childhood was hard and difficult on most days. But I cannot regret the experiences I endured, for they

led me to here. My past gave me the opportunity to develop into something resembling a real person. I have my own thoughts, ideas, and beliefs.

These words I write are for anyone blindly giving in to the wishes of another. You can't go through your life living it for another. You have to stop looking without for life's answers. You came into this world with everything you will ever need. Don't be scared to be yourself. Live your own life. Don't be a paper cutout Barbie or Ken wannabe. For when it is all said and done, it will only be you and whatever god you believe in standing face to face.

But until then you can be your own person. So in the words of Dylan Thomas, "*Rage, rage against the dying of the*

light."

Rehabilitating Rehab

By Sheriah Quartey

When my mother, a drug addict, had several bouts with suicide attempts, she was turned away from programs due to not having proper insurance. My mother has been addicted to drugs for 10 years and has never been successfully able to get proper treatment to recover. There is a dire need for affordable rehabilitation facilities and also programs that accept Medical Assistance.

She went to the emergency room after taking several different pills and instead of treating this as a serious situation, the emergency room staff gave her liquid charcoal to drink and advised her that she should go home because the program that they have does not accept her insurance. This program is called New Start and is one of the better programs that we have for rehabilitation services in Madison, WI, but the fact that they do not accept Medical Assistance (which is what the majority of low income and unemployed people have for insurance) makes it just another good program for people with money.

I have had road block after road block when it comes to getting her the help that she needs. Another example is the fact that programs like New Hope and Women in Transition have long waiting lists, and it takes forever to hear back from them. If there is an individual that has serious addiction problems and needs to get in treatment as a



matter of life or death, how can being on a waiting list help to solve this situation?

My mother's addiction has had a devastating effect on my entire family. I am in the middle of her seven children, and I have had the responsibility of being a mother/care giver for my three younger siblings for several years. As a 23-year-old young woman, I find it very difficult to have that kind of pressure on my shoulders when their age ranges are 13-18. My mother lost her home, due to the addiction, and all of her most valuable possessions. My 18-year-old sister lives with me, my 17-year-old brother is staying with friends, and my 13-year-old brother has been placed in residential treatment due to behavior problems relating to my mother's addiction. I am the primary contact for everything when it comes to my young siblings, and at times I am unable to complete necessary paperwork for my brother's medication or other important things because my mom is not around.

Having more options for treatment of people with no insurance and low income would lower the number of children in foster care and would allow a lot of young women and men to not have the responsibility of an adult at such an early age. My mother was told that she did not have the right insurance to get help, she was told that she has to see a psychiatrist before she would be accepted, and she was told to call every morning at 8 a.m. to see if there is an open bed for her. How can it be so hard to get treatment services from places that are

supposed to help addicts recover?

Children of Alcoholic Parents **By Albert Watson**

Growing up was truly an experience. I was fortunate enough to grow up with a mother and a father. I also was fortunate enough to be the oldest of four boys. We were a very close African-American family. We had a nice home, two cars, front and back yard, and a garden that grew some of the tastiest greens, juicy tomatoes, cherry red watermelons, and the sweetest sweet corn. My father was a construction worker, and my mother was a nursing assistant.

Neither one of my parents graduated from high school. I must say, they worked very hard raising us, and providing for us. They also worked hard at drinking and at abusing drugs.

As soon as my mother was home from work, "snock" was the sound of the opening of a beer can. Drinking after work was better than being off that day because my mother would try her best to drink a whole case of beer. For those that don't know, a case

is 24 cans.

My father wasn't much better. In fact, my father was worse. My father was a terrific guy until he began to drink hard liquor. My father would get drunk and start hitting my mother. My father would also get paid on Friday, and the family wouldn't see him until Sunday morning. Was he hurt, dead, or alive? We had no idea. Oh yeah, my father was drinking and smoking crack all weekend. Not to mention, he would always come home with no money for bills, groceries, or any extra curricular activities like folders, school supplies, etc.

My parents drank everyday, but the fun didn't begin until the weekend showed up. I spent most of my middle school and high school days hating the weekends. I remember having friends over, and my mother being wasted. She was really making an ass of herself. I asked her to please stop. She looked at me and said, "I'm your mother, you're not mine." She pointed to her crotch area and said, "You came out of this." I'll let you figure out what she meant by that.



I often hear bad stories about kids who grew up with alcoholic parents. It seems that not many of them do well as adults. My three brothers are married, have beautiful children, budding careers, and have never spent a day in jail. I'm also thankful that we don't depend on an alcoholic beverage each and every day, or at all.

To today's youth who are growing up with alcoholic parents, the only thing I can tell you is to look out for each other as siblings, and do your best to break the cycle as adults. Just because your parents drink, it doesn't mean you have to. I also believe that the idea that children who come from alcoholic parents are likely to become alcoholics is clinical bull. We all have choices to make in life. My brothers and I chose to stay sober, and so can you.

Bridging achievement gaps in today's public schools

By Ozanne Anderson

In Room 229 there are 24 elementary students anxiously waiting for class to begin. All have come to class with different learning styles, cultural backgrounds, levels of literacy and math skills, and physical and emotional needs.

The spectrum of diversity widens when you consider that of the 24 students, 12 are White, 6 are African American, 4 are Hispanic, 1 is Native-American, and 1 is Hmong, creating a classroom mosaic mirroring the image of a typical public school classroom.

Unfortunately our current

public school system has failed to adapt its programs and curriculum implementations to the changing diasporas of the students in which it serves. The cookie cutter approach to education in culturally, economically, and demographically diverse classrooms is leaving large masses of non-white middle class students falling through the archival cracks of a land marked educational structure.

Classrooms like this one are familiar to the Madison Metropolitan School District. Though having a reputation for being one of the best in the country, the test scores tell a perplexing story. African-American, Hispanic, and other non-white groups and also the economically challenged, physically disadvantaged and special needs students are struggling to achieve.

According to the 2006 WINSS-WKCE/WAA data analysis of combined third grade proficiency scores, 43% of 428 African-American students and 35% of the 232 Hispanic-American students enrolled are performing below proficiency standards. In contrast, of the 796 White student population (doubled and tripled over other student group populations), only 9% of this group scored below proficiency.

Are these numbers to suggest that non-white students are incapable of achieving academically? Or would it be more accurate to say that the current educational structure is inadequately prepared to teach them?

I believe the latter is true. When national reports are expecting 50% of America's African-American students to drop out within the coming year, we see an enormous achievement gap on escalated levels.

Who will be held accountable for the students left behind? Will we believe that these students have inadequate academic skills and hold them accountable? Or will we take another look at our practices, find the missing links, and go back to the drawing board?

Am I suggesting lowering the standards of our educational system? To the contrary: I am challenging our system to go higher to create learning environments that promote academic success for every student. I believe that all children have the ability to learn, and that all children learn differently. As there are many components that make up the thought patterns and learning styles of any one child, as educators we must be ready to shake up the foundation upon which we have built our instructional formats.

It is time to rebuild. At the blueprint levels we must ask ourselves these questions: Who are the students we will serve? Where are they from? How do they learn? What obstacles do they face? What are their interests, talents, and natural gifts? The answers to these questions are the ground zero for building a more structurally sound educational environment inclusive of all students.

It is at ground zero that we rebuild a curriculum foundation

that supports African-American literature as an inclusive function of American literature. At ground zero, we mobilize our social workers by including in-house consultation visits to students from broken family structures, non-English speaking families, and students from impoverished-working class homes. At ground zero we learn that the arts and music are a large part of the African-American and Hispanic-American cultural experience, and we use them as tools for building curriculum strategies and implementation methods. At ground zero, we restructure athletic programs to include economic disadvantaged students' participation in all sports arenas regardless of their ability to pay. At ground zero we hire teachers of all ethnic groups to balance the social/class environment of the educational system itself. At ground zero, we plan to keep class sizes low so that every student's potential can be assessed, nurtured, and adequately supported by our educational resources. At ground zero we find creative ways to mobilize parents in the rebuilding processes and setting mandates for parental participation on some level. At ground zero we make sure the "whole child's" needs are addressed and that individuality is not compromised by a cookie-cutter approach to education in the diverse arenas of the public school classrooms.

It is time to rebuild, time to seal the cracks in our educational foundations. We start at ground zero with blueprints that factor in the unique design of every child.

If we can learn from the subjects we're endeavoring to teach, we can build an educational structure that can stand up to the growing diversity within its borders.

How Would You Feel?

By Josephine Lorya

Imagine walking down the street and all eyes are on you. You wonder and begin to ask yourself, "What did I do?" The eyes staring at you have anger and hate in them. You know you are not a murderer, a criminal, or a bad human being. The only thing you hypothetically did wrong was being born into a culture that follows precise traditions with their clothing and daily life. This is how I would feel if I were in a Muslim girl's shoes.

Life behind the veil of most women of Islam is tough these days post September 11th, 2001. Some Muslims are extremists, but most are moderate and live normal lives, just like us. How would you feel if you were stopped while traveling, or heard whispers as soon as you walked by? I bet you wouldn't feel so great and appreciated as a human

being.

Muslims are just as normal as we think we are, and here is why. Muslims believe in God; so do Christians. Islam's holy book is called the Quran, and they believe in the same Old Testament adhered to by the Christian faith. Christians' holy book is called the Bible, and they believe in both the New and Old Testament. All Muslims belong to one of two major denominations, which are the Sunni and Shia. About 85% of Muslims are Sunni and 15% are Shia. They pray five times a day, and their duties and practices include fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. During this month a Muslim must not eat or drink, among other things, from dawn to dusk. This fast is to encourage a feeling of closeness to God.

So I am asking you all not to judge a person by a stereotype you hear. Don't make assumptions because if you assume, it makes an ass out of you and me. Take a moment to know someone because you just never know what the individual is going through.



Too Much Money?

By Mandisa Hayes

How many people do you know panic at the thought of making too much money? I know I do, and I know several other working families who have the same fear. Why, you ask? The answer is simple. Dane County offers childcare assistance for low-income working parents. However, once you reach the income maximum, you are no longer eligible for the program.

I remember going to visit my caseworker for a regular review. After he computed the monthly income of my household, he told me I was 20 cents over the limit. His suggestion was to reduce my work hours so that I would make less money. As a family of five with three small children, my childcare expense without the subsidy was more than \$700 per week. With the subsidy, my co-payment was about \$100 per week. I could not believe that earning an extra 20 cents in income each month would cost me an extra \$600 per week.

In my case, my partner was able to get his work hours reduced so that our household

income would be lower.

However, many people are not as lucky. When I presented my request to my supervisor, I was told that reducing my hours was not an option. How many families will be in this situation with no other options? Why should a small bump in pay cause a major financial crisis for a family? Coworkers have had to turn down raises and promotions to avoid reaching that income cap.

I know the program is to assist low income families, but something must be done with the income limits that will allow people to progress in their careers without feeling as if they will be punished for doing so. Raising the income limits for the program will allow families to continue to receive this much needed assistance. This program relies on state funding. To help get the limits increased, you should contact your state legislators and let them know how important this program is. If you are unsure how to contact your legislators, you can call (800) 362-9472.

Young Sisters of Distinction

By RJ Knight

The challenges facing young girls are becoming tougher each day. Having expectations and labels placed on them from every direction, adolescent girls are often confused by who they should trust and how they should conduct themselves.

From one perspective, some girls are labeled “at-risk,” and told by society that the odds are not in their favor when it comes to graduating high school or landing a lucrative career.

Teachers and administrators are calling for higher grade point averages and better conduct.

Through media and other entities, society can dictate what type of clothing should be worn to be considered cool and to be accepted, while school authorities still demand a different and positive behavior.

Who should they listen to? Who has the answers to their confusion?

Unfortunately, parents, grandparents, teachers, and others don’t necessarily have the answers. The example the girls see in their communities and some home environments are often just as confusing.

Torn between love for community and home, bombarded by the desire and the need to feel a sense of belonging, through expectations placed on girls by peer pressure, music, and media, young girls are often left feeling helpless and unmotivated to change that which they could change.

We can not allow them to fall through the cracks. Providing safe spaces for girls, where they can just be girls, is a step in the right direction, a step toward helping girls end the vicious cycle of negative labels placed on them.

Young Sisters of Distinction is a new non-profit organization to assist girls in developing individual plans for success, rites of passage, team building, and positive relationships with others. Young Sisters of Distinction programming will begin in the fall of 2008.

YSOD has begun a partnership with an area non-





profit organization whose focus is teen boys.

If you would like more information, please contact RJ Knight, CEO of Young Sisters of Distinction, at (608)-906-8995.

Changing Our Health Care System

By Nosihle Lukhele

Just recently my mother had a cataract surgery which will cost

\$12,000 for each eye! I was really shocked when I saw the bill. I just didn't know that a surgery that we are told was a simple, 20-minute procedure could be so pricey. This is awful because she is not even covered by insurance. Without insurance, she's more likely to spend so many years of her life in debt.

This is really unfair when you consider the fact that still millions of Americans are not covered by insurance. Many people cannot pay their medical bills because of low income. I feel like they make it hard for so many people to be covered by insurance just so that they are never able to move on with their lives and live better because they will still be paying their bills. I think that some people don't pay their bills simply because they don't want to have to pay for other people's health care, and I totally agree! It

doesn't make sense or seem fair to pay for other people's health care when you don't have health insurance yourself. So why would anybody want to keep a huge number of people in debt that probably would end up not being paid? Who benefits from that? And what?

I also feel they take advantage of people's situations. Whenever a person needs medical help, it will cost him thousands of dollars. Insurance companies are supposed to be there to help people, but that doesn't happen. The health care system in America is awful. In some other countries, they have better and more affordable health care than in America. For instance, Canada's system is publicly financed but privately run, provides universal coverage, and is free at the point of use. Health care in America is more expensive than a lot of other countries. I think it's time we also find a solution to make our system better and more affordable.

No Place for Terrorism

By Haroun Omar

Say "Come, I'll rehearse what God has really prohibited you from": join not anything as equals with Him, be good to your parents; do not kill your children on an excuse of want—We provide sustenance for you and for them. Do not come near any shameful act, whether openly or in secret. Do not take life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law." Thus does He command you that you may learn wisdom.—Quran 5: V 32.



These are some of the views I and billions of people around the world espouse. I am a Muslim, an anti-terrorist, fun-loving, TV watching, bus riding, job working, everyday regular person Muslim. I believe in God, His mercy, and His prophets. I believe in the mission/message of prophet Muhammed, prophet Jesus, Noah, Ishmael, Jonah, David, Moses, Isaac, John, etc.—all the prophets—which is no more than the belief in the Oneness of God, in life after death, and in judgment day (accountability). Most Muslims and non-Muslims are not different from each other: we all aspire to a fulfilled life, with love of family, an education, an occupation, a means of earning a living, a hobby, a love—something or someone to love or befriend.

So I emphatically, unmistakably, flat-out say to non-Muslims and Muslims alike that terrorism, tyranny, oppression, and wanton murder of innocent people has no place in Islam. “This madness, hatred is not a radical interpretation of Islam. It is a deliberate, calculated, heretical misinterpretation of the Holy Quran by intoxicated, power-hungry, deluded tyrants.”

The Quran clearly states, “There is no coercion, compulsion in religion—truth stands out clear from error.”—Quran 2 V 256. It is therefore important to differentiate between a few hundred madmen and about a billion or more peace-loving people that claim Islam as their religion.

A System without Humanity By Ivonne Ramos

On November 7, 2004, a third year medical student was bashed in the head repeatedly on a Sunday afternoon in front of Whole Foods.

Death happens everyday . . . but some deaths seem so unnecessary, senseless, and preventable. What the papers didn't say is that this brutal killer was once a good, wholesome person raised by a loving family.

What went wrong? He was a 24 year old afraid to share with family and friends that he was hearing voices. Once the cat was out of the bag, his family did what any good family would do: they sought medical help. Time and time again he was discharged because his HMO felt that he had received enough assistance.

The killer tried to kill himself just two months before he became a murderer. He drove 90 miles an hour on a New Jersey highway going the wrong direction. His father begged the hospital to keep him in his care, but they pushed him out of the hospital and into the public.

Eventually the voices became so loud his mind told him he needed to kill this beautiful

woman in order to shut the voices in his mind. So the person who was once his peer in a prestigious medical school was about to become his victim haunting him for life.

The murderer was my dear friend Nadir, who once had a bright future and now sits in a prison properly medicated reliving that moment daily, wondering what went wrong and wishing he would have killed himself in the car crash.

Mental illness must be taken seriously because we all suffer consequences of a system that has no humanity.

Allied Drive or the Astrodome? By John Shields

Why hasn't Madison made more progress in creating more affordable housing for low-income families? I would like to see better housing opportunities for low-income households and fewer neighborhoods where underprivileged families are highly concentrated.

Why do so many low-income people live in neighborhoods such as Vera Court, Darbo Drive, Northport Drive, and Allied Drive? One reason is the high cost of living in Madison. I work over 50 hours a week and rent a small efficiency, yet more than half my income goes for housing. People with entry-level employment skills can work fulltime, sometimes holding down two or three jobs, yet still cannot afford adequate housing in safe neighborhoods.

How can this problem be solved? We need government programs such as rent-to-own,



grants for down payments to assist first-time homeowners, and grants for security deposits. Section 8 is a good program, yet landlords are still reluctant to rent to Section 8 clients.

A Katrina evacuee who was resettled on Allied Drive said, "I'd rather be in the Astrodome than here." Affordable housing must be available throughout the city rather than concentrated in a few neighborhoods. If you agree, contact your neighborhood alderperson to fight this ever-growing problem.

Mandatory Dress Code for Middle Schools

By Brenda Tompkins

Many of our Wisconsin middle school youth have been left behind, not because they are absent a lot, have a disability, don't care about their education, or can't find anyone else who cares, but just because of the clothing they're wearing.

Students should wear uniforms. It will eliminate a lot of issues, such as certain colors looked upon as gang related; it will take away the competition students place on themselves about what clothes they are wearing; it will save money for those parents whose finances are limited and really can't afford to keep up with the latest fashion. Also, when students are among their peers in a school setting, it surely will take away the insecurities many of them have about their appearance.

My premise is if you don't have a group of students who are dressed in expensive clothing brands and showing off, then you

are creating a more serious tone. With less clothing distraction going on, there will be much more learning taking place. Just like in sports, the teams wear uniforms bringing unity to the team. I feel students' wearing uniforms can also promote school unity.

Some may argue that students' constitutional rights are being violated. . . . Others may agree with me wholeheartedly just because a student's education seems more important. . . . There will always be pros and cons about mandatory dress codes, but I still say middle school students should wear uniforms.

Organic or Non-Organic Foods By Rockameem

I have to watch all of the foods that I eat, and I began to look into organic foods to see if that could be a better diet for me—using foods with no chemical fertilizers or pesticides, free from chemical injections or additives, simple, basic, and close to nature, to use food to ensure adequate hydration, fiber, and a good source of protein and nutrition—lowering cholesterol without prescription drugs.



To eat well, choosing foods grown with fertilizers and mulches consisting only of animal or vegetable matter, would be less dangerous for me. For example, non-organic milk has been linked to prostate cancer but not organic milk. It's the additives and the way the cow is fed that make the difference in the milk. The non-organic milk makes it harder for the body to work, causing stress for the body to break down unwanted chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or genetically modified organisms. So for me, natural and organic milk, with none of the additives of conventionally non-organic processed milk, would be so much better.

Eat well to live well. I will try to use food to cure myself. Organic would be best for me.

My "Right" to Vote By Jeffery McCarroll

Wisconsin is one of many states where parolees cannot legally cast a vote in any election due to state laws. Not allowing parolees the right to vote is disenfranchisement based on racism. The state law is a direct violation of constitutional rights

granted all citizens. It hinders the ability for felons to effectively reenter society. Sadly, it is nothing more than a holdover from Jim Crow laws.

December 1, 2004, I embarked on my journey home in hopes of starting a new

life after seven and a half years of incarceration. Since then I've maintained employment for over two and a half years. Taxes are taken from my check every time I get paid, like any working citizen. I have not broken the law, and I'm pursuing an education. Yet I am not considered a full citizen because I am actively on parole. My taxes help pay for the improvement of the city, state, and country I live in, and to deny me the right to vote is an example of the American government's propensity for the ideas of slavery to continue.

In every state, the number of blacks in prison outnumbers their proportion in the general population by a large percentage. In 11 states, Wisconsin included, the percentage of the prison population is more than six times greater than the percentage of blacks in the state population. It seems to be a neat way of controlling the number of black votes in state and federal elections. The Voting Right Act of 1965 Section 2 prohibits voting discrimination. Congress amended this section in 1982, prohibiting any voting practice or procedure with a discriminatory result.

Felony disenfranchisement is a direct violation of the 16th amendment. Section I of the amendment states that the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the U.S. or any state based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude. According to the Human Rights Watch, "9% of all black adults are under some form of correctional

supervision . . . compared to 2% of white adults." Speaking from experience as a prisoner, I felt enslaved with the warden playing the role of master and the correctional officers playing the role of overseers.

Disenfranchisement does not help to keep the streets safe. It causes a disconnection from the community that felons are released into every day. Research shows a link between voting participation and re-offense: people who voted after release were half as likely to be re-arrested as those who did not vote.

Black History Month By Charrod Miller

Why is the one month that is most important to black folks, besides the month that their birthday may fall in, the one month we start to celebrate each other, the shortest month of the year? What month am I referring to? I refer to Black History Month.

To me it seems that Congress was sick and tired of black folk rallying and coming together for common causes after we were considered "equal," so they got together and said,

"Let's give them a month all to themselves." Then someone said, nonchalantly, "Yeah, let's give them February," and the rest is history. I guess it's better than nothing, but was 31 days too much to ask for? I guess it was. To me Congress might as well have said "take this month and go over there and sit down, boy."

I want to see black history become history period. I am tired of this country being racially divided. . . . Why is it that once February is over, so is the celebration of black folks? Right now this country is on the brink of history. The next president of the United States could be an African American or a woman, but instead of people finding out more about Obama's or Clinton's policies and how they might run the country, the only thing that the media can focus on is the fact that Obama is African American.

They promised us 40 acres and a mule, but we settled for 28 days. To me giving us February is not enough. If anything, Black History Month should be celebrated in June, seeing as how back in 1865 we were no longer considered slaves, but I



guess that's two days too long and too much to ask for.

They Don't See Me

By Maria Torres

I feel that when some people see me, they see an illegal alien/Mexican. They don't see a U.S. citizen. They don't see someone that is bilingual. They don't see a taxpayer. They don't see a high school graduate.

They only see an illegal Mexican, the brown of my skin.

Why do people say Mexicans are illegal aliens? The United States took over some of their land and crossed their borders way before Mexicans started crossing ours.

Stop Destroying the Future **By Severn Anderson**

People are throwing the wrong trash and recyclable items in clearly marked receptacles, wherever I go. Numerous businesses, mostly large corporations like Walgreen's and Border's, have no recycling. They respond when asked to throw a refuse item in the recyclables, "We don't recycle but I can throw it in the trash for you."

Recycle bins are not even a part of the homes of some of my acquaintances, friends, and roommates. They claim to be, dare I say, the new trendy "green" and into holistic health, but when confronted about this act of selfishness they sputter, "My town doesn't have mixed recycling" or "It takes too much time."



As U.S. citizens we are accustomed to driving the Hummer or the SUV to the store for a couple of items instead of walking. Small businesses insist on using Styrofoam cups to save a buck, so take action and demand a glass or bring your own. Every piece of refuse you use is burning up in a land fill, destroying our ozone, affecting the ocean, the coral reef and food supply, and ultimately affecting our food chain.

The carelessness of our actions needs to be dealt with now! Start cleaning and rinsing out perfect recyclable items and throw them into the right receptacle. Stop throwing soiled paper and cardboard into the recycling bin. Rip the bottom soiled portion off your pizza box and throw the top part in the trash. Visit your local recycling center or website and ask which items you should definitely be throwing away or recycling, such as cell phones. Stop ruining your children's and grandchildren's futures, not to mention our city too. Teach your family and friends how to recycle, and tell them how important it is to you

and your family's future.

Who Should Enforce Immigration Laws?

By Naomi Kharrazihassani

In June 2007 I was approached by some El Salvadoran parents. They told me that their son had been stopped by a Marshall police officer for not stopping at the stop sign. This young man admitted that he did not stop. He ended up in jail. The police officer called immigration saying that he is an illegal alien and should be deported back to his country. In the end, the police authorities didn't know what to do with the case because the young man didn't have any criminal record and was known to be a good, hard worker.

Several months past, and still his case wasn't settled as to whether he would be released or if he would be deported to his country. Finally a decision was made that he would be deported. The young man was actually happy to be deported because he was treated very badly while being detained by the police. The El Salvadoran parents asked me what role the police play in immigration violations. Are they doing two jobs, or is federal immigration enforcement separate from local law enforcement?

Later on, I got to know another family who were from Mexico. The husband was leaving one job to go to another when he got stopped by police.

This police officer asked the man not only for his driver's license but also for his green card. The man said, "I don't have it." He was also put in jail. His case also resulted in deportation. His wife asked me what police have to do with immigration.

I myself do not understand since these people have committed no other criminal offenses. With so many illegal immigrants in this country, we have to ask ourselves what is the best way we can enforce immigration law, and who should be enforcing it?

Racism in Wisconsin!

By Candy Gonzalez

Some say that racism no longer exists. I say it is still a

serious problem.

When my three children and I moved to Marshall, Wisconsin, in 1999, we had so many things happen to us. A pick-up truck drove past us, and all yelled out as if singing in harmony, "Take your n***** asses back to where you came from." The school did nothing about it when a 7-year-old boy said about my daughter and her friend, "Let's go get those n***** off our playground." . . . I had illegal searches while coming from the Kingdom Hall with Bibles in my hand and my three minor children in the car. At the Sun Prairie Walgreen's, I've been called "darky" while handing out prescriptions to a customer. My son has been told by a Madison Court Commis-

sioner that he was favoring his black side while in court for some fights he had as a minor.

Racism isn't a problem here?

I grew up not caring for white people too much, to put it nicely. When I became an adult and mother, I had to find an inner peace and forgiveness in my heart so I can move on and try to teach my children not to look at color; to look at what's inside. I didn't want them to have the bitterness I felt for over 18 years. What a waste that was! I do understand that many of us have had to deal with racism in our lives, but do we really have to let hatred grow in our hearts?



René Robinson Rewords Walt Whitman

From "To Think of Time" in *Leaves of Grass*

[7] *It is not to diffuse you that you
were born of your mother
and father—it is to identify you,
It is not that you should be
undecided, but that
you should be decided;
Something long preparing and
formless is arrived and formed in
you,
You are thenceforth secure, whatever
comes or goes.*

*The threads that were spun are
gathered....the weft crosses the
warp....the pattern is systematic.*

*The preparations have every one
been justified;
The orchestra have tuned their
instruments sufficiently....the
baton has given the signal.*

*The guest that was coming....he
waited long for reasons....he is
now housed,
He is one of those who are beautiful
and happy....he is one of those
that to look upon and be with is
enough.*

*The law of the past cannot be eluded,
The law of the present and future
cannot be eluded,
The law of the living cannot be
eluded....it is eternal,
The law of promotion and
transformation cannot be eluded,
The law of heroes and good-doers
cannot be eluded,
The law of drunkards and informers
and mean persons cannot be
eluded.*

To me, Walt Whitman is
speaking about understanding
oneself and being secure in that
understanding.

Our parents are our identity. Our
parents distinguish who we are with
distinct features, attributes and traits.
Our lives were specifically made,
woven together.

Our lives are pre-destined in spite
of—a life about to be born; a life
formed, a life born pure and loved.

The generations before me are
a part of me. I am who they were;
they are in me. The generations
before me outlined who I am now
and who I will be. As long as there
is life, people will live/exist, from
generation to generation.

Within life there will be ups
(promotions). Within life we will
live and learn (transformation).
Within life there will be all types
of people (heroes, good-doers,
drunkards, informers and mean
persons), none of which can be
eluded (avoided).

Years ago I heard someone ask,
"How do you know where you are
going, if you don't know where
you've come from?" That question
has hence stayed in the back of my
mind and I have often wondered
about me. Where did my traits,
attributes
and
distinctions
come
from,
especially
the ones I
don't like?
Sometimes
I wish
I never
had them.
Were they
a learned
behavior or
genetically



passed down?

This poem has given me the
answer. It's not about questioning
who you are; it's about knowing,
understanding, and accepting who
you are. The attributes and traits
in me are my distinction, and the
beauty centers around the acquiring
of those qualities, which were
passed down from my ancestors;
they are eternal. And even though
society might define certain qualities
to be good or bad, they are mine.
They are stepping-stones towards
my destination.

It is my belief that all of us are
pre-destined and have a significant
role to play. Live the life, accept
and embrace your identity; it is a
gift.



Advice for Walter and Ruth Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun*

Walter, you switch between acting like you're all that, the MAN of the house, and a pouting fool. You expect Ruth to trust your intelligence and choices, yet when she shows any sign of resistance, you start acting childish and speaking condescendingly. . . . Ruth, Walter needs your support. It does not help him when you ridicule him, his ideas, and his friends.

(Kevin Schoen)

Ruth, don't say to Walter things like "Honey, you never say nothing new. I listen to you every day, every night, and every morning, and you never



say nothing new."

Walter, don't say to Ruth things like "We one group of men tied to a race of women with small minds!" . . .

You must feel comfortable to talk and listen to each other in good and bad times without fear of harsh words.

(Sherri Bester)

Ruth, if you are cooking eggs every morning, try to make them different ways and send your



man off to work with a pleasant morning conversation other than "eat your eggs, Walter." Let him know you still stand behind him and his dreams. . . . Walter, you are focusing too much of your time on bootleg scams. . . . Stop drinking and spend more time with your family.

(Sheriah Quartey)

Do not involve your son in two adults' discussion or call each other names. He will grow up thinking it's OK to treat women that way.

(Naomi Kharrazihassani)



Comments on the Characters, Scenes, and Images in *A Raisin in the Sun*

I think about *The Measure of a Man*, the Sidney Poitier autobiography. He says he fought to have the play focus on the Walter Lee character.

Reading the book and seeing the movie, I can see how both Mama and Walter Lee could be the central characters of the play. Even though Mama is the center of the family, Walter seems to cause most of the conflict in the



play. With the ending, it seems that Mama decides to show him that she still has faith in him and gives him control of the family's destiny. Even though Mama is the last one on stage, it seems the action is flowing through the Walter Lee character.

(Mandisa Hayes)

Mama is the last person on stage, but the plant she grabs from the table in her living room is also part of the family. Even when the plant looked dismal and pathetic, she still tended to it, and in a way it was always there for her in return. This is a great metaphor because it is the seed of hope that Mama relies on when she is in despair and doubt. Her last minute decision to bring the plant to the new home is poignant, for all we can do is hope, even when our dreams are constantly being deferred.

(Severn Anderson)

Mrs. Johnson is a nosy busybody who has nothing better to do with her time than disrupt other people's lives. Mrs. Johnson pretends to be happy for other people's



accomplishments, but deep down, it eats her up. She tells horror stories in order to discourage others from making a better life for themselves. Mrs. Johnson inwardly categorizes the Youngers as "uppity" black folks, trying to be better than everybody else.

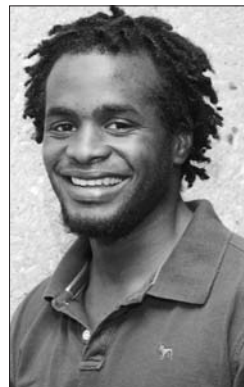
(Valerie Williams)

Mr. Lindner's role in this play was to talk them out of the purchase of the home. His plan was textbook discrimination.

. . . Mr. Lindner's second meeting with the Younger family was to hear what they had to say and to still support the community stand on not having them move there. Mr. Lindner . . . realized he had lost. The family wanted the home.

(Brenda Tompkins)

In the play *Raisin in the Sun*, the character Asagai is a confident, articulate, and charismatic student from Nigeria that courts Beneatha Younger. Asagai is much more than a suitor to her but also a friend and confidante. . . . Although they often engage in debates about passionate



differences, Asagai is never domineering or quarrelsome; instead, he is warm, pragmatic, yet sincere. . . . Asagai's character brings balance, calm, serenity, and a sense of hope in an otherwise turbulent or agitated world of the Youngers. Asagai is very insightful, intelligent, and confident but still not arrogant or uppity. He exudes a beautiful aura that is simple yet sophisticated.

(Haroun Omar)

Walter Younger's dream dried up and exploded when he took the family money and turned a potential opportunity into a nightmare. He wanted his dream to turn into sweet syrup, but all he was left with were empty calories.

(Ivonne Ramos)

Lena Younger (Mama) is the backbone, heart, and soul of the family. Lena was the optimistic ending to what happens to a dream deferred. She didn't dry up like a raisin in the sun or fester like a sore;



she didn't even explode. She did exactly what she had to do to keep her son, Walter Lee, and the rest of her family from exploding! Although she wanted to cry, she kept a smile on her face and her head up. Lena Younger was the epitome of Langston Hughes' poem "Mother to Son."

(Ronnie Jones)

Bobo is what I would consider a needy friend, a man who is not capable of fulfilling his own



dreams. This doesn't make Bobo a bad person; it places him in a category of maybe a leech. In Ruth's eyes, Bobo meant her husband and her family no good. Walter, on the other hand, trusted and believed in Bobo and his pipe dreams and get-rich-quick scams. Walter always agreed, but this time neither he nor Bobo knew what a ride they would both be taken on.

(RJ Jones-Knight)

Does a grape sit on the vine so long that it has become a raisin that is drying up from loss of hope and desire? The sun can bring you life and color, but

it can also drain you of spirit and grit. . . . Does the dream simply wither away "Or fester like a sore"?

This describes the son's irate behavior towards everyone who does not listen to or respect his dream. . . . "Does it stink like rotten meat?" He is so intent on convincing everyone about the importance of his dream that the same recital is beginning to stink up the already tense atmosphere of a house crowded with conflicting issues.

"Maybe it sags like a heavy load" suggests that the load of failure keeps him from giving his son whatever he needs—from fulfilling a responsibility expected of a father. "Or does it explode?" is what you expect from Walter at any minute. . . .

(Thomas Jasen Gardner)

Explosions occur throughout the play. Walter explodes at Ruth and Beneatha. Beneatha explodes at Walter. Mama explodes at



Beneatha and Walter. All these explosions happen in a house full of dreams long deferred, as the characters react in all of the ways depicted in Langston Hughes' poem "Harlem."

(John Shields)

As I look back over my life, the Younger family is just a smaller version of the Flowers family. I



come from a large family, and even though Mom and Dad were within the household, having to work to keep a roof over our heads and food in our mouths pretty much took up the day. . . . It was the same thing day in and day out. It was about surviving. . . . We were born into an environment of survival, yet the media offered us dreams, dreams we wanted to come true but no one to tell us how. We thrived on our gut instinct and that desire within to live the dream, but it never happens. We make mistake after mistake, going after that dream of having nice things, living in a big house, but it never happens. We have what I call no resolve.

(René Robinson)



Review of the Madison Symphony Orchestra By Kevin Schoen

It was pure joy to attend the Madison Symphony Orchestra on Sunday, April 27.



The Orchestra was conducted by Vladimir Spivakov with incredible energy. I tried to close my eyes to get lost in the sounds but could not; that meant having to miss the “show” of Mr. Spivakov teasing out the exact note and tempo and energy out of each member of the orchestra.

From the mezzanine we could see the interaction between each member of the orchestra and their guest conductor. He would ask for more, then more, then more. The audience could feel the mutual satisfaction between the two, and he was on to someone else. It all took just seconds.

This dance of musical ideation went on for two hours. It was no less than spectacular to watch.

The program was all Russian music: Shostakovich’s Festive Overture, Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 3, and Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 6 (Pathétique).

The guest pianist, Yefim Bronfman, was absolutely gifted. He played two major movements without the aid of any sheet music. Those two movements took almost an hour by themselves.

I will long remember this day! Please give a heartfelt Thank You to the donors of these tickets.

Poem By René Robinson My Journey

My journey started about seven months ago,
How I would fare, I really didn’t know.
Reading, writing for sure there would be,
But from six to nine, that I couldn’t see.
The professors were there for all to meet,
Outlining History, Humanities, and Philosophy.
I was scared but I didn’t know why,
Maybe it was the thirty years that had quickly gone by.
Getting acclimated was a little rough at first,
But soon thereafter to read books I would thirst.
See, prior to Odyssey, I didn’t read,
All the info I got was from the TV.
But things have changed
Mainly the screen
From the TV to the computer
I’m now a Google Queen.
My journey, my journey,
Who would have thought
Would be the beginning of me being taught,
Being taught the importance of opening my mind,
Instead of sitting around wasting my time.
Thank you, Odyssey, for choosing me,
I’ve found knowledge,
My greatest discovery.



Poem By Jeffery McCarroll

I am a man of many thoughts among my peers,
My deep thoughts cause most of my tears.
A peaceful place I search for in my mind
But in my mind I’m still doing time.
My escape came on an Odyssey I took
And for the most part in a book.
I escape with Walt, Langston, and Emily for weeks.
Socrates, Martin, and Thoreau made me think.
Oh, and wait, my Odyssey is not complete
Finding freedom and peace in pictures I see
Frida has been my favorite for weeks.
Art has become a newfound wealth
Because in the artwork I can find
A place for myself.
Aw, freedom of the mind
And in this new freedom, My Odyssey
Shall continue till the end of time.



Comparing King and X

Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the Bullet" speech made it clear that both

men shared the goal of ending discrimination against blacks: to end their suffering. Their differences in tone, images, and strategies are many. The collision of their ideas together in the American mind created a symbiotic effect; an irony, to be sure, that two men with such differences ended up unknowingly needing each other to complete the deal.

... Dr. King seems to recognize the Black Nationalist Movement when he says "The marvelous new militancy



which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people." Dr. King does not accuse "white people"; he says that America has defaulted on this promissory note in so far as her citizens of color are concerned. His message reverberates throughout his speech: that since blacks are Americans too, we must all work for an end to injustice. He sells his unity message by implying that if part of the body is sick, the whole body suffers.

... After reading Dr. King's "I see the Promised Land" speech given the night before his death, I noted that Dr. King recognized some value in Malcolm X's ideas on economic power; quite a demonstration of humility since Malcolm X took to publicly criticizing him. In that speech Dr. King promoted the idea of using the power of the money in the black community to persuade companies to embrace justice fully.

I am unaware of any non-violence movement that has succeeded without the aid of economic and political pressure. Even in Gandhi's case, the revelation to the rest of the world of the brutality at the salt plant in India, and the subsequent economic fallout,

appears to have been largely responsible for the success of his non-violence movement.

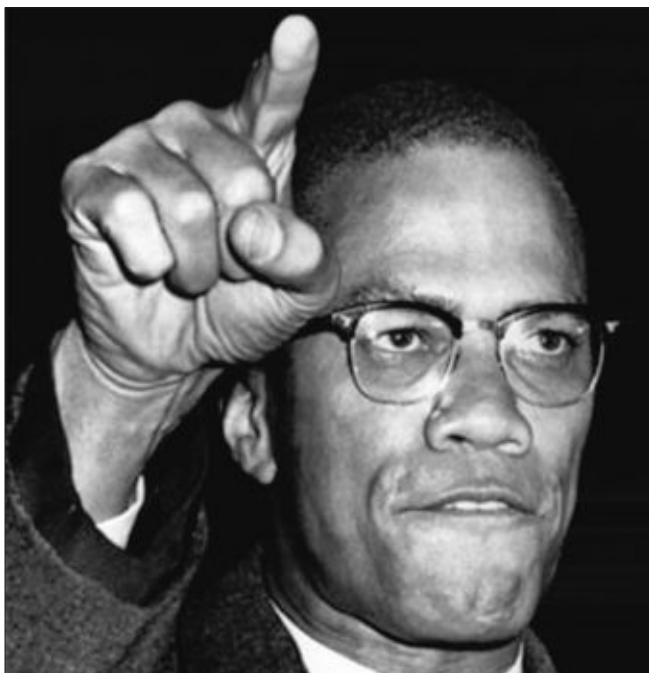
The world owes all three of these men—Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Gandhi—a debt of gratitude. They all helped us to clarify our own beliefs about justice and how to find it. **(Kevin Schoen)**

The difference between Dr. King's approach of persuading his audience versus Malcolm X, I believe, lies in their backgrounds.

Dr. King was the son of a Baptist preacher and was raised in a peaceful middle class environment. Malcolm grew up under harsh and violent conditions, and his family was harassed daily. Dr. King completed his Ph.D. while Malcolm X was in jail. Their approaches toward freedom were different because both men were the products of their environments, just like most of us.

(Josephine Lorya)

Regardless of whether Black Power or black equality was represented by a non-violent integrationist Christian minister or a militant segregationist Muslim, both Malcolm and Martin were considered



dangerous and therefore assassinated. Malcolm was correct as to bullets—one engraved Malcolm, and the other Martin. Both Malcolm and Martin agreed that now was the time for this struggle of power. Though the methods were different, the goals were the same.

(Jessica Bhan)

Dr. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, in my opinion, were two equally great black leaders of freedom, justice, and equality.

They both were intelligent, wise, persistent, focused, courageous, determined, bold, passionate, outspoken speakers and fighters of change.

When Dr. Martin Luther King spoke, he spoke gentle, kind heartfelt words of change peacefully. He was not a violent man but followed the advice of the Bible to always “turn the other cheek.” My grandmother used to always tell me when I came home from school deeply hurt and crying from being called an “ugly, black, nappy-headed n*****” that “one must always kill hate only with further kindness.”

... When Malcolm X spoke,



he spoke bold, angry, frustrated words towards change even if violence be needed to achieve freedom. He was a violent man who in this period of his life lived by the truth in the Bible that states, “There is a time for war and a time for peace.” My grandmother used to always tell me when I was a little girl who wanted everybody all around me simply to get along, be happy, and love each other no matter what that “sometimes you have to fight, but it is only love that is worth fighting for.”

... I believe love always wins in the end over all else and is what leads one towards everlasting freedom within.

(Sherri Bester)

... They both believe in blacks helping each other in order to achieve new heights. Economically they believe that black dollars should stay in black communities. They both have arrived at the understanding that “The waiting is over” and that

something must be done now. They both cite American history. Another similarity is that they both are ministers and believe in God.

In spite of these similarities, there are many differences in their ideals, tones, and images. . . . King quotes Thoreau, Socrates, Lincoln, and Plato. King believes in non-violence, and Malcolm X believes in “the ballot or the bullet.” King is a Christian, while Malcolm X is Muslim. They also have geographical differences. Malcolm was from the North and struggled with poverty, while King was a southerner, more upper class and well educated.

... One common strength of both Dr. King and Malcolm X was that both leaders forced America to acknowledge injustice.



(John Shields)

... I find myself agreeing with the ideals of King's "I Have a Dream" speech, but speaking as a black man, I see how some of Malcolm's principles have benefited us. In fact, they still have value today. The black people of this country need to unify, to improve themselves, and build better communities for their families. Yes, we live in a multicultural world, but in order to be considered a valuable part of that whole, we need to clean our own house first.

(Justin Wilson)**Malcolm X Writes Martin Luther King, Jr.**

I've read your "I Have a Dream" speech and would like to respond to it. You and I both desire freedom from racial discrimination, inequality, and injustice for all people regardless of our differing religious beliefs.

However, you believe integration will get us freedom; I think separation will get us freedom. You say you have a dream that one day all people will live in harmony. Dreams don't always come through. I don't



want to keep spreading false hope to our brothers and sisters.

Our brothers and sisters need to channel our energies on ourselves and take action and control of our own destiny versus focusing on a dream that may or may not become a reality.

... You believe we can get back our rights from an all white government by battling them with soul force instead of physical force. There is no revolution in which you love your enemy. Historically it has never worked, and it isn't going to work now.

(Jack Crawford as Malcolm X)

My dear brother, the time for dreaming and hoping is over. We as a people must come together and stop waiting on the "white man" to do for us what we can do for ourselves. You said in your speech, "One hundred years later, the Negro is not free." We are free! ... Can we not build and establish communities and businesses and support each other? Can we not build schools and teach each other? ...

You ask, "When will we be satisfied?" I will be satisfied when we realize that this government has failed us, and the white liberals who have been posing as our friends have failed us. I will be satisfied when we stop turning to them and turn to each other. ...

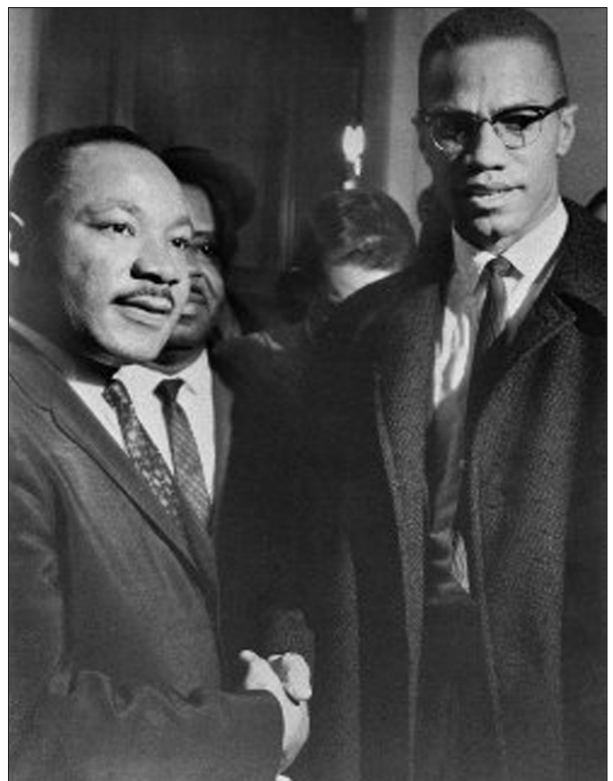
I will never have

hope or faith in America, the country who fought against taxation without representation, and

degradation only to turn around and do it to us. We are their dream! And until we come together as a unified body setting and establishing our own standards of life, there will never be realities, only dreams.

(René Robinson as Malcolm X)

We will never achieve equality if we continue to sit and take the abuse handed to us for so long. We must stand up and fight back against the injustice of Americanism. The Negro has looked to the wrong people for help and has been led astray



countless times. I too have a dream, brother Martin, that one day black men will stand up and take control of their communities.



I have a dream that Negroes will wake up to miseducation we have been given and set out to reeducate. I have a dream that we will stand together and fight for the freedom we deserve.

We cannot fight the batons, bullets, and dogs with a song. . . .

(Jeffrey McCarroll as Malcolm X)

Martin Luther King Jr. Writes Malcolm X

I respect that you are a Muslim minister. As a Christian



minister, I do not agree that you should keep “your religion at home, keep our religion in the closet, keep our religion between ourselves and our God.” Religion is a part of what we are. . . .

This country will indeed “overcome” prejudice and racism one day as you mention, but it won’t be through an atomic bomb or violence. It will be by a change that all of us will do. I might not see that day but it will come soon. Every black brother and sister will be free. . . .

(Naomi Kharrazihassani as Martin Luther King Jr.)

My friend, my colleague, I understand your frustration in regards to Black America. Yes, I understand America has defaulted on its promise as far as the American citizens of color are concerned. We cannot face another lifetime thirsting for freedom by drinking from the bitter fountain of hatred. We must work on mending the fences, not just for our generation, but for other generations as well. . . . We will never be satisfied until blacks in America are treated with equality and respect.

(RJ Jones-Knight as Martin Luther King Jr.)

Your “Ballot or the Bullet” speech was moving, insightful, and well strategized .

. . . but I wish you would consider talking about soul force to achieve what we are aiming for. Only through non-violence can we really be free. . . .

I also have to point out my disagreement with your quote “the white man made a chump out of you” when referring to my “I Have a Dream” speech in D.C. I feel that my speech was just as moving as yours if not more.

Last night I had an awkward



dream. I dreamt it was the year 2008, and there was a Native American Indian man by the name of Severn Anderson. I saw him on a bus reading the speech I gave. He was highlighting the part where I said “this sweltering summer of the Negro’s legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality.” I could see him gasp for air every time I said “I have a dream,” and his eyes well up with salty liquid each time I said “free at last.”

I saw him use a small typewriter with a television screen that glowed with color. He viewed a film of my speech from the screen, and I heard him say “Jesus, look at all those people between the Washington Monument and Abraham Lincoln.” I could sense his anxiety, and I could feel his heart sink when I spoke of angry Bull Connor and how he demanded his men to turn the fire hoses on us. He felt sadness in his heart not only for me but for you, Malcolm X, and for all of the Negro community. I heard his thoughts, I felt his rage, and I saw him wince.

I saw him read and listen to “The Ballot of the Bullet” speech, rewinding certain parts, so he would not miss one word. I saw his love for you, your speech, your insightful courage and an image of a portrait he will paint of you someday. I just know that one day it will be easier for our children, regardless of color.

(Severn Anderson as Martin Luther King Jr.)



Who said it? Find out on May 7, 2008, in the graduation program!

I was adrift, struggling academically, until I found a piece of driftwood named the Odyssey Project.

I love seeing my children smile when they tell their friends, "My mom is in college."

The Odyssey Project has lit a fire under me.

Know in your hearts that you've planted seeds, and some of them, God willing, are destined to germinate.

My confidence was solidifying like a good dessert.

I feel a lot of people have helped me, and I want to give something back, maybe even going so far as to become a therapist.

I didn't think I would be accepted because I felt I was not college material.

The Odyssey came into my life. It appeared and reappeared and pushed its way in—to save me, maybe?

People who are once allowed an opportunity won't quit and will not be denied.

All of us, in total 32, love each other like a family; we are not just a number.

I've learned how it was, how it is

today, and how it may be in years to come.

Odyssey is a place where past traumas are not shunned.

I feel my mind has opened up, oh so wide, into a rainbow that possesses a pot of gold of riches untold as a result of my studies through the Odyssey Project.

The reading, writing, poetry, and music have opened up doors in me that have been shut for some time.

The best part for me was learning to write for and listen to others.

I believe this program will give me a chance to not only further my education but also show people that I am not a 'lost cause.'

When I first read the brochure, I couldn't believe that it was free. I thought it was too good to be true.

I never thought I would carry a dictionary around with me!

Odyssey revealed to me that knowledge is the key that opens the door to possibilities.

My life has taken on new meaning, new purpose, a new birth.

Wednesdays have become my stabilizing force and helped me once again believe in myself.

When my son sees me doing my homework, I can tell he's proud that I'm doing something to make our future better.

Coming out of the cave and heading towards the light is the next step in my visionary plan.

The former shell I inhabited has broken like a chicken egg.

This class has made me realize that I actually enjoy writing but just never knew it.

I, too, am Odyssey!

Instead of running alone against the wind, every Wednesday night heated class discussion was wind in my sails.

From the first moment, I was hooked like the two-pound catfish I caught.

I am no longer intimidated by poetry.

This class has really stimulated my mind and strengthened my inner spirit.

The Odyssey Project meticulously nurtured my dreams from intangible to tangible!

This class has taught us to "unwrap our gifts," expressing ourselves in words.

Words out of Art



**Leonardo da Vinci,
“Mona Lisa”**

Her posture is serious,
Her gaze makes you wonder
What are her thoughts?
Her look mysterious
She looks like she wants to smile
But is holding back
Maybe that's just her style
Or maybe you are just assuming
Your anger makes you curious
The background is full of nature
Full mountains, valleys, and a river
Her hair is long, dull, and black
Her face is plain and natural
Her dress is black, like she's
going to a funeral
Her portrait is labeled as most famous
The artist is much respected
His paintings are closely protected
I hope this description
Made you feel connected
This is the portrait of Mona Lisa
Painted by the brilliant Leonardo da Vinci
(Josephine Lorya)

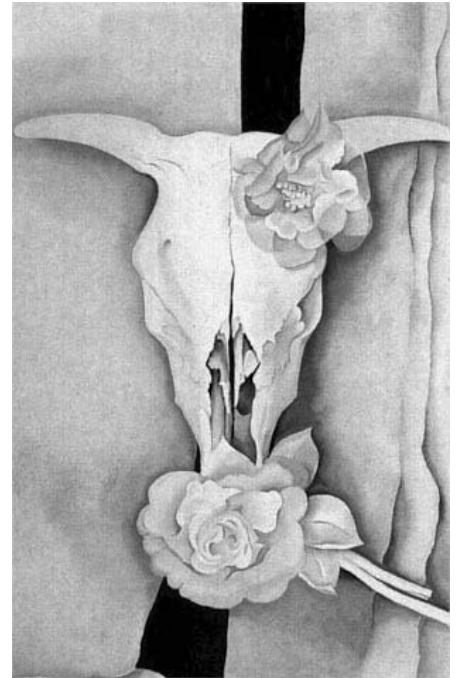


“Black Youth”

Looking at the statue reminds me
of the days
Black people in some form were
always on display
At auctions looked over like
cattle to be sold
Or depicted in slavery movies
without rights
And that is too bold
The Black Youth statue illustrates
the racial diversity of Hellenistic times
It only became a piece of art
because of the increased use of
slaves
What the hell was on the artist's
mind?
The statue represents negative
thoughts that still exist today

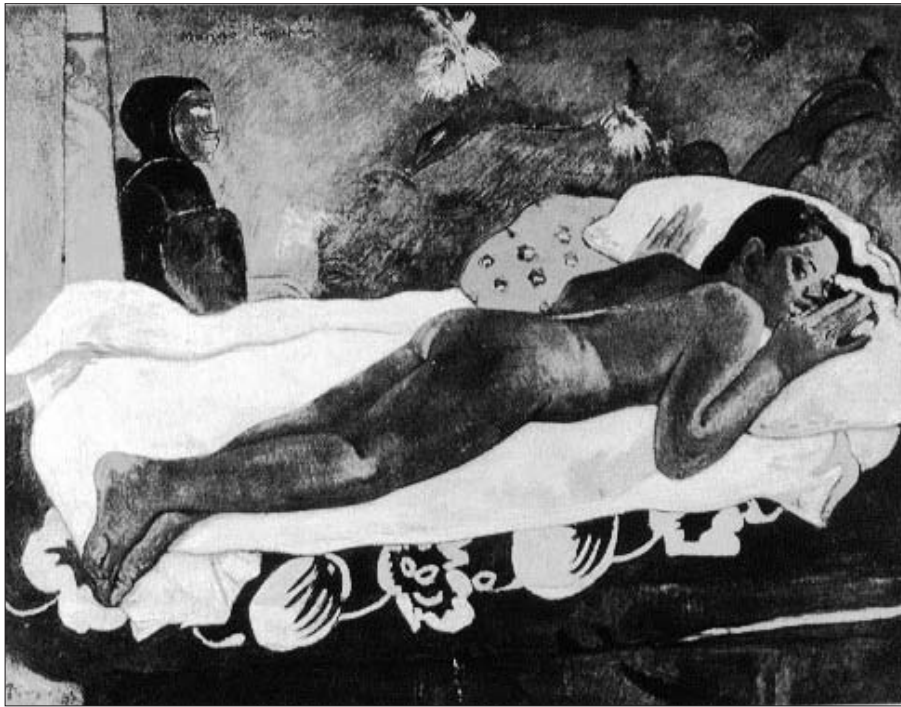
From people of color and those of
Caucasian race
Will we ever think differently?
Who's to say?
(Brenda Tompkins)

**Georgia O'Keefe,
“Cow's Skull with Calico Roses”**



This picture that I chose to
describe to my blind friend is
called “Cow's Skull with Calico
Roses.” The horns are long and
rounded like a plastic knife that
you use in the morning to spread
jam on your piece of bread. The
black line in the background is
just like the satin ribbon that ties
around your velvet dress. The
cow's eye socket on the left side
is hollow like your cereal bowl.
The rose on the tip of the cow's
nose is just as sweet as you, my
friend—blind or not!
(Debby Loftsgordon)

**Paul Gauguin,
“Manao Tupapau” (*The Spirit of the Dead Watching*)**



Paul Gauguin states of this painting that he “wanted to convey the presence of tupapau, or the Spirit of the Dead, as envisioned by the young girl on the bed.” What drew my attention to this work of art is that I can relate to the young girl on the bed and her fear, struggle, and interest in the spirit of death.

When I was younger and around that age, in the foolishness of my youth, I wasted much time upon my bed wrestling with this tormenting spirit of death and suicide. We watched after each other like identical twins.

The difference that came into my life is when God had mercy on me and said “ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!” . . . From the pits of hell, I heard Jesus call out to me, and He said, “Rise up off your death bed, oh daughter of the most high God!” . . . And

so I did get up off my bed and walked away free with feet that now dance a victory dance of

salvation of life! I am free from Manao Tupapau, the spirit of death watching. Yes, I am free, so I dance! Dance! Dance! Dance! (Sherri Bester)

Étienne Aubry, “Paternal Love”



“Paternal Love” is full of color. The background is a very dark brown with hints of black at the top. The dark brown becomes lighter and lighter as it extends towards the bottom until it’s almost the golden color of an autumn leaf. . . .

To the left we have what appears to be a grandfather dressed in clothes that are indicative of the time during which this painting was made: 1775. He has on a grey mid-length coat that’s patched at the elbows, burgundy knickers and socks, and golden colored shoes with a buckle. His hair is long and silvery gray, and his skin is bronze-red. He’s looking at his son and daughter-in-law . . . while he leans on the top of a red blanket strewn over it. The seat is made of straw or wicker like the ones we see at Pier One.

On the chair is an old-fashioned drum, probably a Christmas present for the little boy who appears to be playing it; maybe the middle child. He has

on a brown vest over a white shirt with the cutest little tan hat. He's looking towards his parents.

Next to him I think is his oldest brother, who has on a green jacket, gray knickers, green socks, and brown socks. He's looking up lovingly at his mother . . . who's sitting looking lovingly at her baby boy, who's standing in front of his father. She has a white-laced bonnet covering her red hair. . . .

The baby, a little boy with red hair, reaches both hands towards his father as if he's asking to be picked up. His jacket is blue, kind of like the sky. He has on red knickers, grayish socks, and brown shoes. I don't think they matched colors back in the day.

Now I can only see a portion of the dad, but what is clearest is the black pirate-like hat he's wearing. . . . He's lovingly reaching towards his son as if he's about to pick him up.

Overall it's a colorful oil on canvas painting portraying a loving family, but, no, there's no sign of a grandmother. Maybe she's in the kitchen cooking, or let's just say, "She has left the

building!"
(René Robinson)

Jan Breugel, "Hearing"

I see a large room with three enormous windows overlooking the tops of trees under a cloud-filled sky. Birds fly over green meadows, and a white castle appears in the distance. In the center of the room, a nude woman plays a guitar for the amusement of a young child, also nude. Beautiful paintings of people and animals hang on the walls.

Throughout the room are displayed a variety of stringed instruments, an organ, and a music stand. On the floor lie French horns, a trombone, and hunting horns. A menagerie of animals including a parakeet and a deer-like creature surround the woman and child. In the left corner of the picture, a tiny room shows people singing and a gentleman playing a string bass.
(John Shields)

Mary Cassatt, "The Bath"

Come little baby
Come little child
Here is your mother



Holding you tight

I will clean your dirty face
And give you a sponge bath
Wherever you want
Just don't give me a big, big splash!

I'll hold you after that
With a big, big towel
To dry your tiny body
And cover you with a big, big hug.

I will rock you in my chair
And sing a lullaby
And see how you sleep
At the end of the night.
(Naomi Kharrazihassani)



**Utagawa Kuniyoshi,
"Princess Tamatori"**

Professor Gene Phillips' favorite Japanese woodblock print is Utagawa Kuniyoshi's "Princess Tamatori at the Palace of the Dragon King." It is a color woodcut circa 1853.

Legend has it that the lovely Princess Tamatori married the son of the founder of the almighty Fujiwara clan. His name was Fujiwara no Fuhito. They met in a discreet area while he was



searching for a priceless pearl that was given to his father. The pearl was stolen by the dragon king during a storm. Princess Tamatori gave birth to a son and promised to retrieve the pearl. The dragon and the horrendous amphibian guards were lulled to sleep by music; then they woke and chased after her. The princess cut her breast open to hide the pearl. The blood clouded the seawater and helped her escape. Princess Tamatori died from the self inflicted wound but is adored for her courage and sacrifice.

Kuniyoshi uses all the basic colors and the popular Prussian blue to create a unique, macabre print. The dragon king's body is the focal point; Kuniyoshi uses a striped pattern for the dragon's oblong body, which seems to jump out at you. The princess is very pale: this may be a purposeful decision on Kuniyoshi's part because of her courageous efforts to save the pearl. Princess Kuniyoshi has a long knifelike sword in one hand and the priceless treasure in the

other; it looks as if she is about to go to war with an octopus. Among the villains there is also a crab, a squid, fish, turtles, and salamanders; some carry bags. Behind the turbulent waves, there is a city skyline.

(Severn Anderson)



Romare Bearden, "The Prevalence of Ritual: Baptism"

This collage reminds me of my life—how the spirits are always in my room, in every part of me. To admit to their acquaintance is very humbling but very powerful at the same time, knowing that your life doesn't belong to you and you must respect that at all times. It asks the question, what is life and my part in it?

(Rockameem)

Peter Blake, "Have a Nice Day"

This painting shows three older men having a discussion. It appears that they are in some type of exercise park. There are some people roller skating and a young girl playing with a dog. The weather looks nice. The palm trees, green grass, and light purple background indicate it could be a nice sunset. The younger people in the background continue to do their own thing, not paying the older men any attention.

(Jack Crawford)

