

odyssey oracle

Contents

Paraphrasing and Pondering the Bill of Rights.....	1
Waterboarding by Thomas Jasen Gardner.....	6
Pressing for Universal Health Care Coverage by Dr. Keith Meyer.....	8
Education Must Trump Prison Time by Corey Saffold.....	9
Fight Homelessness by Brian Benford.....	10
The Life of Brian by Brian Benford.....	10
Brian Benford: an alumnus profile.....	11
Examining Socrates.....	14
Mai Neng Moua by Eric Rodgers.....	18

odyssey.wisc.edu

Editors/Contributing Writers:

Kegan Carter, Odyssey 2004 Graduate, Designer kegancarter@wisc.edu

Emily Auerbach, Project Director eauebach@dcs.wisc.edu 608-262-3733

Year 8 #8 December 1, 2010

Paraphrasing and Pondering the Bill of Rights

Amendment I

This important part of the Constitution talks of the very fortunate freedoms and rights we as Americans enjoy every day: freedom of religion (able to believe in what we want to and to be open about it); freedom of speech (openly able to say what we want to most of the time); freedom of press (writing, reading, displaying of letters, newspapers, magazines, opinions, etc.); right to complain to and protest the government (making the government aware of possible disapprovals and dislikes).

I think that these are among the most valuable of the freedoms and rights we in the land of the free have! Some peoples cannot enjoy nor exercise all or even one of these freedoms and rights. I also think that a great many conflicts, controversies, complications, conversations, and causes can arise because of these freedoms as well, good and bad. **(Ray Migizi Hopp)**

We as U.S. citizens have the rights to freedom of religion, press, and expression. This allows us to have and express opinions about politics and religion but not to subject other individuals or groups to having to hold those same views. I

agree with the First Amendment because I believe in freedom of speech. I agree that all individuals should be able to choose freedom from religion as well as freedom of religion. The First Amendment is all about freedom of expression. **(Helen Montgomery)**

The law says that the government cannot tell people what kind of religion they can be





involved in. People are free to practice and preach about the religion of their choice. The government cannot tell people what to say or not to say. It is the right of the people to speak freely and to gather peaceably. The press has the right to report what they feel, and the people

have the right to ask government to address their concerns and complaints.

I feel this amendment is very important. Each and every person has a God-given right to express themselves. No person should be denied the opportunity to voice opinions. Religion as well is up to each individual. People should be able to worship as they choose. We all can legally voice our opinion and views on religion or any agenda in a peaceful gathering of like-minded people. If government is a thorn in the side of the people, we can lodge a complaint and ask to have it resolved. **(Eleita Florence)**

This amendment establishes the right to freedom of speech by both individuals and the press. This



allows individuals to say things that express their opinion. It also establishes freedom of religion and the right of anyone to practice any religion they choose. This established the right of the public basically to "complain" to the government about things they don't agree

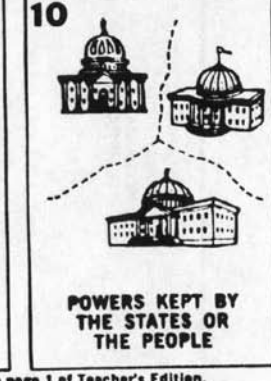
with and to call for resolution of the problem.

Many of these are being practiced in various forms, but the right to petition is one that many do not take advantage of. Many don't understand that the government as a whole institution works for us and is only as successful or ineffective as we'll give them power to be. **(Takeyla Benton)**

I feel there is a thin line between freedom and what is actually allowable. The police play a prominent role in choosing how far a person can take this amendment. For instance, the KKK can have an organized protest on the front steps of the capitol building, but I've seen a State Street guitarist arrested for disorderly conduct because her music

THE BILL OF RIGHTS

The First Ten Amendments to the U.S. Constitution



Transcribed Master (±5) for Feb. 1, 1971 Young Children

Questions and more information on page 1 of Teacher's Edition.



was offensive (cuss words).

Freedom of press allows entities like Fox News to deliver news not only from bogus sources but only from one side. . . . Who or what decides what's offensive? (**Eric Rodgers**)

It's your life, your choice, your voice, so live and express however you feel is right. . . . How can



this amendment be true when schools have school uniforms keeping kids from being able to express themselves by wearing whatever they want? . . . It's the same way with music where you have certain record labels that are keeping real artists back by restricting them from what they can and can't

sing from their soul. (**Marseills McKenzie**)

Congress can't make any law about your religion or stop you from practicing your religion or keep



you from saying what you want or writing what you want (e.g. newspaper or a book). Congress can't stop you from meeting peacefully for demonstrating to change something in government, as with Martin Luther King marching for justice or women demanding the right to vote.

We do not have to all believe in the same thing, thank God, and people have spoken by having all kinds of peaceable protests to change laws. (**Edwina Robinson**)

Amendment II

What the amendment is saying is that a "militia," a group of people trained for military services, like the police, is necessary for the security of the people. But at the same time, people have the right to have their own guns, and the police cannot take that away from them.



I totally agree with the second amendment. I do not think it is being lived up to, though. If you buy a gun, you should be able to have it where you want to as long as you legally bought it, have a license, and go through training on how to properly use it. (**Kiara Hill**)

All people are allowed to have guns if legally allowed to have one, so if they need to protect their family or home they have that right to protection.



To be completely honest, I don't really know which side I'm on for this amendment. On one side, having a gun in a household could promote violence, but what if you lived somewhere secluded and needed a gun? I think that some

FRANK & ERNEST by Bob Thaves



people should not have guns! I think that having a gun in the house could obviously be potentially dangerous, especially if it gets into the wrong hands (toddlers, for instance). (**Leah LaBarre**)

The second amendment explains that as a U.S. citizen you have the right to protect yourself by owning legal weapons. This amendment cannot be broken.



This amendment is very valid today. In today's society it seems like the world has gotten progressively worse every day. Having means of protection if you can would be wise. People carry weapons depending on different

neighborhoods and what situation they are in. (**Shardetra Ofori-anim**)

Amendment IV

You have the right to be protected in your home, school, and property. This means that no one can just come to where you live, work, or play and search you or your property. The only way that they can do this is with proof that you may be involved in a crime.



I believe that when carried out correctly, this amendment is a good thing. I think it's not being lived up to today in

certain races. The problem is it's being used widely without true cause. Why does the government continue to let it happen? (**Marvin Pratt**)

This amendment means you don't have to worry about the law coming in your house and violating you unless you are doing

something illegal in your home. I feel this amendment is not always true. An elderly couple in the suburbs of Illinois had their house raided and turned upside down because an informant told police of drug activity. The police did



not monitor the home nor investigate. The man was bedridden and his wife was his caregiver; both were in their 80s.

I agree with the amendment but think it should be enforced correctly. Someone's word of mouth should not be a reason to raid someone's home. (**Tracy Cunnigan**)

This states that court officials cannot violate your rights by searching

through your personal belongings (house, car, business, etc.) and cannot seize your assets without a written search warrant or without your authorization. To do so, they must have probable cause.



I agree with this because your personal property and

assets are yours, and no one has the right to invade your privacy and property. I feel that it is being enforced here in the U.S. because illegal searches will not hold up in the court of law. My negative thought is that in some instances there is not always a probable cause that is a good enough reason.

(**Michelle Bozeman**)

A person has the right to take care of his property and families and secure the wellbeing of all

people and property where he lives. The problem I see is states have a gray area as to how far you can go to protect and secure your property and issues with self defense. I totally agree with this amendment, as you should



always be able to secure family and property.

(**Pamela Lee**)

Amendment VI

When you have made a poor choice or been accused of making a poor choice, you have to go to court. You will not have to wait a very long time for a judge and/or jury to decide what to do about this problem. Your trial will be in the town or city in which this problem with the law happened. You



will be told all about what you are being accused of and the people who say that they saw you do it. You will also be able to find people that are your own witnesses, who will be on your side. You will have the right to a lawyer who will help you through this whole process.

I agree with this amendment: I think that all people are innocent with proven guilty by a court of law. I am sad to say, though, that like most things in our country, money talks. If you have money to pay for a good lawyer, your chances are better in court. If you are poor and a minority, your chances of a fair trial are less. (**Danielle Rosales**)



In a court of law in America, people who are accused of a crime will have the right to a fast public trial by a jury of their peers (people they would hang out with) who will not take sides. These people will be from the state and district where the crime was committed. The accused will also be told about the reason they are accused, where

the accusation came from, and the witnesses who accused them of the crime so that the suspects will be allowed to set up a way to defend themselves with their own lawyers and witnesses.

I totally agree with this amendment, though in some cases I want to say it is unfair to the victims. One problem I see with it is that public defenders in some cases are overloaded. The poor do not have the means to get a good lawyer. Why do innocent people go to prison? (**Bonita Greer**)

Amendment VIII

The court cannot make you pay a big, huge amount of money to get out of jail, nor can the court fine you a very large, ridiculous amount of money. The prison system is not allowed to mistreat, torture, starve, or abuse jail or prison inmates.

I agree with what Amendment VIII is supposed to be about, but it is definitely not being lived up to today! Excessive bail is charged and excessive



finer are imposed. There most definitely is very cruel and unusual punishment inflicted on jail inmates and prisoners every day by police, deputies, sheriffs, and guards. (**Marie Hill**)

Bail for inmates should always be fair. No matter what you've done, you should be treated with respect and should not be harmed. I have many friends who were given excessive bail amounts for minor crimes. I do not think that the legal system, especially in Madison, is as fair as it should be. (**Precious LaShore**)



The punishment must fit the crime. The government cannot charge too much for your bail, and you cannot be charged too much money for a crime.



I believe in this amendment; however, I believe that the government doesn't hold to it. All parts of this amendment (bail, fines, punishment) appear to be violated every day, for example with Guantanamo Bay. In fact, I would argue that most prison time is cruel and unusual. Families are separated due to victimless crimes, as with our incarceration of minority men a.k.a. the drug war. With determining bail, are the circumstances and income of the person taken into consideration?

Also on another note, my friend Jordan was in a situation where he and his friends were leaving a parking garage downtown and by accident knocked the arm off the exit gate. They were yelled at by police and given tickets of \$700, while workers put the arm back on in five minutes with no costly damage done. This is an example of excessive fining. (**Dalonte Nobles**)

Thomas Jasen Gardner: Waterboarding? Racist Cops Have Been Torturing Black Suspects for Years

When I read about the increasing acceptance of waterboarding as a form of torture, I vividly recall how in 1968 members of the Memphis Police Department believed I could tell them information about civil rights insurgents arriving to create havoc. Forty years later I still hide my serrated scars.

I was 14 years old and forgot I was a black boy living in racist America and heading for the devil's den of discrimination. Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* stimulated my raging hormones for truth, justice and the American way. Like the main character in his book, I stuck out my thumb for a ride from my home in Wisconsin. I was so excited when someone pulled over for me that I went in the wrong direction. After hitchhiking the rest of the way from Milwaukee to Memphis, Tenn., with no trouble, I put out my thumb for the last ride to my grandfather's place. I was sure he could take me to demonstrate alongside Martin Luther King Jr. to support his recently announced policy on poverty and Southeast Asia.

"Boy, where you from?" asked the toothpick-sucking officer in the passenger seat as his partner walked around the car to me. At the station, Tennessee police officers beat me because I was a threat to the status quo of time-honored Uncle Tom behavior. In retrospect I would have kept the King's English to myself, shuffled my feet, and goggled my eyes in adherence to the South's renowned sacred social rule for young black bucks.

The physical and verbal abuse heaped upon me caused several broken bones in my body and several dozen stitches on my 14-year-old skull. I guess these seven policemen were trying to protect the good citizens of Memphis from more of the Rev. King's peaceful demonstrations. Between the baton blows to my body and over my screams of youth and innocence, their loud accusations that there were people supposedly coming to Memphis "to stir up trouble" kept ringing in my ears.

Who were these people I supposedly knew

who were ready to disrupt the city's infrastructure? My wild eyes could only register pain as the large men kicked, punched and beat me with nightsticks because I was unable to speak coherently between my sobs of sorrow and moans for my mother.

I went over in my brain the moment when I stuck out my thumb for one more ride and noticed it was a police car driving by. When they pulled over to talk to me, I knew to have my ID ready, but I never could have been ready for the pain and anguish they distributed upon me.

Recent victims of waterboarding must have felt the same excruciating, indescribable pain administered to me by seven Memphis police officers. Forty years later, I can only hope that when Canada put America at the top of the list for human rights violations, they were also talking about America's recent increase of police brutality against black men.

The legacy of Memphis police in 1968 may have influenced CIA torture methods. I am not sure what waterboarding victims in our own times tell their captors, but my experience tells me that nothing said under such forms of torture should be regarded as truth. I acted quite contrite as I admitted to being the vanguard for hundreds of civil rights workers heading for Memphis to be with King and acknowledge the number of black men drafted, wounded and killed during the Vietnam "conflict" (what a euphemism for war!).

Like relentless Stalinists, the policemen gave me a few hard, calculated kicks with steel-toed boots in my back and ribs for making them exhausted from their beating. I promised them the names of



protesters, when they were coming, and what they were driving. I could hardly speak from my busted lips, chipped teeth and broken jaw, but I forced words from my mouth that sounded like what they wanted as long as they stopped their feverish beating to decipher what my cracking voice was revealing.

But I didn't know anyone, and I certainly didn't know about a conspiracy to take over Memphis. So I have since apologized for naming as co-conspirators Ralph Waldo Emerson, Hermann Hesse, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and any other author I ever read. I kept looking from face to face of my seven captors trying to plead with them individually by offering each a name. I worried that one would recognize these names and decide to kill me and dump me in the river, like so many other black men who had been crucified in the South.

Then one of the white men with sweaty armpits shouted out, "I know the name of Faulkner but

I can't remember where." My heart seemed to explode. I held my breath while biting my lip in preparation for the repetitive beating from well-worn nightsticks. Then another cop said, "Wait a sec. It sounds like one of the names from our list of people to look out for."

The next thing I remember was being thrown onto a crowded jail cell's sticky, dirty floor with inmates shouting to the guards that I belonged in a hospital. As they looked over at me with unmasked pity and sympathy, I tried to mumble "please, no police" because I was in no hurry for them to finish the homicidal job they'd started. When an old prisoner with callused fingers tried to prop me up to drink putrid water, I remember saying, "No, thanks, Mr. Bojangles," before I passed out again.

I woke up in a hospital bed with the sunlight streaming down on my shackled, cast-encased arm. Seeing me regaining consciousness, a black nurse dressed in blinding starched white rapidly walked across the ward floor to my bedside. As a bulky white police guard looked on, the nurse whispered in my ear, "Martin Luther King is dead." Now death was also stalking me, and I started to hyperventilate.

My experience at age 14 in 1968 leads me to conclude at age 54 in 2008 that no torture is justifiable. No one has the right to harm another human being. Information obtained through such barbaric methods cannot be trusted to be the truth. The amendments of 1789 to the Constitution through the Bill of Rights denounce personal violation at home. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights should extend those morals abroad.

Thomas Jasen Gardner (Odyssey '08) is a student at UW-Madison. His editorial was published in the Capital Times in March 2009.

What is water-boarding?

Water-boarding is a harsh interrogation method that simulates drowning and near death; origins traced to the Spanish Inquisition.

Subject strapped to board with head slightly lower than feet

Cloth* held tightly over subject's face; water poured onto cloth, over face



Breathing becomes difficult; gag reflex stimulated; subject feels close to drowning, death

Subject begs for interrogation to stop

Source: The Nation, ABC News, McClatchy Washington Bureau
Graphic: Lee Hulteng, Judy Teitler

Dr. Keith Meyer: Keep Pressing for Universal Health Coverage

"Please don't take me to the hospital. I don't have insurance," pleaded the moaning young man lying on the wet, dark pavement at my feet next to his smashed hulk of a car.

Two minutes earlier I had seen cars braking and coming to a standstill ahead of me. Hazard lights started to flash as traffic abruptly slowed to a crawl on Interstate 94 north of Chicago. No emergency vehicles had arrived. So I pulled my car to the center median and got out to see if I could help.

The young man was conscious, had a strong pulse and did not appear to have a head injury, chest pain or abdominal pain. But he had severe back pain and difficulty moving his legs. Another "good Samaritan" had gotten something to cushion his head as he lay on his back with glass and debris strewn all around.

To minimize the risk of spinal cord injury, I told him to stay still on his back until an ambulance arrived.

Once the ambulance crew had taken control, I drove off into the night, a bit more carefully, to be sure. The young man was lucky to be alive, judging from the twisted wreckage that had been his car and the eye witness descriptions of the vehicle flipping upside down and twirling.

But he certainly had good reason to be apprehensive about a trip to the emergency room and subsequent hospitalization. Assuming he would recover from his injuries, could the uninsured man recover from the financial burden?

Emergency rooms are known to charge over \$100 for just one tablet of Tylenol. The victim lacks bargaining power and gets charged list price for emergency medical evaluation and treatment if uninsured - plus exorbitant charges for subsequent hospitalization.

As a physician who has run emergency rooms and practices pulmonary and critical care medicine, I am usually on the receiving end for ill or injured patients and not a first responder

in the field. As I drove from the scene of the crash, I thought of all the patients I had seen who had major problems because of their insurance situation or lack of insurance.

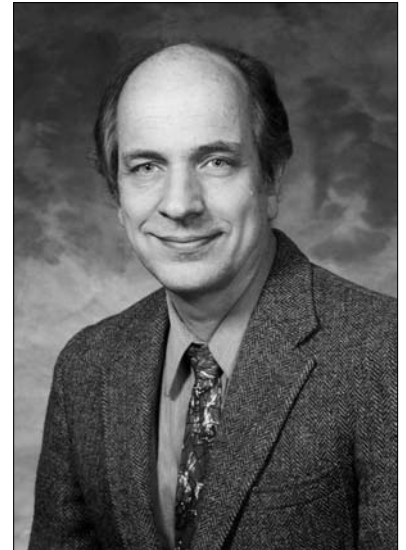
A woman in my office just the previous week had broken down in tears when she recalled her 17-year-old son's accident and three-month stay in our intensive care unit before he succumbed to his fatal head injury. Her family had employer-provided medical insurance. But the insurance company refused to pay for the helicopter to transport her son 200 miles to the trauma center, which was the best chance of resuscitating and treating him successfully.

That was just one of many battles she and her husband had to fight to try to get the coverage they thought they had.

I do not know what happened to the young man who was flat on his back on the I-94 pavement, but the scene haunts me. Why in our country should the first words out of a young accident victim's mouth express fear of financial catastrophe due to inadequate health care coverage? Citizens should not have to forego medical care or worry about financial ruin if they suffer a catastrophic illness or accident.

As we head toward mid-term elections, we must choose representatives who will continue the fight for health care reform. We must not rest until we have health insurance for all Americans.

Meyer is a pulmonologist at UW Hospital. He is Professor Emily's husband. This editorial was published in The Wisconsin State Journal in July 2010.



Corey Saffold: Education Must Trump Prison Time

Frederick Douglass said in a 1886 speech, “Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.” In 2006, does the criminal justice system have an organized conspiracy against black men?

Everything from prison scandals to racial profiling proves that the criminal justice system is one of the most corrupt and unfair forms of government in our country. According to the Department of Social Justice, blacks account for only 28 percent of all violent crimes committed, yet they make up 34 percent of those convicted of those crimes.

Justice is not blind, as the symbols of Lady Justice suggest. She hands out verdicts of guilt to the poor while receiving bribes to free the rich. She disproportionately locks up blacks while simply giving white criminals a slap on the wrist.

Look at the so-called war on drugs. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, whites are 76 percent of current users, while blacks are 13.5 percent and Latinos are 9.2 percent of current users.

Latinos and blacks together make up less than 23 percent of all drug users, but over the past several years they have come to represent most of the people sent to jail or prison for drug possession charges. Why does Lady Justice wear that meaningless blindfold when she can clearly see race?

In light of the ever-increasing incarceration rate among black men in Wisconsin, it is imperative for black men to graduate from high school. According to the National Center for Education, black students who do not graduate from high school are significantly

more likely to end up in prison.

Why not pay more attention to educating our youth in order to prevent the likelihood of prison? Our country spends more of its time, money and resources figuring out ways to contain and lock up people of color than on investing in families and the homes they come from.

In this state alone, blacks are 13 times more likely to be incarcerated than whites. Why is Wisconsin ranked number one in locking up black men and nearly last in graduating them from high school? Can you see the connection? It seems as if there’s a systematic plan in place for blacks, especially black men, to fail rather than succeed.

How can Wisconsin take pride in being progressive while having such high rates of teen incarceration, black incarceration and black male high school dropouts? This problem affects everyone in Wisconsin, not just blacks, so everyone should bear the responsibility of bringing about change. It’s time to make Wisconsin a state where everyone progresses.

Saffold (2006) is a police officer for the city of Madison, a student at Concordia University, and a music director at a local church.

Editor’s note: Corey Saffold’s original article was slightly altered by the Wisconsin State Journal prior to print. The original is available from Emily upon request. Published in April 2006.



Brian Benford: Can we raise \$1 million to fight homelessness?

Dear Editor: I have been blessed to serve the community for many years. Currently, I am a student in the UW-Madison's School of Social Work. For the last few months I've had the extreme honor of serving the community with Joining Forces For Families.

Each day, countless individuals and families come to our offices seeking shelter, homelessness prevention, food and utility help. Dear friends, it is absolutely heartbreaking that in this great community there is so much need and despair.

As we lay to rest city and county budgets, as we grapple with what to do with the Overture Center, Edgewater, a new downtown library, can't we pause as a community and support the most marginalized and vulnerable in our midst?

Despite the great work of many community-based organizations, folks (including children) are starving and sleeping in cars. We can do better as a society. Individually we all can do more to end these injustices.

With Thanksgiving around the corner, I challenge all of us to do more. Could we as a city, a county, raise a million dollars for a homelessness prevention fund? Generosity built the Overture Center as a home for the arts. Can this same generosity ensure no one will sleep on our streets tonight?



Brian Benford is a graduate from the 2007 Odyssey Project. He is currently a student at UW-Madison. This letter to the editor was published in the Capital Times in November 2010.



The Life of Brian

I'm a sensual thinker.
 In my dreams I taste, smell, and feel.
 Blinded only when I'm awake.
 Tenderly I held my babies between jobs,
 meetings, and relationships.
 For my children, I cooked tried and true
 ancestral foods. Stirring in extra love as
 I nourished our bodies and soul.
 At times the electric was lost to pay the
 rent. Used it as a teachable moment on
 how the 'old timers' lived.
 Gave my blood to pay for food.
 Pushing shame and guilt aside with
 artificial pride, as I try to justify that my
 plasma gave life to others.
 In the face of poverty, I bowed and
 embraced a lifestyle of simplicity
 and grace. I introduced my children to
 him with hopes that they would never
 be friends.
 Education has brought me out of the cave,
 enriching life as I race to the grave.
 I read about realities unknown, new ways
 of thinking were shown.
 In my dreams I've tasted pain, smelled fear,
 and felt the light.
 Now I'm awakened, I can see, and the
 future looks bright.
 I'm a sensual thinker.

Brian Benford: Father, Activist, Student an alumnus profile

Brian Benford's mission is clear: he wants to raise awareness of those considered voiceless. This is not surprising given Brian's strong ties to community issues through his activist work.

Brian started his academic career at UW-LaCrosse and attended several different schools around the country, yet his familial and financial obligations forced him to drop out in the 80's. He never believed that he would return to school, so he resigned himself to doing good deeds and participating in community work. Brian felt connected to society through his community work.

While he preached the value of a higher education, Brian felt that it was a "dirty secret" that he did not have a college degree of his own. "Maybe a degree wasn't that important,"

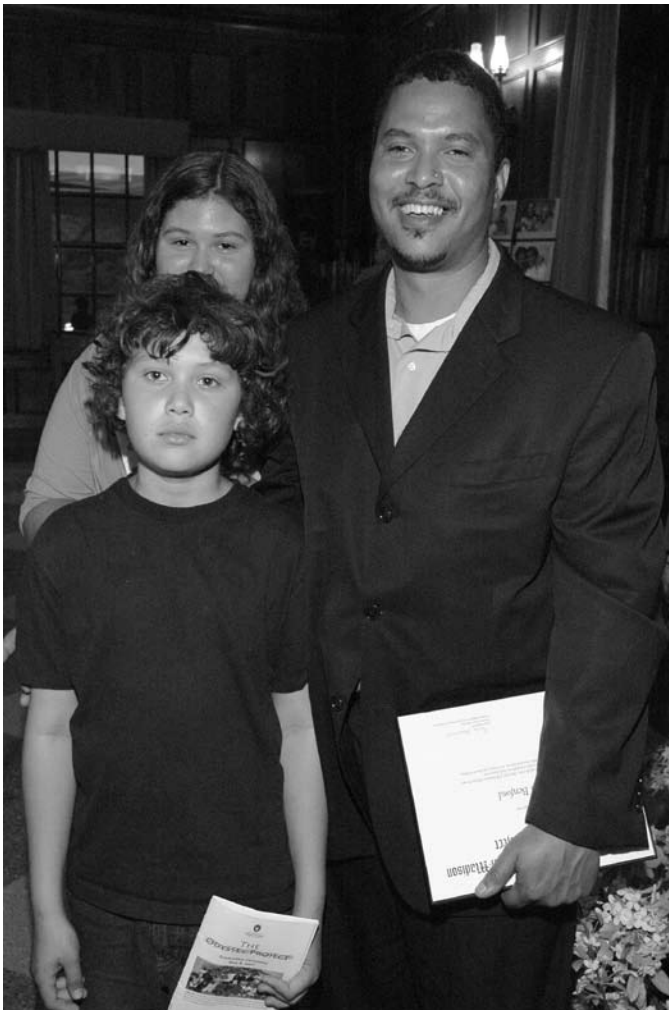
he remembers thinking, especially since he was fortunate enough to be hired based on his experience rather than his education. Brian held various positions at several community-supporting organizations, such as Neighborhood House and Headstart. He also delved into politics, serving on the city council and as an alderperson.

His political career stemmed from anger. While working for the Neighborhood House, he observed the differences between the extravagant lifestyles of the privileged in contrast to the lack of resources for the poor. "I wanted to empower other people to fight city hall, to take marginalized and underrepresented people and provide a voice for them, and to be a role model. If I could hold political office while being a single dad, then the very least others could do is engage in public policy. Not everyone has to run for office, but go out and vote and advocate for important things."

Brian continues to stay involved in both local and campus politics. "As we talk about diversity and inclusion, I think we often get lost on racial distinctions rather than age, socioeconomic background, parenthood, and things like that," he muses. "They talk about the Wisconsin Idea; it's a total lie. Right now, they're not committed to opening these doors, especially in these economic times where people have to go back and reinvent themselves. This campus and this whole university system really isn't serious about that. Odyssey is the only program that I'm aware of that takes all of that into account and allows people to come to UW-Madison's campus."

Brian credits Joe Robinson (Odyssey '04) and the South Madison Library for learning about the Odyssey Project. "I wouldn't have had a clue about Odyssey. I thought that Madison College was the only option that nontraditional students had. I'm always preaching about Odyssey."

On his first day of Odyssey, Brian felt nervous and somewhat anxious. "I felt that since I was in my 40's, I should have had my degree already." Those negative feelings were soon overcome by something way stronger. Although Brian thought that the



Brian at his Odyssey graduation ceremony, 2007

professors for the Odyssey Project were “fantastic,” he acknowledges that he was most moved by the power of his classmates. “It was the other people sitting around the table... I can’t say enough about them,” he says. “Hearing other people’s challenges, witnessing other people learn... it was really profound... It validated that one could be a lifelong learner despite age.”

Brian also felt that witnessing the accomplishments of the alumni helped him make it through Odyssey and continues to help him in UW. “I realize that I am not alone and that it can be done. I can reach the one goal that hasn’t been obtained.”

During his first semester back at UW-Madison, Brian felt that he was in way over his head. He hadn’t written a paper in 30 years. “I remember thinking, ‘Wow, what am I doing here? I can barely make it up and down Bascom Hill, and here are all of these brilliant 20 year olds around me... I’m old enough to be their father!’” Reflecting on the people from his Odyssey class helped to empower him and keep him focused on his goal. Brian also credits the Academic Advancement Program (AAP) with

helping him transition to UW-Madison smoothly. Even still, Brian feels that there should be more help for returning adults. “I didn’t know that I could get free health care until after two years of being here. Someone should have a half day workshop on the nuts and bolts of being a UW college student. That would have helped tremendously.” Brian also wishes that there was a space designated specifically for returning adult students’ needs, such as emergency child care, job placement, and a lounge area for resting between classes.

Brian recognizes the “strange dichotomy” between people that attend university and the “real world.” “I witness a great deal of privilege. There’s no diversity in my classrooms, there’s no inclusiveness. This institution is set up that way. If it were not for Odyssey [and other programs], there wouldn’t be people of color here.”

Brian stays connected to the community through his work with the Multicultural Student Coalition. “They fight for diversity on campus. We need to raise a level of awareness. On any given Saturday, the Badgers will pack sixty thousand people that are paying millions of dollars to watch football, yet the campus just doesn’t display enough respect and dignity for human worth. The campus should do something to allow more people to attend college.”

Brian is very grateful to Odyssey Project donors whose gifts help him buy textbooks every semester. “Books are hundreds of dollars, especially in the Social Work department. I love those books. At the end of the semester I watch all the students of privilege sell their books back. But those books are a reminder: that was five months of my life that I dedicated to trying to juggle a million things.”

When Brian thinks of the donors, an old adage pops into his mind: ‘Give a man a fish and he’ll eat for a day; teach a man to fish and he’ll eat for a lifetime.’ “Oftentimes when we give money or our time, we don’t really see the impact. If you give to Odyssey you’ll immediately see the benefits of your donation. All you have to do is come on Wednesday and hear the conversations around the table and you’ll know that that was the right thing to do. People in a position of privilege are teaching people to empower themselves when they donate to Odyssey.”

Brian is a single dad of four, one of whom is



Brian's Self-Reflection piece

also a student at UW-Madison. Brian and his son took the same class: “That was deep to have my son come over and we have this shared learning experience. I know he wouldn’t have taken that class if I hadn’t taken that class.” He also enjoys moments of study time with his family. “I love those moments where we’ll all be working on something and we share something we’ve learned.” Brian strongly feels that he’s learning from his children as well. “Their time management skills blow me away. I’m inspired by their dedication.”

He calls his balancing act of school, kids, and work “controlled chaos.” “I don’t sleep,” he says. “I know people have much harder lives; I’m cognizant of that. But through my work as a social worker, I see people who have horrendous life challenges. I’ve been fairly blessed in my life.”

To stay successful, Brian tries to keep current on his homework. “I try not to procrastinate. I don’t have the luxury,” he says. He also suggests utilizing tutors and the Writing Center to increase the chance of college success. He does warn about the physical toll on the body. “My arms have become fairly spindly from holding books for eight hours,” he jokes. “My eyesight is gone; I’m wearing glasses now... I haven’t watched TV in two years.” His current goal is to get his degree. “I want to get done before I’m too old to retire,” he laughs.

Brian knows that it is hard to stay motivated in school when there are so many other things happening in one’s life. “We’re all caregivers,

but it’s okay in life to do something to enrich and empower yourself,” he says. “It’s a leap of faith. By doing that, ultimately it’s going to improve the lives of the people you love. I think that’s hard to see when you’re thinking about dropping out. Education really is a gift to ourselves. That’s hard for people to accept... this is something that no one can take away from you.”

In May 2011, Brian will become the first man to graduate from UW-Madison via the Odyssey Project. “That’s a great distinction. I’m really happy about that. When I was elected to the City Council, I was the first African/Native American elected to local politics. Growing up, I was the first kid of color to go through my school district. So I guess I’m accustomed to firsts. But this is really an incredible honor. It makes me feel like I’m going to do it now. It’s inspirational for me. It will carry me through these papers I have to write!”

On his way to graduation, Brian has earned several scholarships from the UW. In a letter of recommendation for Brian, Professor Emily writes, “Brian is an absolutely fantastic student and human being. In class he demonstrated extraordinary motivation, superior writing and speaking skills, tremendous insight into literary, historical, and philosophical texts, and sensitivity to men and women from diverse political, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. In the community he served as an alderman learning the intricacies of local government, and he worked at the Neighborhood

House as a community activist, leader, and underpaid hands-on social worker for those who are homeless, speak little English, or struggle with a broad range of issues ranging from substance abuse to domestic violence. . . . He will be an incredibly sensitive, compassionate, and knowledgeable social worker in the future.”

Coach Marshall adds, “Brian is one of the most intelligent and thoughtful students I’ve ever encountered. His commitment to his community and to his family is an inspiration. I’m blessed to know this man.”

Brian’s community and academic work serves as an example of the power of a motivated individual.



Brian's children

Examining Socrates

“For if I tell you that this would be disobedience to a divine command, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe that I am serious; if I say again that the greatest good of man is daily to converse about virtue, and all that concerning which you hear me examining myself and others, and that the life which is unexamined is not worth living—that you are still less likely to believe.”

Socrates is saying that he will speak his mind in all cases and situations. He is also saying that it is actually man’s imperative to do so. Socrates was the quintessential rabble-rouser. Through Plato’s depiction of him, it becomes clear why the most influential voices of social change have referenced or modeled themselves on his values. It appears to me that all cultural changes are prompted by those who become nuisances to the powers that be. **(Dalonte Nobles)**



I think Socrates was a smart and wise man, but also cocky. He had a way that if you were unsure of your beliefs, by the time he finished with you you would be questioning everything, which is good but also dangerous. Socrates had things in common with William Blake and Dr. King. William Blake was called crazy for the way he saw things differently. Martin Luther King was considered a trouble maker, a man with too much power. Jesus and Socrates lived in different times,



but both stood for what they believed to be true, even when their lives were threatened. Wow. What do I believe, and what do I stand for? These are questions I will continue to ask myself on a daily basis. Stand for something or fall for anything. **(Edwina Robinson)**

“I am that gadfly which God has given the state, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you.”

A gadfly is one that annoys others by posing upsetting or novel questions or just being an irritant. It also can be someone who challenges positions of power. Socrates wants to ask questions that challenge societal norms, not caring about the fact that it annoys others because the annoyance may make them think.

(Takeyla Benton)



Socrates irritated some people with considerations of justice and the pursuit of



The Death of Socrates” by Elsie Russell

goodness. He is not like every man, neglecting the truth, taking money to teach lies, engaging in politics; he did what he felt was right. He knew he might be killed; however, he kept teaching.

(Tracy Cunnigan)



A gadfly is a pest, an annoying person. Socrates wants to be a gadfly for God. He hates the society he lives in because they believe in riches and worldly things. He says people pretend to be something they're not. A gadfly is someone who speaks the truth.

... Socrates keeps it real. He wants to tell people the way it is but in a good way. He doesn't swear or act ignorant. I like him because he believes in God. I love him and wish more people around me were like him.

(Kian Cunningham)



Socrates is an irritating person who is arousing the people from complacency. This gift he has is from God. All day in all the places he visits he stirs, invokes, reasons, convinces, and rebukes the people he talks to. From his perspective, these are his students of life. (Leah LaBarre)



I really like Socrates, but if I lived back then I don't think I would have liked him. I feel that I am a product of my environment. Living back then, I would have been more on the side of the accusers. I do see a lot of similarities between Socrates and Jesus. Jesus was always telling parables and metaphors to teach a lesson like Socrates. (Kiara Hill)



“There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong—acting the part of a good man or of a bad.”

Socrates is saying, “I’m not afraid of dying, as long as I die, secure in myself that I do so, not only for what I believe in, but also for what is right.” This sentence spoke to me, saying that I stand firm in my beliefs, views, and thoughts. If I am to die because of it, then so be it. I feel it better to face death because I do so righteously and morally, not saving myself by changing to meet your criteria. . . . The fact that society would rather go along with the majority or the way things are even if not necessarily true vexes Socrates. I think he believes that the truth will set you free. Socrates’ society was not willing to step out and make ripples in the water, to appear to have a different opinion or even an opinion at all. This society didn’t take kindly to change or things not understood. Socrates was a ripple they didn’t understand. (Eleita Florence)



“I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours, that you may not sin against God, or lightly reject his boon by condemning me, for if you kill me you will not easily find another like me.”

I feel he was saying that he will fight for the people before he fights for himself. Being that he is faithful to God, if they kill him, they will never find another like him. . . . As my mother always says, “You’ll miss me when I’m gone.” . . . I think Dr. King and William



Blake admired Socrates because he was for the people, wanted justice, didn’t want to be like other people, was independent and bold, and didn’t care who didn’t like what he was talking about. Even though he knew he was going to die, he knew what he came to do, accomplished it, and accepted that the people were going to do what they wanted. He made peace in his mind. **(Precious LaShore)**

“I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live.”

Socrates says he would rather speak about what he believes to be truths than live and speak of lies and dishonesty. I like Socrates because I can relate to how outspoken he was about what he believed in. People were afraid of the strength in the power of his words because they were so used to the norm in their society. I also like the fact that he chose to be a leader rather than a follower. . . . Be your own person, follow your beliefs, and speak about them even if people disagree with you. **(Catina McAlister)**

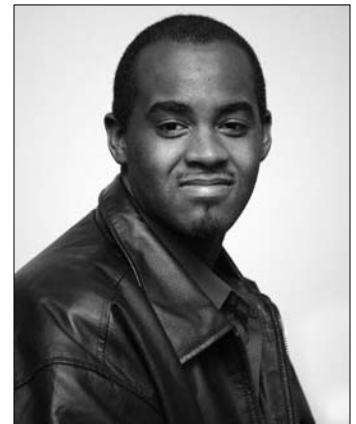


Socrates says instead of bowing down and going against his own beliefs just to spare his own life, he would rather stand with his head held high and die with what he believes to be right and just. No matter what the flow of the masses, one should always stand strong for what one believes. Socrates, Martin Luther King, and William Blake all fought against things that were wrong and unjust. Socrates and Jesus both went through hurt and pain due to the persecution of others. Even though they had done no wrong, both were put to death for doing good works. **(Marvin Pratt)**



“I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows.”

This reminds me of what the apostle Paul wrote: “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21) To me Jesus is the center of life. Without him, we are nothing, no existence. . . . I feel as if Socrates was saying the same thing: in order for them to see the truth and accept it, he had to die. . . . Both Socrates and Jesus died at the hand of the authorities as a result of the challenge they represented. What I admire about Socrates is the willingness to be different and to grasp the concept of critical thinking, free thinking within self. As he said, “*I know that I know nothing.*” The only real wisdom is knowing that you know nothing. **(Marseills McKenzie)**



“For if you think that by killing men you can avoid the accuser censuring your lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honorable; the easiest and

the noblest way is not to be crushing others, but to be improving yourselves.”

We live in a world where we try to get rid of people we don't like by physical confrontation, or by trying to ruin their reputation or getting others to join against them. This is not the divine way of living. It's better to improve yourself. Try to learn and observe versus crushing that other person. . .

. . . Socrates makes me want to always be confident and stand up for myself and what I believe in. He has values that I think we should always strive for: truth, integrity, justice. He also cares about the souls of the people. His style of speaking lets me know the importance of the power of language, of speaking in ways that resonate truth. *“For you shall hear from me the whole truth: not, however, delivered after their manner, in a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases. . . . But I shall*



use the words and arguments which occur to me at the moment.” He speaks from within—from his inner God. (Eric Rodgers)

“And I prophesy to you who are my murderers that immediately after my death punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you.”

Socrates is saying that immediately after his punishment of death, the murderers (his accusers) will be punished a lot worse than he will be. I guess in our world today we call that Karma. He's telling his accusers what goes around comes around. Since he is a man of God, his murderers are going to be punished more. I really believe that statement is so true, and I understand what he was implying. (Michelle Bozeman)



The Death of Socrates by Jacques-Louis David

Mai Neng Moua: Hmong Author and Activist

by Eric Rodgers

The Hmong are an Asian ethnic group from the mountainous regions of China, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. They traveled gradually southward in the 18th century due to political unrest. A number of Hmong people fought against the communist-nationalist Pathet Lao during the Laotian Civil War. Thousands fled to Thailand due to being singled out for retribution. Since the 1970s, thousands more have fled to the U.S. and other Western countries. Not too much is known about the Hmong people, but they are increasingly becoming a part of the American fabric.

One of the most influential of Hmong community leaders is Mai Neng Moua, a creative non-fiction writer and poet.

Mai Neng Moua overcame a lot to become a prominent activist and writer. She was born in 1974 in Laos. Her father was killed in the war when she was only three years old, and the family had to move to a refugee camp in Thailand before

emigrating to the U.S. in 1981. The family eventually settled in St. Paul and sold vegetables at a farmer's

market. While a junior in college, Mai Meng Moua developed renal disease and endured a kidney transplant. She found inspiration in literature but noticed that there was a shortage of material by Hmong authors. In her introduction to *Paj Ntaub Voice*, a Hmong literary magazine she founded, she asks, "Where are our voices? . . . Why are we always waiting for others to tell our stories, to define us, to legitimate us?"

Mai Meng Moua also became the editor of the first anthology of Hmong-American writers, *Bamboo among the Oaks*. Her works have been published in *Healing by Heart Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, *The Minneapolis Star Tribune*, and *We Are the Freedom People*. She currently resides in Minnesota and has an M.A. from the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. She has taught creative writing to Hmong youth at the Jane Addams School for Democracy. She is an instrumental figure for the Hmong American Institute for Learning, a non-profit organization that focuses on the oral histories of the Hmong.

In her introduction to *Bamboo among the Oaks*, Mai Meng Moua writes, "It is an exciting time to be Hmong in America. We have written and are writing our own stories. . . . Although the Hmong have not had a tradition of written literature, we are building one. We are the creators of our own history from this point on."

