

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

Odyssey ORACLE

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My Life with Lupus By R.J. Knight

My youngest daughter was nearly six months old at the time. I awoke one morning, unable to move a single muscle. "God, what is happening to me?"

Not understanding any of it, I felt this overwhelming gut wrenching pain, and to add to this whole fiasco, the pain made me sick to my stomach. I immediately called for my mother's assistance, and we moved to the next step quickly. Finding out what was going on with my body was at the top of my list. God, please tell me how to get rid of it! After many doctors' visits and numerous tests and scans, I was diagnosed with Systemic lupus erythematosus – SLE or Lupus.

"What is that?" I asked my doctor, and before I knew it, the tears began to flow like a flood-gate opened. All I remember hearing was, "You can live a healthy life if you are willing to change your life." I asked myself what is this mess they're trying to tell me I have? It was time for me to do my own homework and research. I took all my notes and concerns to my doctor, and

we discussed them. My doctor informed me the lupus would affect my kidneys, immune system, and joints.

Here is how lupus is described medically: *Lupus is a chronic inflammatory disease. This disease can affect the central nervous system, kidneys, lungs, skin, joints and other organs. The most common symptoms include arthritis, skin rash, most of the time accompanied by fever and fatigue. Lupus is an auto-immune disorder which develops when the body's own immune system, which normally protects against*



cancers and invading infections, begins to attack the patient's own tissues. Auto-antibodies attack a person's own cells. As the attack continues, other immune system cells join the fight. This leads to inflammation and blood vessel abnormalities, which cause tissue damage.

My heart continues to go out to Debbie Loftsgordon. She's had to be a soldier for more years than I. I understand more than most would know what Debbie goes through with Spina Bifida. Lupus has some of the same outcomes: eating the right foods, staying stress free (LOL). I have had five major surgeries due to some form of complication from my lupus.

For me, living with Lupus is adaptation to things you would otherwise know nothing about, if you weren't faced with it. Early on this disease came close to taking me out. I couldn't fathom the idea of me being sick the rest of my life. I thought of ways to take my life; it was too much pain for me to put on my family and two small daughters. I would like to believe God came to me. In that second, I responded "Why me?" and the overwhelming response I heard was "Why not you?"

From that moment on, I began to embrace this thing called Lupus—as a part of me, now. I don't talk about it much because I do my best not to focus on the disease. I'd rather focus on living my life to the fullest and being an example for others who struggle with chronic illness. My life with lupus has many relapses and remissions. When life feeds you lemons you better learn quickly how to make lemonade.

Riding the Sound Waves: Describing the Viola

On November 14, Odyssey students listened to David Auerbach play a Bach suite on the viola and described what they heard. Jack felt it was soothing and warm, Tara called it rich and smooth, and Brenda found herself calm and relaxed.

It made Valerie picture a masquerade ball, Josephine think of a movie with no words, Haroun undergo a sorrowful odyssey with twists and turns in the plot, Charrod experience the echo of a baby's cry, and Severn imagine a montage from a serious drama movie. Ozanne felt herself sweetly dancing and gliding along. René contemplated the ups and downs of life itself as it journeys on a road and ends peacefully at the point of no return. Dwayne imagined a long stone corridor with frosted windows, while Ronnie wanted to close her eyes and let the story whisk her away.

Tom discovered a flowing, caressing, comforting voice earnestly and sincerely speaking to him. Sherri heard butterfly wings fluttering through fields of flowers, clouds dancing softly over sunbeams radiated from

sunrays melting into moonlight and flickering stars, and ocean waters dancing, skipping, and running across sand grains and sea shells.

Several others thought of water. Rockameem journeyed back to Jamaica where he remembered hearing the peaceful sound of running water over a fall. Ivonne felt it was like listening to the seashore at the end of a long evening, with peace or liveliness depending on how fast the waves crash. R.J. was reminded of the waves washing upon the rocks on the shore, and Loretta found herself traveling on the ocean with the sound drifting away on the waves into the distance.

As John concluded, it was a sound that quiets minds and moves souls.



Sev, Kevin, Mandisa, others let the cat out of the bag

‘Buying a pig in a poke’ is an idiom referring to a confidence trick originating in the late Middle Ages, “when meat was scarce but rats and cats weren’t,” **Sev Anderson** tells us. “It means to make a risky purchase without inspecting an item beforehand.”

Sellers would bag the small pigs in something like burlap, because they were easier to carry that way, **Kevin Schoen** adds. “Unscrupulous sellers would sometimes substitute a small dog or stray cat for the piglet.”

Mandisa Hayes tells us that “poke” was just another word for “bag.” Some merchants would tell the buyers that there was a valuable suckling pig in the poke. In reality, there would be a cat in the bag. ‘Letting the cat out of the bag’ thus refers to when the buyer would look in the bag and

discover the cat, thus revealing the merchant’s trickery. Her source was the website: www.wisegeek.com.

Josephine Lorya found the secret on www.bartleby.com, which even gave the French version, “Acheter chat en poche.”

“The expression is a way of telling you to be careful,” **Naomi Kharrazihassani** notes, adding that “letting the cat out of the bag” is akin to “spilling the beans.”

John Shields dug into *The Facts on File Dictionary of Clichés*, second edition, to trace the reference back to 1546, when John Heywood defined buying a pig in a poke as “To purchase something sight unseen and

risk disappointment.”

Brenda Tompkins found cats, pigs, and pokes at www.phrases.org.uk/meanings.

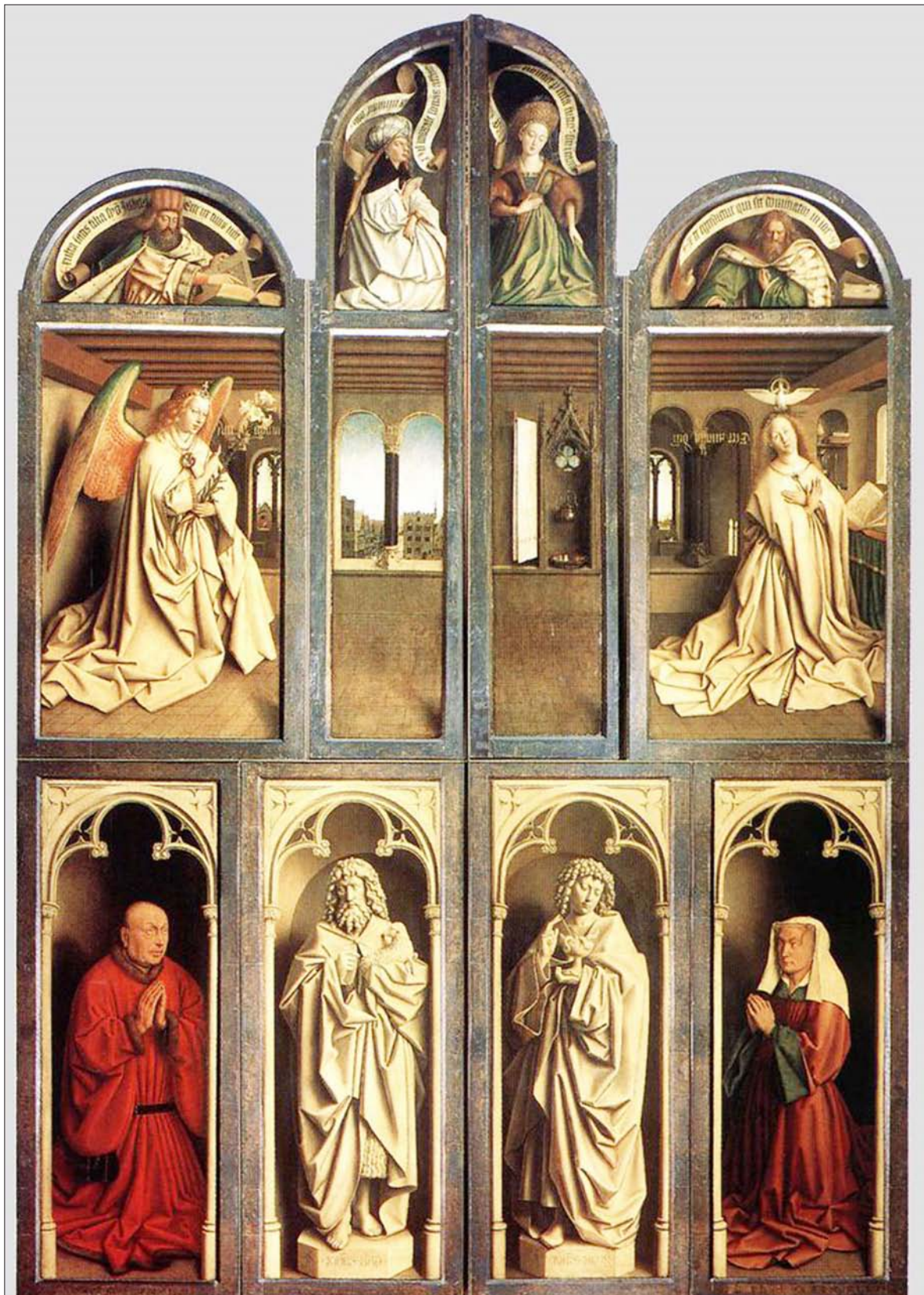
Congratulations to these seven language scholars, who scored extra credit.



Odyssey graduate Katy Farrens (Class of 2006), now working toward a bachelor’s degree, serves on the Allied Neighborhood Association and helped organize an accountability award ceremony that took place on November 10 at the Boys and Girls Club. Other Odyssey students pictured here are Oroki Rice, Mary Wells, Anne Meyer, Kevin Schoen, and Sonia Spencer. Odyssey grad Anthony Ward performed gospel hip hop at the ceremony, and Odyssey grad Annette Bland spoke on behalf of Project Respect. As Allied board president Alice Howard observed, “I keep hearing about this life-changing Odyssey Project from all these excited students!”

Name that Art Work

Name this famous Flemish art work of 1432. What story is being told, and what does each detail add to our understanding of it? See your Western Humanities book pp. 112-113 for help.





Reactions to Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*



I believe the prisoners in Plato's Allegory of the Cave are us: people, human beings in general. It has nothing to do with race, economical or educational status; I consider those sub-caves. We have all been fettered (shackled and chained) from generation to generation. We have been taught how to think and what to think. The expansion of our mind has been limited to our surroundings. We have been made products of our environment by our communities, our neighborhoods, and our upbringing; WE WERE ALL BORN IN A CAVE.

The cave is like a one-sided coin; seeing only one side. If you are born rich, do you know what it is to be born poor? If you are born poor, do you know what it is to be born rich? The importance of getting out of the cave is to find out what's on the other side of the coin; such as Socrates' example of going from the darkness to the light. I believe every human being in this world is dealing with some form of darkness, whether by force or choice. . . . We need to walk towards love, passing by hate. We need to walk towards courage, passing by fear. We need to walk towards "I can," passing by those infamous words "I can't."

(René Robinson)

I think we all have our caves that we live in. I go back to my early childhood years, when I had a relatively sheltered life. I did not think twice about the things that were going on in our house due to my mother's drug addiction. I did not know that the reason we got our breakfast from the grocery store every morning was because my cousin's father was there to give my mother money. I didn't think twice about my mother turning the lights back on from the meter using a broom handle. I thought everybody ate biscuits with syrup for dinner while sitting around a space heater. I didn't know we were poor until sixth grade when I started in public schools. Even when my mother sought help for her addiction, I was still in the dark. I can remember being in a support group meeting for children of addicts and saying that I was there because my grandfather was an alcoholic, not realizing that my mother was the reason for my being there.

(Mandisa Hayes)

I am currently journeying out of my own cave of poverty and financial imprisonment. . . . I, however, have been to the top of the cave in other areas of my life. Where I saw images of verbal abuse and was a victim of physical abuse, I now live in a truth

where I speak to my children with love and respect and never discipline them in anger. Where I saw images of broken black families and thought this was the norm, I now live in a truth that my husband and my children are a loving and happy family. . . .

I return to the cave often to help others build more healthy relationships and learn to love themselves. While I am there, I bump into Emily Auerbach and Coach Marshall, who made the trip down to convince me I could finish my education. They told me the impossible shadows were a lie. I saw Tom Gardner there, and he raised my awareness about capitalism. Rockameem was there, and on his journey back up he clued me in on how to prepare my brown-skinned sons for the third grade competency tests. Kevin stopped by to show some love and remind me that the curse of racism hasn't entrapped all. . . . Haroun and I crossed paths, and my image of a young black man was challenged for the good and left me with hope. Jeffery added to that hope when I saw him speaking to youngsters like my cousins—still locked up with fetters—but their images were changing just because of his presence. Every time I hear Bro. Jeff speak—powerful, and changed by his journey to the top—I see people like my cousins exiting

that cave with him, and I thank God for the journey back.

Lack of education in any form closes us off and limits our potential to be great. As for me, my cave has many rooms. Some rooms I have shut down for good; other rooms are still under construction. My journey upward has no end. For a lifetime I will be in and out of the cave, shutting down one room at a time. However, while in route I'll be illuminating the rooms of others, coaxing them to take the journey upward.

(Ozanne Anderson)

Sometimes there are caves no one should return to, but they must remember in order to lose the chains that bound them. Last year at this time I lived a dark secret that till this day my close friends and family have no awareness of. . . . Addicts are considered the lowest forms of life in our society, and as one I admit that we have earned this title. It is hard to understand how someone can become a slave in the year 2007, but anyone who must have drugs knows this feeling. When I applied for the Odyssey program I was clean for a little over a month. I was afraid to share this because I knew maybe I wouldn't get in. I also knew that having something to strive for that was good and would bring me back to the person I really am would

make me stay clean. . . . The Odyssey program allows me to do extra assignments just because I asked. Little do most know . . . how it saves my life.

(Anonymous)

The prisoners are all of us, caught up in our own cave, not facing the fears of what's outside ourselves, the fear of trying to change. We need to see more than our own small space to overcome the shadows in our minds, to face the contradiction of life and not let knowledge be stolen by illusion . . . In other words, free your mind and your ass will follow!

(Rockameem)

The prisoners are the humans without wisdom. Education does not always make a wise person. I have met many who are educated that are sadistic idiots. The quality of life could be altogether different if 567 billion spent on this one Iraq War was divvied up between the citizens and residents of the U.S. and Iraq, or if all prisons were destroyed and everyone in the U.S. was given homes instead of prison cells.

(Jessica Bhan)

When I was strung out on drugs, the hopelessness of addiction clouded all the reason and understanding I had, causing me to live like I was in a cave.

(Dwayne Blue)

Black people who go to church with hopes that a higher being will free them from poverty and hopelessness are prisoners of oppression. . . . Religious leaders and politicians have kept people in caves to remain in power. If people don't leave the cave, they will remain ignorant. And those who do leave come back frightened of the truth they found.

(Tom Gardner)

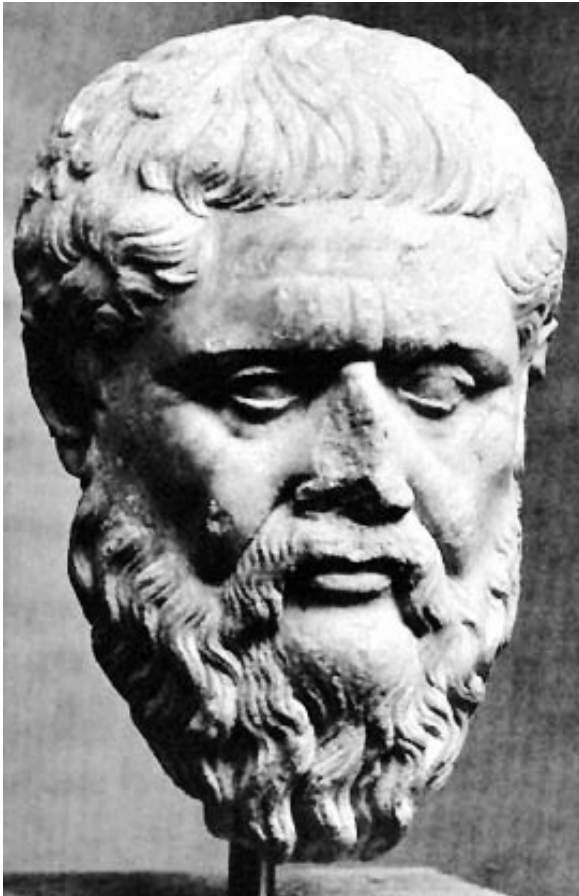
I guess I was in a never ending circle where I couldn't or wouldn't see the light. When I became a mother, I realized many years later that I was treating my children very similarly to how I had been treated. . . . I know now that we as parents are to help guide them, but we don't have to be overpowering.

(Candy Gonzalez)

I have been in a cave. At 15 years of age I was forced to have sex against my will. Not only was my life snatched from me in so many ways, but my voice was as well. I was forced to do things that some may say only God can show me mercy for. It sent me into a deep depression which symbolizes the cave I was in. Like the small opening of light the prisoners had, my hope for future in mind was as small as that. My mind wasn't open to the fact that God could ever forgive little ole me.

(Ronnie Jones)





When I was in prison I started going to school to obtain an education, and in the process my views and opinions in life changed. I understood more than I did before; however, the men around me that were not in school still had this false sense of reality about what's right or wrong. I learned to accept responsibility for my actions; on the other hand, the men around me continued to blame everyone but themselves for being in prison. So I return to the prisons (the cave) to share the knowledge I've gained since I came out of the "cave."

(Jeffery McCarroll)

Uneducated people are often left behind or in the "dark" their

whole lives because of not knowing. My ex-girlfriend's sister is a victim of domestic abuse, but her husband is her high school sweetheart, so when he beats her she has no other relationship to compare it to. She takes the abuse only hoping that the next day will be better.

(Charrod Miller)

Prisoners stay in the cave because to come out would require learning about a reality they don't know or don't want to know about. Being chunked* in the mental lathe* as your way of understanding is reshaped must be a painful process. Getting out of the cave is important because it represents seeing a larger world.

(Kevin Schoen)

**Editor's Note: Kevin draws on his carpentry trade here: a lathe is a turning tool—a machine for working wood or metal, in which the piece being worked is held and rotated while a cutting tool is applied to it, and chunked means clamped in the lathe.*

I have been trapped in a narrower world by a lack of education. All my life I have felt I could see a light at the end of the tunnel, but I could never reach it. At times I felt I was inherently

born like those children with fetters on their necks and legs, destined to live the life to which I've become accustomed to, communicating only with the shadows. My self-made prison kept me captive and ignorant to the beauty of what the world has to offer.

(John Shields)

Looking back at my own life, I can see an example of when I was also in a cave. I was a victim of domestic abuse by my ex-husband. Before I never wanted to talk about it, but time has healed me of what I was going through. I never understood how I could change my life by walking out of that abusive relationship. . . . I always wonder why he beat me. Maybe it was his way to let go of his anger when he came from work and things didn't go well. He had me as a scapegoat, screaming, yelling, and waking me and my children in the middle of the night. . . . I hope one day he will look back and get out of his cave too. I hope that he will realize that I had value. . . . With respect to those women who are still in the cave of domestic abuse, there is still a way out of the cave. . . . They feel alone. They think there is nobody out there to help, or no place to go. Thanks to D.A.I.S., social workers like my friend Teresa Tellez [Odyssey '04], . . . and others who are there to help those women and their children.

(Naomi Kharrazihassani)

Editor's note: Odyssey gradu-

ate Tineisha Scott, whose essay is in this Oracle, now works for D.A.I.S.

I was one of those people who believed smoking “weed” was non addictive and even medicinal for me. I got a criminal possession charge and was sentenced to Drug Court, 18 months of drug tests, treatment, and supervision. I started out “knowing” I would quit for the duration of the program with no problem but that I would return to smoking after. I learned that I was addicted. Even though there are some medicinal qualities, there were some more harmful effects that I wasn’t aware of until sober. I go back into the cave all of the time. Everyone around me is a smoker,

it seems, but they only help me remember why I stopped!

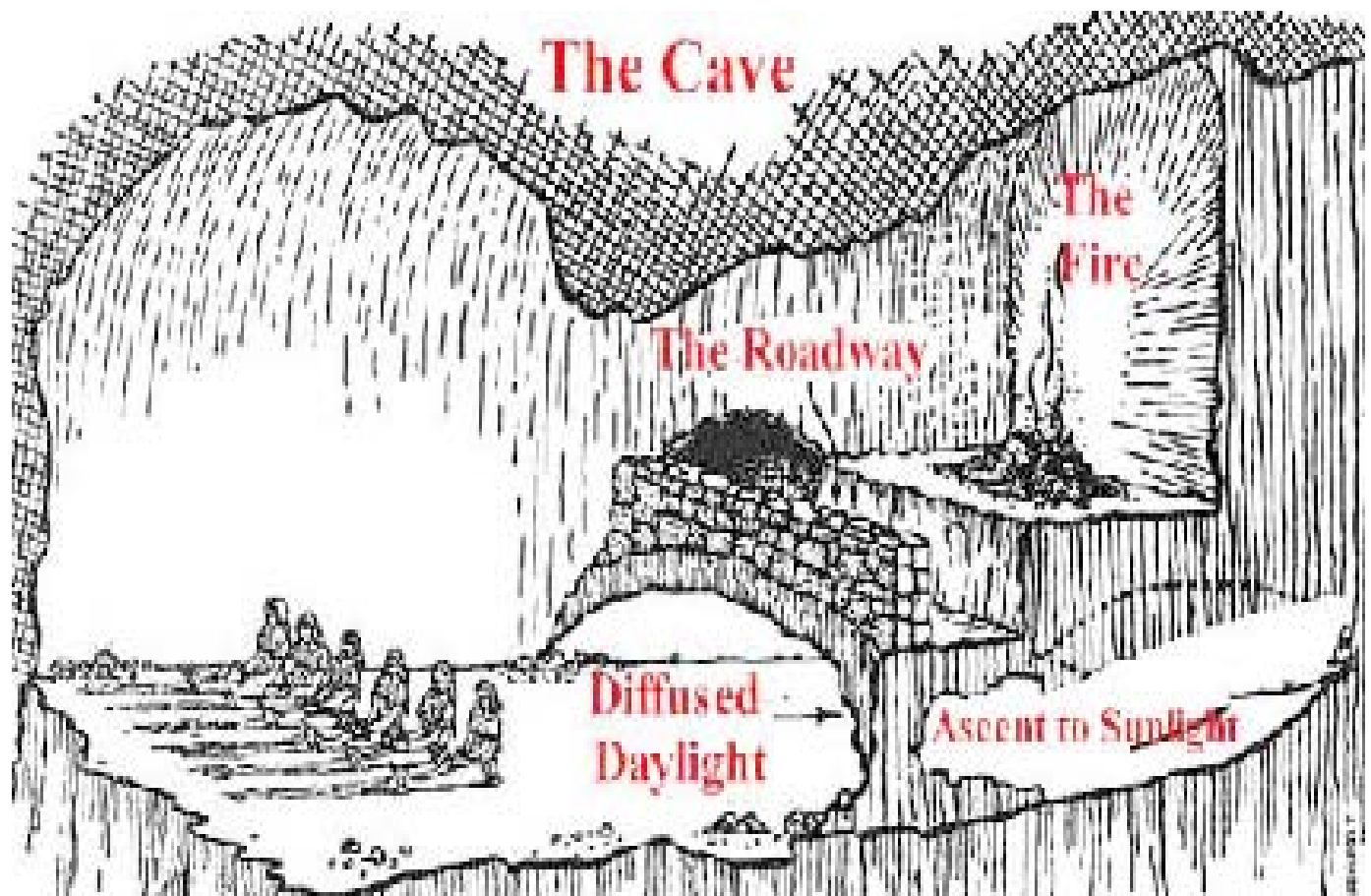
(Tara Wilhelmi)

I was in a cave for a long time. I would always say how I wanted to do more with my life in regards to education. I never did, though, because I was afraid of rejection and failure. Then I finally took hold of the rope that had been dangling in front of me for so long. After accomplishing many goals this year, I realized that it wasn’t failure I was afraid of . . .

(Valerie Williams)



William Blake's *Daughters of Albion*



Oracle Call and Response



The Odyssey Oracle is a gift of the greatest of riches so overflowing with love, wisdom, and miracles. This piece of great art is therapy to my heart, mind, body, soul, and spirit. When I feel overwhelmed sometimes by everyday life struggles, I read my Odyssey Oracle both many a day and night. I find real life stories and examples of solutions, encouragement, hopes, dreams, goals, miracles with faces that I can touch, eyes that I can look into and smiles that I can behold every Wednesday night.

(Sherri Bester)

I would like to respond to the poem by Sherreallyum ["The Gift" by Sherreallyum Allen Odyssey '05, about her son with cerebral palsy]. I couldn't help

but cry when she read her poem in class. I totally felt like she was the best mother any child could have, having so much love and faith in her that she conquered what one would find impossible. I read her poem everyday. I find strength in her words because being pregnant with a baby that has a fetal heart defect, not knowing if he may have Down Syndrome, I sometimes feel scared and hopeless. I question myself on caring for my son. But now that I have heard her words and have felt her determination, I believe I too have a gift from God that has been entrusted to me. That phrase in itself gives me the lift-me-up that I need daily.

(Maria Torres)

To my class, the griots, the djeli,

of today, the singers, musicians, and storytellers, we have become invaluable chroniclers. Between the drum and the internet, present day griots that we have become, we will be the witnesses to this era, the ferry boat captains of memory! Pull up your anchors and row. Don't stop until we get to the other side. Row! Before we know it, May will be here, and I'll miss y'all so very much! Row, babies, row! Get to the other side.

(Rockameem)

My man Rockameem should be running for president. In times when tensions are running high . . . even in a time of war, the key to make change is through love. People's ideas differ, but almost everywhere in the world love is the same.

(Dwayne Blue)

I enjoyed the poem written by Angel. I did have the chance to introduce myself to her the first day of class, and I was looking forward to having an opportunity to get to know her better. I hope she is doing well today, and my prayers are with her.

(Jack Crawford)



I believe I am in a cave of self-pity, but the essays in the Oracle are shining down upon me. The essays remind me that, like Frederick Douglass, I know education will make me stronger in mind and body.

(Tom Gardner)

The way 'Frederick Douglass' spoke in class on November 7 sent a tingle up my spine! We owned it, we spoke it, and we meant it. If we had all portrayed ourselves as Frederick Douglass back in 1852, the editor would've had a force to reckon with.

(Ronnie Jones)

We all go through disappointments, calamities, misfortunes, and even injustices in life, which aren't easy to overcome, but some of the first steps to a speedy recovery that Candy took are forgiveness, tolerance, acceptance, a rancor-less heart, humility, and learning from experience. I love you, girl! . . . Ozanne's salad metaphor . . . was ingenious and very refreshing—delicious too. I also connect to it on a personal and spiritual basis. As a Muslim, I know that the Qur'an states in Q49:13—"O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other, not that

you may despise each other."

(Haroun Omar)

I would like to mention that Christmas is coming. In my country [El Salvador] we dance and light fireworks too. Even though I live here in America, I always light fireworks when we reach midnight, although police come and see where that noise came from. . . . I know there are classmates that might be Buddhist, Muslim, Lutheran, and other Christian beliefs, but we all respect each other's culture. My message is that God created us equal, and love has to be within us. Let's use that organ that God gave us that is pumping 24 hours a day for 365 days of the calendar year.

(Naomi Kharrazihassani)

Frederick Douglass and Richard Wright fought the barriers of not having the right to books. Knowledge is power! Lack of information is the biggest suppression of all. You can't go to my school; you can't read my books. . . . Knowledge is the tool. Reading is the most dangerous tool. . . . So let's read . . . and read and read some more. Sharpen your weapons, and let's battle ignorance together.

(Ivonne Ramos)

The last Oracle newsletter had a reminder to all of us, but more importantly for me, that there are oceans of ways mankind is divided, and that the important point in life is our sameness; that is what connects us.

(Kevin Schoen)

I too believe that on October 17, 2007, our class was put through a test. For a minute there I started to feel left out. I started to wonder if Milele is talking to her "black people" and talking about "white people," where did I fall into her conversation, being that I'm of Hispanic descent? I started to question my beliefs; I started to question my thoughts. I honestly thought we as a class were started to get separated by color, and that our love and respect for one another was in jeopardy of being won over by color racism. But that night's discussion triggered something within me. It has opened this hunger and desire to educate others on what I believe racism is. I believe racism is a lack of love and respect for "people."

(Maria Torres)

I take my hat off to Jeffery and Kegan on their engagement. These are two individuals who I don't know very well but I have to say I'm proud of. You have



love, and by the grace of God you will support each other and your dreams will be fulfilled. God bless you, and I congratulate you.
(Albert Watson)

I relate to both Anne Meyer's "What Lies Beneath the Surface" and Valerie's comments about being light. I have always been asked "What are you?" or "You're not black, are you?" I come from a little different perspective. I was adopted by two whites and raised until nine in a completely white town. My

brother was also adopted and we are both mixed (biracial). He is lighter than I am, so I grew up the darkest person out of 4,000 some others. My mother taught me about my Native American and African American heritages by exposing me to both as best she could. I faced racism there for being black. We moved to Madison and all of a sudden I was "mixed," an "oreo"—all kinds of crazy names and labels—bottom line, I wasn't black. I have even been discriminated against for looking too Indian and for not

being pure Indian. New bottom line—I don't care! I am Ms. Tara Helen Wilhelmi: African-American, Native American, and too many types of European American to mention. Love me or leave me! I'm going to be right here doing what I do! I'm glad Anne was able to find humor where there was pain, and I wish Valerie would have hung with me and my girls. We are all different races, and we would have loved her just as she was!

(Tara Wilhelmi)

Also an American By Severn Anderson

I grew up in my grandparents' home from 3 years old to 13. Before I begin I just want to say I love my grandmother more than anything. She is a devout Christian, was strict, and instilled morals early in my sister's and my heads.

My grandmother was in her early sixties when she had to raise two of her formerly alcoholic son's children. After raising five of her own, she wasn't happy, I'm sure, but she took on the responsibility. I still remember my dad and grandmother arguing about it when we were 6 and 7.

The rest of the family, my aunts and uncles, were jealous of my sister Kendra and me. They thought we were getting extra attention. Now I realize why we were never given Christmas gifts or had them as godparents. They resented us from day one, when it was my dad's choice to marry a native. The mid seventies was still an awkward time for most to accept interracial marriage.

My grandfather hated my

sister and me. He would come home inebriated, stumbling and swearing, yelling, "Those damn Indians" outside our home. . . .

Growing up native was and still is hard. My first kindergarten teacher wrote on a semester report card, "Don't know if he speaks English." I came home from a day of kindergarten with wads of spit covering my face from a boy a year older than me. I was called a chink, and kids constantly made their eyes Chinese...

Fast forward to high school, where a girl asked my ethnic background. No problem, I thought. I told her, and then I asked her. She said, "I don't know—American." This bugged me for some time. But I realize she was just simple and, like most Caucasian Americans, didn't realize that someone of color that was born here in the U.S. is also an American as well.

I felt ashamed to be a different color. I was definitely embarrassed a lot. I wished I was "nor-



mal looking" like all the other kids. I hated school, and everyday was worse than the day before. I closed up to everyone. When I was a kid, I didn't realize why half my family and the kids at school hated me, but when I was in high school I understood why.

Writing this rehash of my life is painful to me, but maybe this is a good way to get all these feelings out of the way for good.

Setting the Pace By Jeffery McCarroll

I was asked to speak at a fundraiser for the Urban League of Greater Madison. I'm a graduate of the Medical Administration program directed by the Urban League, and since then I have been asked to speak at graduation ceremonies for the program and ongoing classes.

Due to my past transgressions it was difficult for me to obtain employment; however, soon after I completed the program and with the help of the Urban League, I was able to find a job. The program at the time being in its second year, I was the first

male to attend this program. Most men today may view the administrative field of work as a predominantly female field, which would not be an incorrect belief. With my completion of this program, I set the pace for other men to explore the administrative field with the help of the Medical Administrative program.



Chancellor John Wiley and Jeffery



Jeffery McCarroll and I went to a fundraiser for the Urban League, which was held at a fabulous penthouse in downtown Madison on November 20, 2007. The affair was given in order to raise money for the Urban League's prospective site in the Villager Mall on the south side.

UW-Madison's Chancellor John Wiley read a speech concerning the statistics of Madison's minority population. As he concluded, he introduced Jeff to the audience. I was amazed! The Chancellor of UW-Madison was the opening

Jeffery Surpasses the Chancellor By Kegan Carter

act for Jeff!

Jeff humbly spoke about his experience with the Urban League. "After my release from prison, I didn't know what I was going to do. The Urban League helped me out a great deal." Jeffery went to the Urban League to explore ways to occupy his time. "I found out about the Medical Administration program they offered there. I applied, but I was unsure I would get accepted because [medical administration] is a female-dominated field. When I was accepted, I found out I was the only man in the program."

John Wiley smiled and said, "That's a good thing!" The audience laughed.

Getting back down to business, Jeff said, "I found out that I could do so much more than I'd been told I could do before. The Urban League helped me find a love for

education. I tell everyone about their programs." He made sure to talk about his experience in the Odyssey program, as well. "I think if there were more programs like that on the south side of Madison, it would be beneficial. People could get help right in their own community instead of having to go downtown or to the north side for educational resources."

This was my first time hearing Jeff speak publicly, and I was very proud of him. Although he said he was nervous, it never showed. He spoke from his heart. And although I admit that I may be a little biased, in my opinion Jeff did a better job than John Wiley because he did not read his speech, he engaged his audience, and everyone truly heard what he had to say.

Battle of the Sexes

I don't believe women have full equal rights today, and they should. . . . The CEOs on CNN News or the like that represent a company and are publicly interviewed are almost always primarily male. A few years ago when the whole Enron scandal took place, about how many of these organized criminals were actually women?

(Severn Anderson)

I believe women should have equal rights, and not just because I am a woman do I voice this. . . . I see us all as puzzle pieces that complete each other as one rainbow-colored, mysterious picture only after we help each other find and achieve our place and purpose. I feel the road to equality for women is a pathway still in great need of further travel. For example, in the work place, political circles, church congregations, and even the car lots, change must eventually occur. . . . In these different places I don't see women treated with as much seriousness, respect, or importance as men.

(Sherri Bester)

After all the years and the struggles we should be equal, but the opportunity for equality shows its face rarely. Some men see women as equals only when it benefits them. . . . My heart felt gratitude for the cartoonist who created "If women controlled medicine: the man-o-gram." A picture says a thousand words. Now that's equality.

(R.J. Knight)

In today's world, men make more money than women, even if they both have the same qualifications. Being a black man, I have experienced what it feels like to not have full equality in the work force.

(Jack Crawford)

Black men cannot find jobs. Perhaps if the sisters, daughters, and wives would stay home, black men could work to support their families.

(Tom Gardner)

I think we can recognize the differences between men and women and still try to achieve equality . . . I like to think I can do anything a man can do, yet I will ask a male co-worker to carry heavy boxes of paper or move things for me. I do not want to take out the garbage, mow the lawn, or shovel snow. I can do anything a man can do, but sometimes I don't want to. **(Mandisa Hayes)**

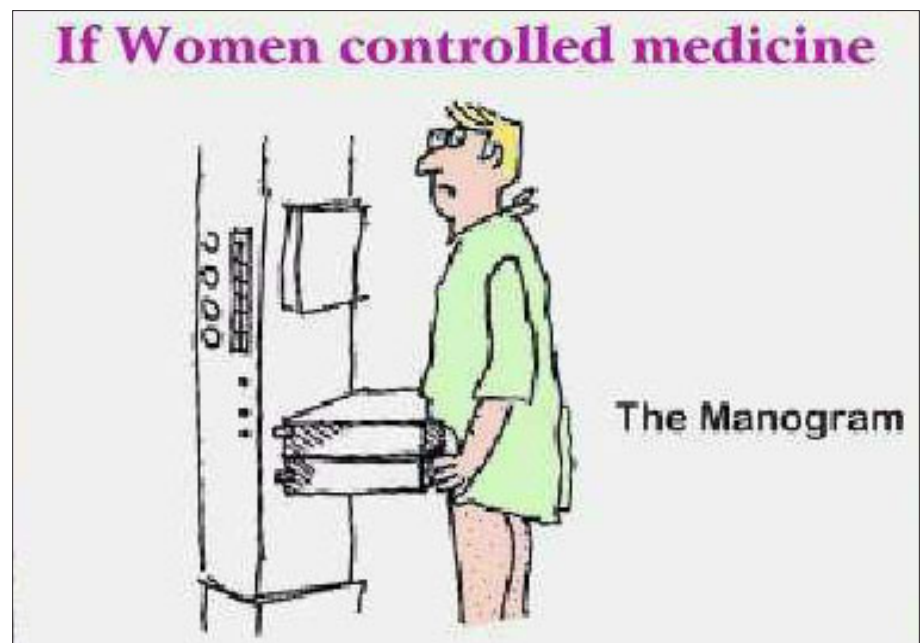
About seven years ago I applied for a job at a factory. During my interview I was told that the receptionist position was already filled. I said I wasn't applying for that position, that I was looking to work in the parts department. I was then told that it was all men, so I asked if women were not allowed. They said, "Of course they are, but we just don't have any that work there." I was refused the job.

(Candy Gonzalez)

I think women should have all the rights of men. It is unfortunate that they get treated as second class citizens. I've always been on the side of the underdog, and women have been treated almost as bad as us brothers.

(Dwayne Blue)

I'm a feminist and proud of it. I'm a woman: hear me roar. ROAR! I was reading in the Wisconsin State Journal not too long ago that pregnant women



were not nearly compensated enough for maternity leave, and many employers didn't want to hire women who wanted to have children someday.

(Debby Loftsgordon)

In most third world countries like my own, Sudan, a woman's voice is ineffective. The government, which is male dominated, tries to control every aspect of a woman's life. They feel that a woman is less than a man. . . Most women cannot even make the decision to wear what they want because they can be punished by law, the law that man made. Women have to cover their heads with scarves when men don't and wear long skirts in the hot desert sun to cover their bodies. When parents have to make a decision on whether to educate their son or daughter, they choose the son because they feel a woman belongs in the kitchen. Well . . . I am a woman, a strong, black, powerful, educated woman.

(Josephine Lorya)

In my opinion, women do have equality, especially in this country. . . . For example, in my country [Swaziland] it's worse than in America. In my country men still believe that women don't need to be educated; their job is to grow

up, get married, have children, and look after the home. At least in America almost everybody has a job and is educated, including women. . . . I do think that women should be given full equality no matter where in the world because they can be just as intelligent as men.

(Nosihle Lukhele)

At my job we have team meetings every Friday, so last week when we were in the meeting one of our male team members made the comment that we have too much estrogen in the room! Although he said this in a joking manner, it was a little disturbing to me that it was just OK to make this kind of a joke in a professional environment and nothing was done about it. My team mainly consists of women; the only men we have are the individual who made this comment and our supervisor. . . . I think that men will have the feeling that they are superior to women until the end of time.

(Sheriah Quartey)

In considering the future of the planet, I would consider any parent a mere biological donor if they believed that their daughter or son should not have equality; wishing my own flesh and blood a disadvantage in life cannot be considered a loving act. . . . I

have three daughters and one son who, like everyone else on the rock, have equal shares of equity in this stingy world.

(Kevin Schoen)

Since Elizabeth Cady Stanton addressed the Seneca Falls conference in 1848, women have had over 150 years to find their own sphere. Women have entered the colleges, the professions, and trades. No one questions that women are intellectually equal to men.

(John Shields)

I don't feel that men and women are equal. I worked at the Department of Revenue for three years, and my roommate at the time was a man. We did the same job, and he got paid 50 cents more than I did. I feel that if men and women are doing the same job, they should get the same pay.

(Loretta Smith)

I feel that woman's equality has been turned on its ear. We now are bread winners as well as bread bakers! Just decades ago a man was embarrassed for his wife to work outside of the home, and now we have "men" bragging about being supported by a woman. In some cases we are still enslaved. We excelled just



as Mrs. Stanton predicted, and men have just found other ways to hold us down. Is the male ego really that fragile, or do they just need to dominate?

(Tara Wilhelmi)

My C.N.A. class had about 25 students in it, and of all 25 there were two male students. It has always been a common belief that nurses should be women and doctors should be men. When you go to a toy store to buy a doll for a young girl, how many

male nurse dolls would be on the shelf? My niece sued the school district because when she went to Sennett Middle School they did not want her to join the football team. There were no locker accom-

modations for female players because they thought of females playing a "man's" game never crossed their minds. That's

a classic example of women being viewed as the weaker sex.

(Valerie Williams)

In most places women are still protected and sheltered. Men in those places have yet to recognize the independence of the woman. Initially, I think that's kind of what it all goes back to. It is in man's nature to protect what he values. I think man sees woman as being more valuable than himself, for he will without thought launch himself into the abyss. Yet at the same time, he will go out of his way to gather and protect his woman, both from the dangers he sees in the world as well as in himself.

(Justin Wilson)

October Concert at the Overture By Debby Loftsgordon

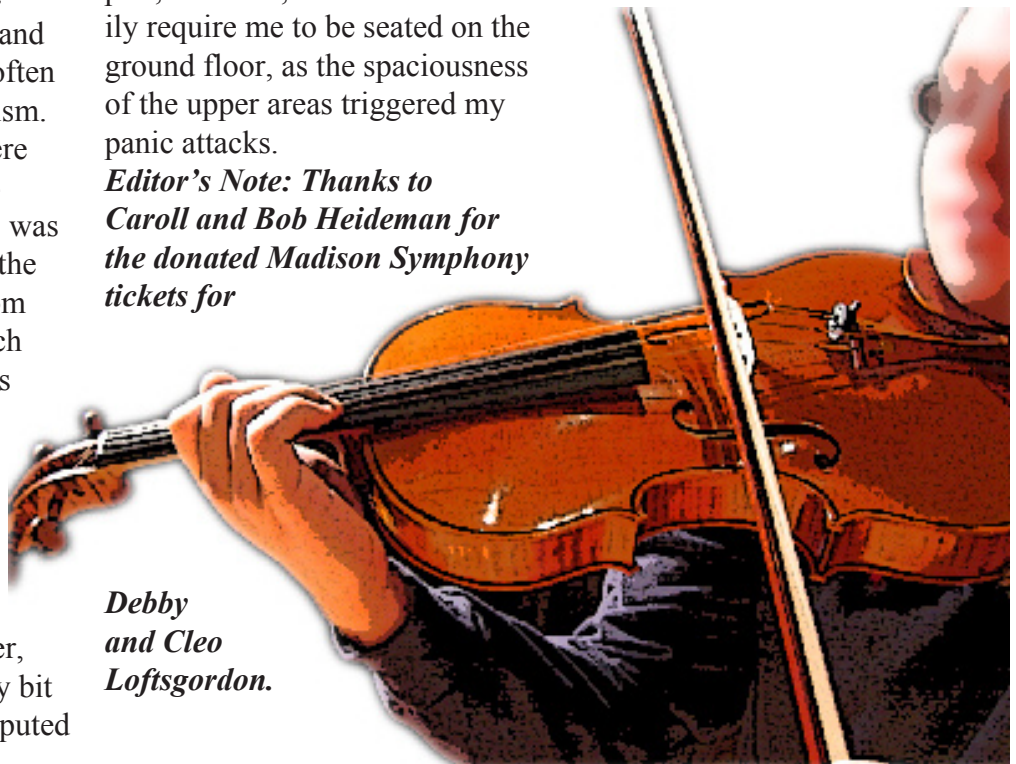
I found the Madison Symphony Orchestra music to be uplifting, delightful, serene, and melancholy. Melancholy is often the source of extreme optimism. . . The Brahms selections were soothing rather than uproariously upbeat and raucous, as was the cellist in the first half of the program, but some rising from despair could be heard in each form—the soothing calmness of Brahms as well as the dynamic head-shaking, almost frantic cello and cello support.

I appreciate very much the opportunity to experience the new Overture Center, where the acoustics are every bit as magnificent as they are reputed

to be. Any future visits on my part, however, would necessarily require me to be seated on the ground floor, as the spaciousness of the upper areas triggered my panic attacks.

Editor's Note: Thanks to Carol and Bob Heideman for the donated Madison Symphony tickets for

Debby and Cleo Loftsgordon.



Puccini's *La Boheme* An Opera Review By Jessica Bhan

My first time to see an opera was a wonderful experience, as it was a very good production and story. The storyline is of young artists and musicians living in the Latin Quarter of Paris. They live for love and art, which entitles them to poverty. The first act takes place in the writer Rodolfo's apartment, which is shared with his fellow friends, Colline (a philosopher), Marcello (a painter), and Schaunard (a musician). Rodolfo's friends are in high spirits because Schaunard has received money due to finding work. The friends decide to go to the Café to celebrate the earnings. Rodolfo stays behind to write, and then comes a knock from Mimi, the neighbor. The two share details about their life experiences and desires, and there is a touching moment of hand holding. This begins their tender

love affair.

The next setting was so beautiful as it takes place in the streets of Paris, with vendors selling everything. Rodolfo buys Mimi a bonnet, though she has her eye on other objects. Rodolfo is not able to buy her all she desires or even attend to the necessities, such as fuel and food for himself. It is a cold season in Paris, and there is snow.

The third act shows Mimi confiding to Marcello of Rodolfo's anger and his accusations that Mimi is a flirt. Rodolfo explains later that his anger is due to the fact that Mimi is ill, and he can do nothing because of being so poor. At this point, my mind wanders to the question of money spent on extravagances, such as a bonnet or wine. Would fuel to keep Mimi warm or medicine bought instead provide a remedy for her ailment? Then I

think that she probably has tuberculosis, and there is no remedy at this time. There is time for these wandering thoughts as it is intermission.

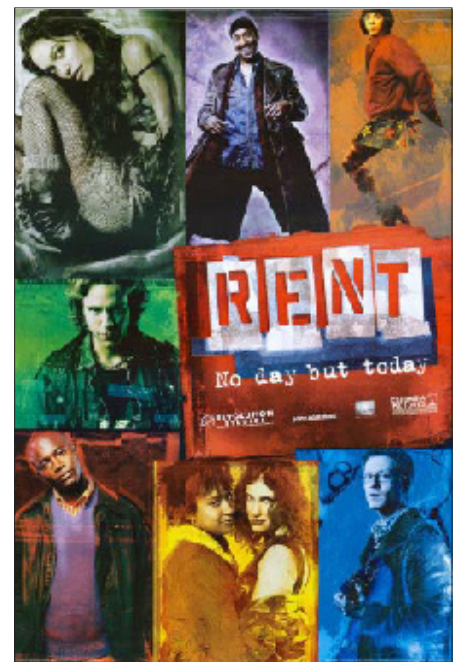
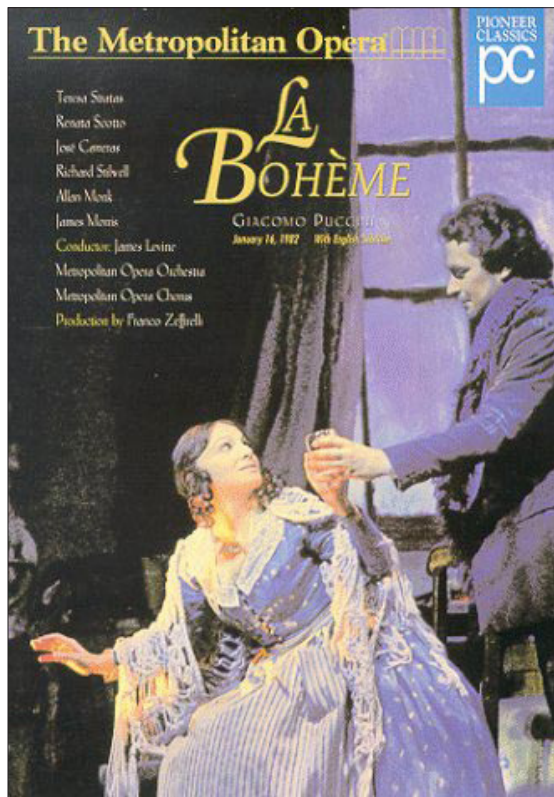
During intermission I am asked to sign up for the Madison Opera's mailing. As people are exiting the Overture, the woman signing me up exclaims to them, "Don't leave! Mimi hasn't died yet!" The end was foretold!

The richness of the ending, though, must be seen and felt. No matter the end of Mimi, the true richness of Mimi's



friends and their sacrifices for her at her last moments in life show the kindness and compassion of these bohemians.

Editor's Note: Thanks to the Madison Opera Company for donating two complimentary tickets for this spectacular event. *La Boheme*, by the way, is the basis for the modern musical *Rent*, which replaces bohemians in Paris fighting tuberculosis with bohemians in New York fighting AIDS.



Meet the Donor: Nellie Y. McKay

UW Professor Nellie McKay was an award-winning teacher who pioneered the study of black women writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Lorraine Hansberry, and Toni Morrison. She earned an international reputation as the co-editor of the *Norton Anthology of African-American Literature*. Until her death in 2006 from cancer, she was a dear colleague of Odyssey faculty Emily Auerbach and Craig Werner.

Professor McKay visited the Odyssey Project in its first year. Rather than boasting about her successes, which were many, she chose to talk candidly about her struggles. As one of the only black female Ph.D. candidates at Harvard University in the early 1970s, Nellie McKay had at times been made to feel unwelcome and inadequate. She failed Latin twice before triumphantly passing it, she told Odyssey students. "I was miserable," she confessed. She persevered, however, and went on to write a Ph.D. thesis on Harlem Renaissance author Jean Toomer that broke new ground in the field. Professor McKay called on all Odyssey students not to let anything get in the way of their dreams.

Odyssey graduate Joseph Hurst remembers, "I was awestruck. I felt I was in the presence of celebrity. She was very encouraging but also really stern in regard to us continuing our education. She told us it was our obligation to continue our studies and make the Odyssey Project a success."

Denise Maddox, another Odyssey graduate, calls Professor McKay one of her "sheroes" and a "mother tree" who inspired many branches to blossom. Denise had been saving up money to try to purchase the expensive Norton Anthology, so she felt "like a kid in the candy store" when she learned that Nellie McKay had purchased and inscribed copies of the anthology to present each graduating Odyssey student.

Nellie McKay's daughter, Patricia M. Watson of St. Louis, decided to honor her mother's memory by donating to the Odyssey

Project, and she arranged for the bank where she works (Bank of America) to provide matching funds. The W.W. Norton Company also decided to pay tribute to a remarkable scholar by agreeing to donate copies of the *Norton Anthology of African-American Literature* to all Odyssey graduates—for as long as the project continues.

Professor Nellie McKay would be pleased. When asked about the Odyssey Project, she commented to a reporter, "Given the nature of American education, a large number of young people, especially from minority groups, do not get an opportunity to have the benefit of the best kind of education. This is an effort to remedy something that went wrong in the social structure. The Odyssey Project means these young people now have a chance to go ahead and live out the goals that they would like to have lived out many years ago."



Meet the Odyssey Graduate: A Letter from Tineisha Scott

Being a part of the Odyssey Project has been a blessing for me. The Odyssey Project is not just a class you take or credits you earn. It is much more than that: it's inspiring, powerful, joyful; a place where you can be safe and not be judged, it's where you feel like you belong (a family).

I was raised primarily by my mother. My father was in and out of prison my entire life. As a young child I witnessed domestic abuse, crime, drug addiction, and many other tragic events. As an adolescent I began having children at 19. After I had my second child, I realized that I wanted something different for my children than I had as a youngster, so I decided to go to school. I started out at MATC taking 6 credits a semester.

Shortly after, I applied to the Odyssey Project and was invited to join the class. I went on to complete a four year degree at Edgewood College. In May of 2006 I received a BS in Psychology.

Since then I have received my social worker certification. With my social worker certification and through my employments, I provide a lead role in implementing social service coordination by providing on-going comprehensive support and case management services to assigned families.

I currently have three jobs. I work for the Secretary of State (SOS), Dane County Parent Council (DCPC), and Domestic Abuse Intervention Services (DAIS). At the SOS I oversee all changes with municipalities in Wisconsin. At DCPC I work with first time mothers and their children, and at DAIS I work with women and children who have been or are currently be-

ing abused. I enjoy

all of my experiences at my jobs;

however, my

dream is to work with the criminal justice system as an attorney.

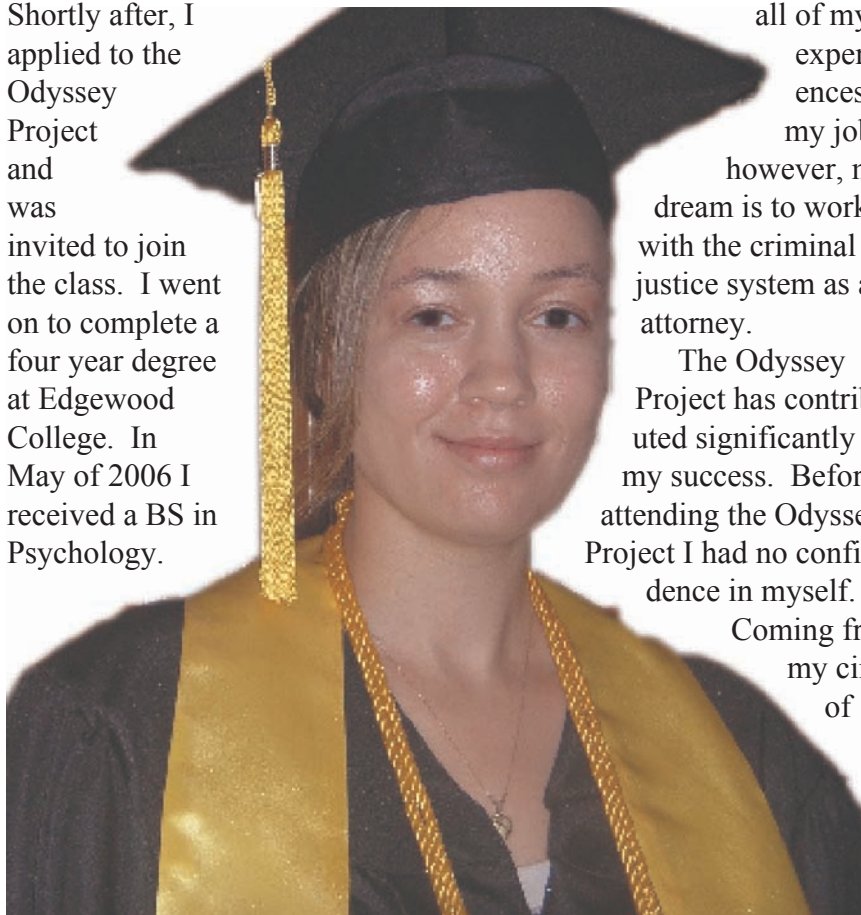
The Odyssey Project has contributed significantly to my success. Before attending the Odyssey Project I had no confidence in myself.

Coming from my circle of

life, college was just something no one did and no one really talked about. Going to college was stepping outside of the box for me. I did not know anyone who went to college, so when I began I didn't have anyone who could relate to what I was going through. I didn't have anyone supporting me. I found that with the Odyssey Project –people who supported me and could relate to what I was going through. I found people to share my successes with; people who gave me the tools I needed to succeed. The Odyssey Project gave me the strength I needed to continue and complete my education. The Odyssey Project stayed by my side until I got that BS; they didn't just disregard me after I completed their course. I have truly been blessed by being able to be a part of the Odyssey Project. Thank you for choosing me as a 2003-2004 Odyssey student!

As a way for me to be able to still be a part of the Odyssey Project, I have started a community resource book for current Odyssey students. This book is an ongoing project and will be updated annually. In order for this book to be the best it can be, I am calling on all Odyssey students to please inform me of resources that should be added or described differently. Please contact me with any comments, suggestions, or comments. I can be contacted via email at Tineisha.Scott@Wisconsin.gov or via telephone (608) 213-5647.

Sincerely,
Tineisha Scott



There Are Times I Sit and Wonder By Josephine Lorya

**There are times when I sit and wonder,
why the world is full of hunger,
not hunger from food
but hunger from love
this is not what we choose
but it's what we have become
If we live our lives like this, we will lose
but if we change, we can overcome
start living in the truth
and use what God gave us from above
there is one thing humans need
and that is to live in peace
embrace with love, survive with harmony
this will make the world complete
so please reach into your soul
and take positive control**



Why Might Milele Speak Specifically to Black Men?

[In response to René Robinson's article from the November 7, Oracle]

By Brenda Tompkins

René, judging by the statistics that you just reveal
It was necessary for Milele to address our black men
In order to open their minds to what's real.

The percentage of black children alone is high
That are raised in a single parent home,
Seventy percent out of a hundred, that is why
I ask what is really going on?

You ask "Why might Milele speak specifically to black men?"
That's the only question that makes sense
To bring our black men and black women together
And to lose all of that crazy nonsense

Women outnumber black men in education
Two to one on the college level
Over half the high school dropouts are black males
So let's get rid of this devil

You ask "Why might Milele speak specifically to black men?"
A third of the homeless people are black men
Who for whatever reason have fallen down on their luck
If we can bring God, some jobs, and black unity,
They won't have so many excuses to use as a crutch.

Half of the new cases for HIV and AIDS
Are said to be populated by blacks
Wake up, my brothers and sisters in a cave,
Imagine how I'm not surprised by those stats

You ask "Why might Milele speak specifically to black men?"

The highest record for incarceration
Is held in the United States
After our fight with slavery and degradation
No longer can we afford to wait

The government is putting billions of dollars into
Prisons, wars, and weapons of mass destruction
Black people, we have to man up, come together, and
Educate ourselves
And put our race under a mass reconstruction.



Mary's Christmas Mosaic By Mary Wells

Christmas has always held a special place in my heart, and always will. My parents made my two brothers, three sisters, and me feel special on Christmas morning, even though our mosaic stones were clouded with the dysfunction of alcoholism. We knew it was a struggle for our parents to make ends meet, but we always had plenty of love, a roof over our heads, food on the table, and clean clothes. On Christmas Eve, my parents would let us see if we could stay up until midnight, and if we could, we could open our presents.

As the years went on, and my Christmas Mosaic was being built, I realized one day that the gifts under the tree were not brought to our house by Santa Claus. That's when my Christmas Mosaic started to have a noticeable change. I still looked forward to Christmas wholeheartedly. I enjoyed the anticipation of those wonderful visits we would make to our grandmother's house as a family, and the family members that

would come over to our house during the season.

The colors of my Christmas Mosaic changed when I became a mother with three beautiful children of my own: Douglas, Frederick, and Ricky (Fred-Rick-Douglas). I had the pleasures of making sure their Christmases were anticipated as much as I remembered. They knew also that they too were rich in love, although we didn't have other material things. I enjoyed having them help me decorate the house, and make cookies and homemade ornaments.

I also started a new tradition where we would pile in the car a couple of days before Christmas and drive around the nicer neighborhoods to look at their Christmas light decorations. I hope that they will remember this tradition and do it themselves.

The stones changed colors once again as my oldest son Doug had a daughter named Gabrielle. She too has enjoyed the traditions that we have surrounding Christmas. Gabrielle really

is the Homemade Overnight-French Toast, topped with fresh strawberry slices and powdered sugar.

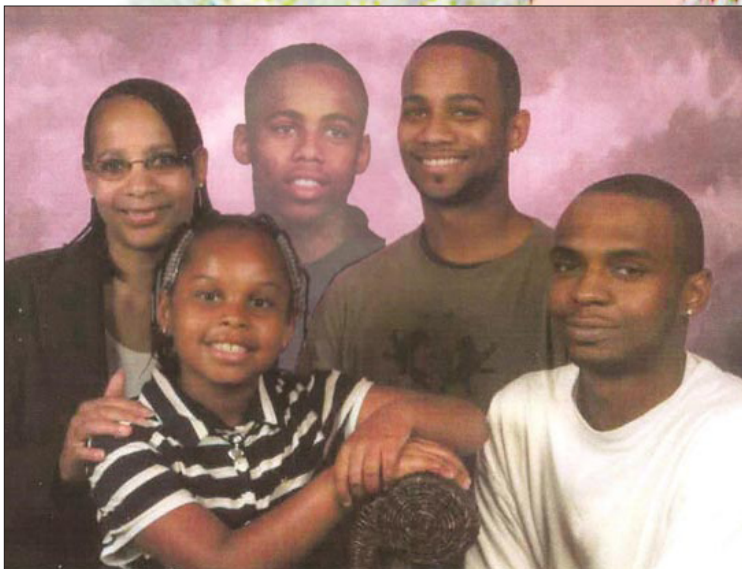
In 2002, my mosaic stones changed drastically when my son Douglas lost his life in a tragic car accident. My nephew and my son Doug were on their way to my house to pick up an early Christmas gift. They had to come across town, but only made it all but two blocks away. My nephew was too intoxicated and shouldn't have been driving in the first place. My nephew apparently passed out behind the wheel.

The car hit a tree on the side of the car that my son was sitting on. My son was unconscious when the paramedics arrived, and he never regained consciousness. My Christmases have not been the same since.

The colors of my Christmas mosaic changed again in 2005. That was the first Christmas since the accident that I was able to put up a tree.

I am sure that the stones in my mosaic will continue to change as the pain eases over time, and always will change as I continue on my Odyssey. As I continue on with my life's Odyssey I envision that Christmas will still hold a special place in my heart with all of the traditions that have made each one special. My son's memory will live on through all of us, especially through his daughter Gabrielle.

Mary Wells (Odyssey '07) used Photoshop to piece together her family mosaic.



enjoys cooking. She and I have started our own cookbook of favorite foods that she likes to prepare. Her favorite of all things