

ODYSSEY ORACLE

WHO SAID IT?

Stay tuned for the first Oracle of January 2013 to discover the authors of these quotes about the Odyssey Project.

There's a plant nursery living within me, and in Odyssey I feel sunshine and watering.



I have NEVER been so excited to learn as I am now. First semester has planted the seed of encouragement; second semester will water and enable this seed to bloom.

In this Oracle . . .

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Odyssey has been an amazing journey. I don't want ever to have the label of "giving up," so therefore I want to continue my journey till the end.



I was nervous on the first day, but now I wish that this journey would never come to an end. Odyssey has helped me to open my heart and mind and remove my doubts and fears.

This journey is really a once-in-a-lifetime experience.



Odyssey is helping me to fulfill my dreams and goals, and I can't stop now. I see something more in myself than I have before.



The course material, instructors, and my fellow students have given me a sense of connectedness that was absent in my life for close to 30 years!



When I first began this class, I never knew my mind would be opened up and transformed, and that I would be inspired to step out of my comfort zone, look at myself in the mirror, and ask who I am.



Romare Bearden, *Odysseus: Roots*



I never knew of a program so willing to get me where I needed to go. There's something about coming to class every Wednesday night that makes life worth living. Odyssey is one piece of my puzzle that will complete my dream.

Odyssey has allowed me, someone who felt she had lost her place in this world, to subdue most of my fears about going back to school at my age.



I am feeling myself going from the passenger seat into the driver's seat. I am truly enjoying and proud of my transformation.



This is where I should be, having an Odyssey Night Delight.



I must continue to keep going in this class because I want to help my children with their homework and be a role model for them.



I know I'm probably the most shy and quiet one in class, but I listen and take in

information given by my classmates. Hopefully second semester I will open up more, and maybe my classmates will take in information I provide.



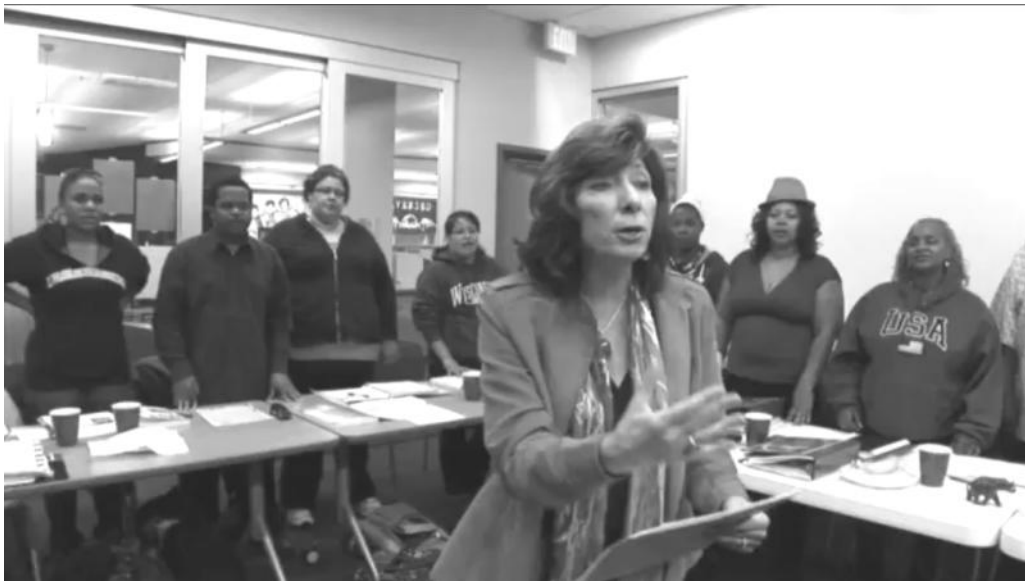
Every Wednesday I am so excited to go to class because I feel like I am in a family not in school. The class makes me enjoy reading, which wasn't the case before.



Odyssey, you're helping me so much. I'm so excited seeing everybody's writing and reading, and one day I wish I can do that, too!



When classes started, I was nervous, but now that we're half way through the school year, I'm proud of myself. I'm ecstatic to have met amazing, powerful-minded people.



Before I joined the class, I started seeing and hearing about the program and wondered what the big deal is. I said, "Oh, it's probably not for me." But OMG! I'm so glad I was privileged to be a part. Now I'm recommending that my family and friends apply.

STUNNING STYLE

Odyssey students show off their ability to use alliteration, simile, oxymoron, and other stylistic devices.

Alliteration

Mary Miller met and married Michael Murphy on Monday. (Michelle Whitman)

Sammy Sosa seems sad. (Sharisse Hancock)

The Somalian songstress's sensuous sonorousness sends forth soothing soulful sounds. (James Morgan)

The macaroon munchables are mouthwatering and magnificent. (Angela Jordan-Jackson)

Vicious vultures vow to not venture into view of Vanessa. (Carrie Llerena Sesma)

Three grey geese in a green field were grazing; grey were the geese and green was the grass. (Jovite Rayaisse)

Parallelism

He enjoyed a life of fast cars, fast women, and slow dances. (Mary Millon)

The harder she laughed, the softer he cried. (Sharisse Hancock)

I like cleaning, cooking, and eating. (Tanatnan Chaipang)

Simile

The guilt lay on me like a heavy, uncomfortable blanket. (Mary Millon)

She is as thirsty as a tadpole. (Sharisse Hancock)

She is a Sphinx-like burnished-copper black woman. (James Morgan)

She has a voice as big as Texas when she sings. (Angela Jordan-Jackson)

She runs fast like a horse. (Tanatnan Chaipang)

Friends are like chocolate cake. (Jovite Rayaisse)

Metaphor

Mom is the rock of the family holding us together. (Sharisse Hancock)

The chili's flavor was a fire burning rapidly. (Michelle Whitman)

The snow came down in a million white gardenia flowers. (Tanatnan Chaipang)

The burden is my cross to bear. (Jovite Rayaisse)

Personification

God has smiled on me. (Sharisse Hancock)

Walking down the street, I saw this tall dark figure which shrank as I grew closer to it—my shadow. (Michelle Whitman)

The doors of Elmina Castle, the gateway to slavery for millions, stand regal, dripping in blood. (James Morgan)

The grass was dancing. (Jovite Rayaisse)



Oxymoron

“Beautiful Nightmare” by Beyoncé is a great song. (Mary Millon)
 Non-participating citizens are the worst, complaining all the time. (James Morgan)
 That dress makes you look big small. (Sharisse Hancock)
 Today’s prisons are just modern plantations. (Michelle Whitman)
 My friend has a sympathetic haughtiness when she gets mad at people for not taking her advice. (Carrie Llerena Sesma)
 It was disgustingly delicious. (Jovite Rayaisse)

Analogy

I need you the way a plant needs water. (Angela Jordan-Jackson)
 The arrogant comments made by some women at an awards event made me feel like Cinderella with her sisters. (Carrie Llerena Sesma)
 I feel like a fish out of water. (Jovite Rayaisse)

Rhetorical Question

Is it not joy we seek? (James Morgan)
 Have I not told you how much I like working as a massage therapist? (Tanatnan Chaipang)

Onomatopoeia

I heard the mosquito buzzing in my ear and the frogs croaking in the pond. (Mary Millon)
 He growls like a lion, while she coos like a bird. (Michelle Whitman)
 I hear his lisp when he whispers in my ear. (Angela Jordan-Jackson)
 My mother shushes me when I talk too loudly. (Carrie Llerena Sesma)

Chiasmus

I mean what I say and I say what I mean. (Mary Millon)
 Since I am who I am, who am I? (Michelle Whitman)
 You have observed the ways of life; now you must find a way to live! (James Morgan)
 It’s not what you say but how you say what you said. (Angela Jordan-Jackson)
 You might think an egg is born from a chicken but the chicken is born from an egg. (Tanatnan Chaipang)
 Never let a fool kiss you or let a kiss fool you. (Carrie Llerena Sesma)
 They don’t care about how much you know until they know how much you care. (Jovite Rayaisse)

Superlatives

It was the most heinous and terroristic crime ever committed . . . the African slave trade. (James Morgan)
 She sang her loudest once the audience was at its quietest. (Michelle Whitman)
 She was the most beautiful woman in the room. (Mary Millon)



Irony

He is as smart as an ant with half a brain. (Mary Millon)
 He said he was a vegetarian who could only eat pepperoni pizza. (Sharisse Hancock)
 She was so superficial that no one could see her external beauty. (Michelle Whitman)
 You never showed up for my graduation; thanks a lot. (Angela Jordan-Jackson)
 My friend's abusive husband loved her to death as he tried to kill her in her sleep. (Carrie Llerena Sesma)

Allusion

My brother is a true Casonova. (Sharisse Hancock)
 Emily Auerbach is doing for minority education what Harriet Tubman did for slavery; instead of freeing the body, she's freeing the mind. (Michelle Whitman)
 To act or not to act, that was my dilemma. (Jovite Rayaisse)

Assonance

The painting was a bright sight with vibrant colors. (Sharisse Hancock)
 By rope-dope-feed 'em hope, he did with rat poison shatter the heart in a soulful, soul-less dirge. (James Morgan)

CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Is Prejudice an Injustice?

By Michelle Whitman

How long must we wear these chains of prejudice
 and accept these laws of injustice?
 How is it that in today's world of complexity and intelligence
 we must still deal with such high levels of unfairness and ignorance?
 I've often wondered where these two words originated from,
 why such an impact on lives past, present, and yet to come. . . .
 How do you take such innocence from a child,
 then carry on with your life wearing a smile?
 How do you explain to children that they're
 none of the cruel names people may call them?
 Who are you and who am I to judge someone for being born?
 Yet we question why our world is so torn.
 Have we made our world so complex and become so "intelligent"
 that we fail to recognize the importance of common sense?
 Have we just become a mankind so dense?
 The choice to change this is definitely a must.
 Yes, prejudice is in-just-us.

STUDYING SOCRATES



A gadfly is a fly that bites livestock or a person that annoys others. Socrates is bothered by the things in his society because people don't see what he sees or feel what he feels. They accuse him of being an abrasive gadfly by the things he thinks God

had shown him. It almost seems that his society sees him as a criminal, as if he is a killer, a liar, a thief, or a snake. Not just Socrates but all people should be gadflies. There should be no poor and rich but everybody on a level playing field. People do not have to think the same, but they need similar values so there won't be as many problems in society. **Lewis Black**



Gadflies are pesky, irritating insects that bite livestock to get them moving and stirring about. Socrates feels that he is the state's gadfly because he has been accused of being pesky and irritating to the state. He wants the state to get

active, examining and challenging the virtue and good in what they do and say. Socrates' society bothers him because the politicians, philosophers, and teachers are not as wise as they think they are. **Michelle Reams**



"But I thought that I ought not to do anything common or mean in the hour of danger; nor do I now repent of the manner of my defense, and I would rather die having spoken after my manner, then speak in your manner and live."

Socrates thought he shouldn't do anything to get himself in more trouble since the time had come for him to depart this world. He doesn't feel he needed to ask for forgiveness, so he wasn't going to "repent" and say he was

sorry. He would rather die stating what he believed than to say what they wanted him to say and live.

Dominique Haskins



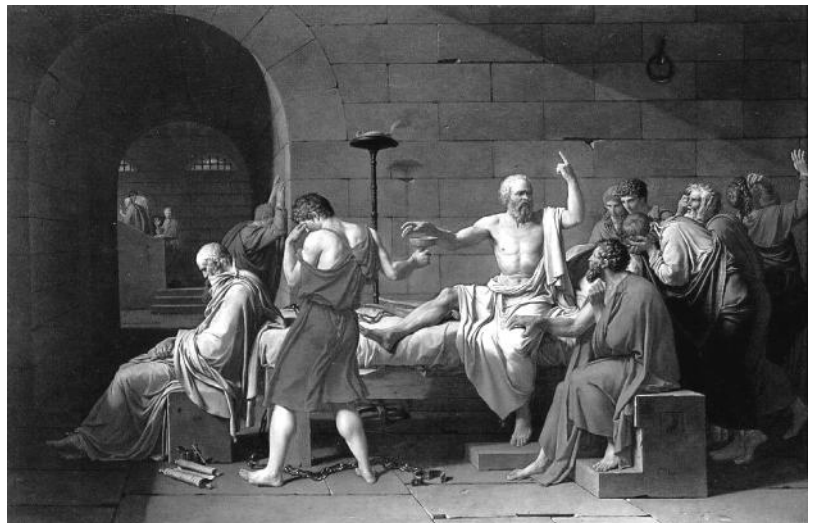
"But far more dangerous are those who began when you were children and took possession of your minds with their falsehoods." The stale normalcy of society is very white bread, where no one thinks for themselves or asks questions. From

the cradle to the grave, people are not treated as individuals who have their own mindsets but rather are treated with a cult-group mentality. There's only one way to do everything in life, business, and home, and to question that is seen as punishable and nearly sacrilegious. **China Moon Crowell**



In the dialogue between Crito and Socrates, Crito offers Socrates a chance to escape from prison, and he also offers to finance the escape. Crito believes that to live in exile is a better choice than for Socrates to give up his life in a few days, so he

tries to convince Socrates of this. Socrates isn't having it. Socrates thinks that injustice may not be answered with injustice; two wrongs don't make a right. I personally think that Socrates made a bad



decision not to escape, but the decision not to leave fits his character. He would rather die for his facts of reason than to live a lie or life on the run from the city where he made his home for a long time. Socrates believed that he would be turning his back on his beliefs if he escaped and went on living in exile. **Akilah Freeman**



power, he would have, by the action of escape, proved hypocritical to the Athenians who he served in the quest for truth. "Think not of life and children first, and of justice afterwards," says Socrates in his defense of his choice to respect the laws of man yet "follow the intimations of the will of God." **James Morgan**



Socrates refuses Crito's offer because he realizes that leaving his cell and escaping would be unjust and would be breaking the law. He believes breaking one law is breaking them all. I think in a way Socrates has a point, but I would have chosen to escape and continue living my life. I believe that the reason he was imprisoned was unjust, so to escape wouldn't really be unjust. **Amber Turner**



I think he doesn't make the right decision. He could accept Crito's offer and escape in order to save his life and have another life in another city with his family. He could educate his children. He prefers to die for justice and to follow the will of God.

Jovite Rayaisse



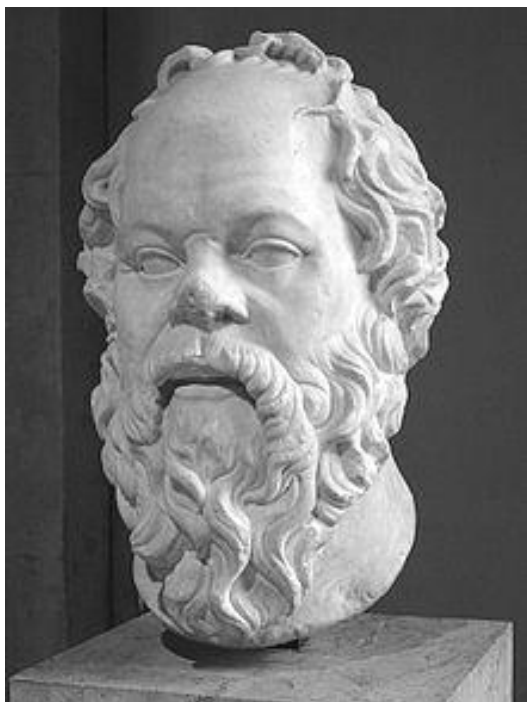
Socrates refuses to escape because he knows it will not make things better. Socrates made the right decision because I think he wanted to prove a point and also because he was a man of truth.

El-Rasheedah Wilson



I do believe Socrates has made the right decision for himself. Socrates is 70 years old. He has lived his life in the way he wished to. He is not afraid of death. He has no loose ends to tie up, so he can let go freely. **Sharisse Hancock**

Given his life and teachings, I think Socrates made the right decision. Had he escaped, his character would be in question among those who truly supported him. As one who served as a mirror or "gadfly" to those in



Socrates felt that going against the law was like striking a parent. I believe he made the right decision [not to escape] because he lived his life being a just person who abided by the law.

Angela Jordan-Jackson



I am not as brave as Socrates so I can't say I would agree with him in choosing not to escape. However, I do respect him for standing by his word and beliefs. I can only hope to become that strong. **Patrice Smith**



It's really hard to say if Socrates' decision was right or wrong. I believe in not doing wrong and trying very much not to harm another person or break the laws, but some laws are not just or fair. I always advocate for good, but my life has never been on the line. **Carrie Llerena Sesma**

HOLIDAY MEMORIES

CHRISTMAS HIGHS AND LOWS



I have the best times around Christmas. Even when I do not have money and know I won't have anything to give, I still make do. I made a tradition for me and my children on Christmas Eve to watch Christmas movies and make cookies.

We normally make sugar cookies with all the Christmas figures. I make hot chocolate for the kids, while Grandma and I drink eggnog. As the night continues, we wrap gifts while Christmas music plays in the background.

Just talking about this makes me more excited about Christmas. I know it will be bittersweet because I may not be able to give my kids what they want. But I will make sure we enjoy each other's presence and feel thankful for each other. **Britney Sinclair**



Having a large family was the best thing that happened to me. My parents did their best and raised ten children. I remember that my siblings and I lacked interest in celebrating some holidays, in particular Christmas. We

didn't receive toys or any sort of gifts. For that reason, Christmas has an emotional meaning to me. **Angelica Cuahuey**

One of my favorite memories was on Christmas Eve when I was eight or nine years old. We were living in Germany at the time. My mother and father let me open all my gifts on Christmas Eve, and I got the Barbie doll with the Barbie van. Oh, was I in heaven! My parents went to bed after I



opened my gifts, and I stayed up all night.

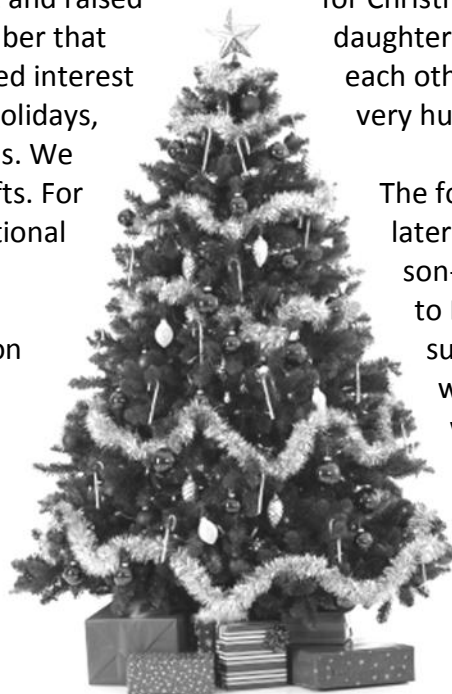
The next day, someone knocked on our door. I opened the door but no one was there. I happened to look down, and there was another Barbie doll on our doorstep. That Barbie doll was a black Barbie—my first black Barbie! The one my parents gave me was white. I will always remember that Christmas in Germany. I always thought maybe a German person got me that doll. **Dominique Haskins**

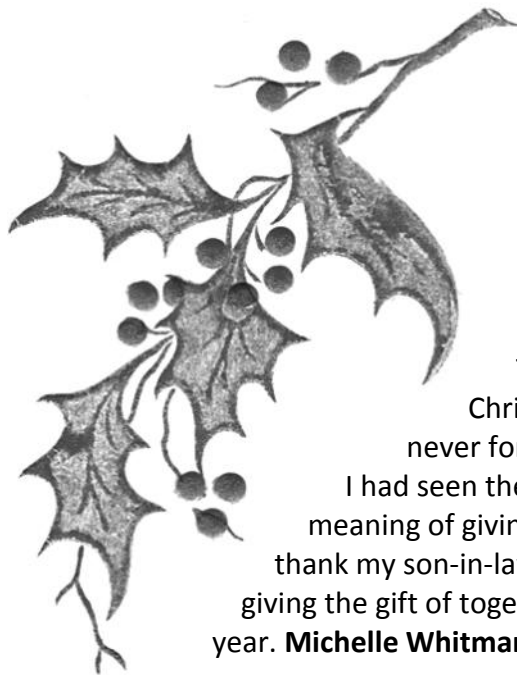


A memory that I had which started out bad was the one Christmas I was out of work and had no money. I had lost my job in July, which ruined my plans to go visit my daughter and her family in Bermuda. I felt really bad because I had to tell my grandchildren two weeks before I was to go that I wouldn't be there for Christmas. I cried and they cried, but my daughter cried hardest. We hadn't seen each other in a long time so we were both very hurt.

The following week began very sad, but later that week I received a call from my son-in-law saying that he was flying me to Bermuda for Christmas as a surprise to my daughter. He said she was so sad when she found out I wasn't coming that she made him miserable; she cried a lot.

The day I flew in, she was in the kitchen doing dishes. I walked up behind her and hugged her. When she turned around and





saw me, she screamed and we both cried. My grandchildren stuck to me like glue.

This was a Christmas I will never forget. I felt that I had seen the true meaning of giving and love. I thank my son-in-law Gitzy for giving the gift of togetherness that year. **Michelle Whitman**



No gift for me . . . ooh, what a sad, sad day, I thought. I had woken up just like every day, but today I thought it would be special. It was Christmas. . . . My stepdad had said, "Baby, I'm going to get you a big bike and doll this year." When morning came, to my surprise I looked back and forth and forth and back, but there were no gifts for me. Maybe I wasn't looking hard enough. Then Mommy noticed my stare. I had no toys or bike. What a sad, sad Christmas. Daddy had forgotten about me. "Well," Mommy said, "We will have to get your sister to share some of her things." . . . I never want to repeat that because it was the saddest Christmas ever. I never had a bad Christmas again. **Angela Jordan-Jackson**

It was Christmas season. I was seven or eight years old. We lived in a single parent, mother-head-of-the household family. We believed in Momma's rules, Jesus Christ, and Santa Claus and in that order. My sister and I were usually at home with the mother of the family that lived downstairs looking after us while Momma was at work. My sister and I would go from downstairs to upstairs as we pleased.

One evening my sister and I began to tease each other, so she hit me and ran upstairs. I chased her, and she tried to escape the fight by jumping into the



closet. She jumped in and jumped out so fast it looked like life went into fast rewind. That was when we learned that Momma was Santa Claus. I think we were late in our adolescent years before we revealed to Momma that we learned the truth about Santa at a young age. It was a Christmas day when we told her, and we all laughed till we cried. **Munroe Whitlock**



It was Christmas morning. I woke up and realized that it was Christmas, so I immediately rushed to the tree to see what presents. All the presents were in similar shapes and sizes. I tore them all open one by one, and each of them revealed clothes, long johns, socks, and designer underwear (superheroes). It made me kind of upset because I felt that I had stuff like that already. I looked at my guardians as if saying, "Really? This is what I get? I know I was good, so where are the toys at?" At that very moment, in comes my Mom with a Sega Genesis. I smiled so hard that if my lips were dry, they would have cracked under the pressure. **Lewis Black**



A holiday memory that I will always remember was when my son was about ten years old. Money was tight, and I was trying to prepare my kids so they would not be disappointed. I told them that Santa's workshop was experiencing hard times just like us and that they could only bring three gifts per child. My son, who was very immature, would pray every night that Santa's workers could find a way to give him everything that was on his list. He even went to the school pastor to help him pray for Santa so he could get all the things on his list.

Finally one night after I heard him praying for Santa again, I decided this was ridiculous. I couldn't continue this lie. It took me a few days to actually tell my children that Santa was not real, that I was Santa, and that they were getting three things for Christmas.

It was the strangest thing once I told them. My daughter, who was the youngest, said she already knew and that she tried to tell her older brother. My son, however, went into a rage and did not believe me. He insisted I was not telling the truth because he was so caught up in the existence of Santa. It took him a few days to come around, and only after consultation with his older cousins and friends.

I hated that fact that I started that story. If I had a chance to redo that one, Mama would be Santa from the very beginning. **Michelle Reams**



The Christmas of 1982 was my father's last Christmas with his family. I came home from California to take care of my father. I decorated the house, made Christmas cookies, candies, and brownies, and made sure the house really looked like Christmas, with lights and a Christmas tree in the living room.

My mother and oldest brother picked my father up at the hospital. I had the camera all ready with flashes. We had a great time together.

I truly miss the Christmas holiday. I really miss my parents and my brother. I love my family, and I miss my family. Thanks, God, for my granddaughters. I still enjoy the holiday with my granddaughters. I hope you enjoy yours this year. **Jovenus Price Pierce**



I will start off saying that Christmas was never my favorite when I was growing up because my family was Muslim and didn't celebrate Christmas. I never got toys, and my friends always used to boast about what they got. It was the worst! Now I make sure my daughter gets everything she wants and more on Christmas because I would



hate for her to feel like I did. I still don't get anything for Christmas!

El-Rasheedah Wilson

The best Christmas I ever had was when my mom and dad (at the time) went all out for me and my sister! Boy, oh boy! I got all kinds of Barbies and toys. I got roller skates and an easy bake oven. We got 15 outfits a piece. . . .



The night before, the sound of banging kept me up. I peeked at the hall door and my mom's room was open wide. I went even further. Then I heard the sounds of the Temptations singing "This Christmas." I tiptoed to the end of the hall and still couldn't see where the sounds of banging were coming from. After all the waiting, I finally fell asleep—in the hallway, no less, with the smells of chitterlings and dressing in my nose.

When I awoke, I got more smells—different smells, like the pungent smell of sweet potato soufflé. Then I saw it. The entire living room was FULL! I even saw bikes! When cousins came over, we went outside to roller skate. **Eunie Conley**



My most favorite Christmas memory was the year I was in California for Christmas. I remember the smells of the fruit trees in my aunt and uncle's back yard. I remember the splash of the pool water as we dived in on an early Christmas morning with my cousins.

Christmas in the past had been joyous, but never like this! It felt like a beautiful summer day on December 25, 1984! I hope one day to enjoy another "California Christmas." **Mary Millon**

HOLIDAYS FROM OTHER LANDS



This weekend I went out and found myself celebrating Hmong New Year's. I came across a group of very friendly, energetic people on a cold Saturday night. At this point, my night was already miserable, but just being in the presence of a celebration of independence really lifted my holiday spirits and educated me about how the Hmong culture came about. I learned that Hmong were Chinese citizens enslaved to their country. They broke free eventually in similar ways to black Americans in America. It really made my night and holiday weekend for random strangers to come up to me and introduce themselves as well as their culture. **Akilah Freeman**



April 13 of every year is a Thai New Year. I remember when I was celebrating the Thai New Year, I took a bus from Bangkok where I lived back to my small hometown. My family cooked so much food and we ate all day, any time we wanted. Younger people brought clean water to wash our

grandparents' feet and hands. We asked them to bless us and forgive us for everything we did that was disrespectful to them in the past year. In the daytime, the weather was 110 degrees hot! In Thailand, everybody had their own basket of water, and we threw the water on each other all day to keep us cool and have fun. We also danced and sang all day long for three days at least. It is a big holiday in Thailand.

Tanatnan Chaipang



On December 31, 2010, I had a very good holiday celebrating with my family in Burkina Faso, Africa, after being gone for four years. I was so happy—first, to be with them again, and second, to show them my daughter Uriel, who was so excited to meet grandparents and her father for the first time. We were all so happy together, dancing and having fun.

I really enjoyed it, and it was the last holiday with my dear father, who passed away last year. So it was a memorial party for me. **Jovite Rayaisse**



NEW YEAR'S EVE



My most vivid and nerve wracking holiday was on New Year's Eve about 12 years ago. I was nine years old. It was the first time my mother had gone out for New Year's and left me and my little sister home. I

couldn't remember why, but I think it was because we did not want to attend church with her. I was a timid, anxious, and nervous nine year old, so being left alone was a big deal for me.

During this time, the new millennium was going to begin, and I always heard that the world would end once the clocks struck midnight. My little sister had fallen asleep, and I was watching a New Year's countdown parade. As the countdown began, I clenched my eyes shut while counting, just knowing that this was it for my family and me.

The clock finally reached midnight, and I was filled with happiness that I was alive! I screamed



extremely loudly! I woke my sister up and made her say a short prayer with me, like my mom taught us, thanking God that we had made it to see the new millennium. **Fantasia House**

AN APRIL DAY



I was in third grade. It was early April, and I was playing merrily outside with my little sisters and little cousins as I always did. I was always in love with life and my family. My Uncle Todd came outside to tell me that my Aunt Martha Ann was coming from

Michigan to visit me. I was so excited because she was my favorite aunt. She was the sister of my deceased father and a most beloved woman. I had visited her the summer before and never wanted to leave. She always protected me, loved me, encouraged me, and looked like me. She was always working—in church, in the house, or at her

job. She was a majestic presence everywhere.

I couldn't wait to see her. I stopped playing and sat on my front stoop the whole day. The other kids all disappeared and night came. My mother called me inside the house. I told her I wasn't coming in because I had to wait for Aunt Martha Ann. I was worried now that something had happened to her because she wasn't here yet, so I begged my mom to call her. She looked at me curiously. I looked back at her and at my uncle beside her, waiting for answers. My mom looked at her brother, my Uncle Todd, and he said "April Fool's!" I was crushed.

Carrie Llerena Sesma

UNFORGETTABLE BIRTHDAYS



The most amazing memory that I will never forget was when my son was born. My son was born on January 1, 2011; he was a gift of a lifetime. I believe he is my lucky charm. His birthday is all ones (1-1-11), and he was born 1:11 AM on New Year's Day.

Things can't get more rare and lucky than that.

My son brings me joy every day. He is my heart, and I can't go a day without him. He is what holds me together. He is why I am sitting here in class right now! **Amber Turner**



On my 18th birthday I did not receive any calls from my family or friends wishing me a happy birthday. I felt so sad and lonely. I thought everybody forgot about me. I didn't pick my phone up to call anybody

because it wasn't my job to remind everybody. They were supposed to remember my birthday.

Finally later that day my mom came by. I found out I forgot to pay my phone bill the day before and my phone was off. **Shalonda Hilliard-Jones**

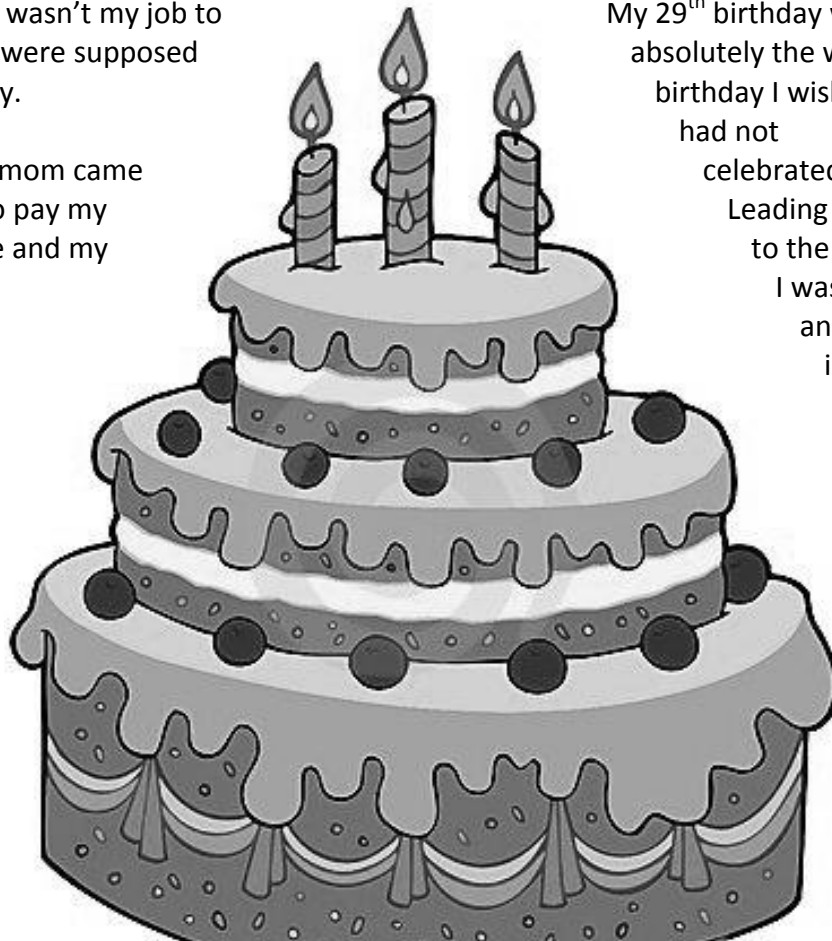


Years have passed, but I still see the image and feel the happiness of the last birthday I shared with my now-dead cousin Duck. I was going through a hard

time in my life at this time and didn't really want to celebrate my 21st birthday. I had no one to celebrate it with, I felt. My cousin Duck and I went downtown to the Nitty Gritty. I am not a big drinker, so I gave the free drink to my cousin, who was 24. My cousin made me feel loved and important as he listened to me talk.

Who would have known this would be the last time I would celebrate a birthday with my cousin? This cold, chilly day on October 6, 2006 felt so warm and blessed. Two weeks later, my cousin Duck would be dead, drowned in a pool accident after the Halloween celebration in downtown Madison. . . .

I took things for granted. I could have told my cousin everything I wanted to tell him, like how much I loved him. At my cousin's funeral, I looked in the casket and had to tell him how I felt, but he was gone. **Derrick McCann**



My 29th birthday was absolutely the worst birthday I wish I had not celebrated. Leading up to the day, I was sad



and cried often. I imagine part of me was depressed about the thought of being 30 years old the following year, which makes no sense to me now. I went to dinner was a friend—my best friend since age 12. She is one month younger than I am. The ironic thing is that she was feeling

depressed about her 29th birthday. I guess birds of a feather do flock together.

That dinner was the brighter side of that day. The only thing I remember is sadness from my 29th birthday. **Sharisse Hancock**

As I walked into the crowded, dimly lit room, Latone Heart made the announcement: "The birthday girl is here!" All of my friends cheered as I walked slowly in awe of how many people came out to my sweet 16. Balloons were everywhere, glitter, and a cake with my fat face smiling on it. The hottest hip hop DJ of Madison's 105.9 radio



station was giving shout outs. I didn't even know half these kids at my birthday party, but it seemed as if 70% of West High School was there. I felt like a princess. A tiara was on my Shirley Temple hair. Dressed to impress, I came out on the dance floor with all my girlfriends. I put my hands up and swayed my hips to the beat. As I looked around, everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. I was for that moment the most popular girl. This was the best sweet 16th birthday ever and the best birthday ever. **Patrice Smith**

THANKFUL FOR THANKSGIVING



This year was one of the best Thanksgivings. I signed up to volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club serving meals. My four children thought that I was being unfair to our family. . . . I cooked turkey, dressing, ham, macaroni and cheese, collard greens, sweet

potatoes, potato salad, and corn bread. My youngest son (P.J.) came by and made four cheesecakes from scratch and also helped out with other meals. He and his friend were the only ones to come by and eat dinner. He was very helpful and smiled the whole time he was there. He helped me to realize that when he showed up, we didn't need anyone else there to have one of the best Thanksgiving dinners ever.

LoLita Phillips

I had a weird Thanksgiving the first year I came to this country. In Africa we do not celebrate Thanksgiving, so I didn't understand what people were talking about. I was confused to see that most of the stores were closed and people were traveling. I heard people talking about the



turkey, but I didn't understand what they were talking about. After Thanksgiving was over, people asked me a lot of questions like "How was the turkey?" I was so confused. Others asked whether I traveled. Thinking of how far away my

family is, I didn't know what to say.

Nancy Wambua

This most recent Thanksgiving Day was a special one for me. I attended a luncheon with my friend Lisa, her husband Ken, her mother Dorothy, and their daughter Hannah. We dined at the Green Owl Restaurant, where on this particular occasion the entire meal consisted of vegetarian dishes. The food was delicious, the company great, and the service excellent.

We took turns looking at the art décor, which displayed bamboo trees in multiple colors. There was no green owl, though. There were people of varying ages and cultures in attendance. We enjoyed seeing and hearing the various dialects



being spoken.

I felt somewhat like a novelty being the only black man there, but my friends made sure I was comfortable and indeed welcomed.

James Morgan



A weird Thanksgiving meal for me was in November 2006. My children and I were together without my ex-husband. My son hadn't been home for Thanksgiving for three years because of being incarcerated or in a group home.

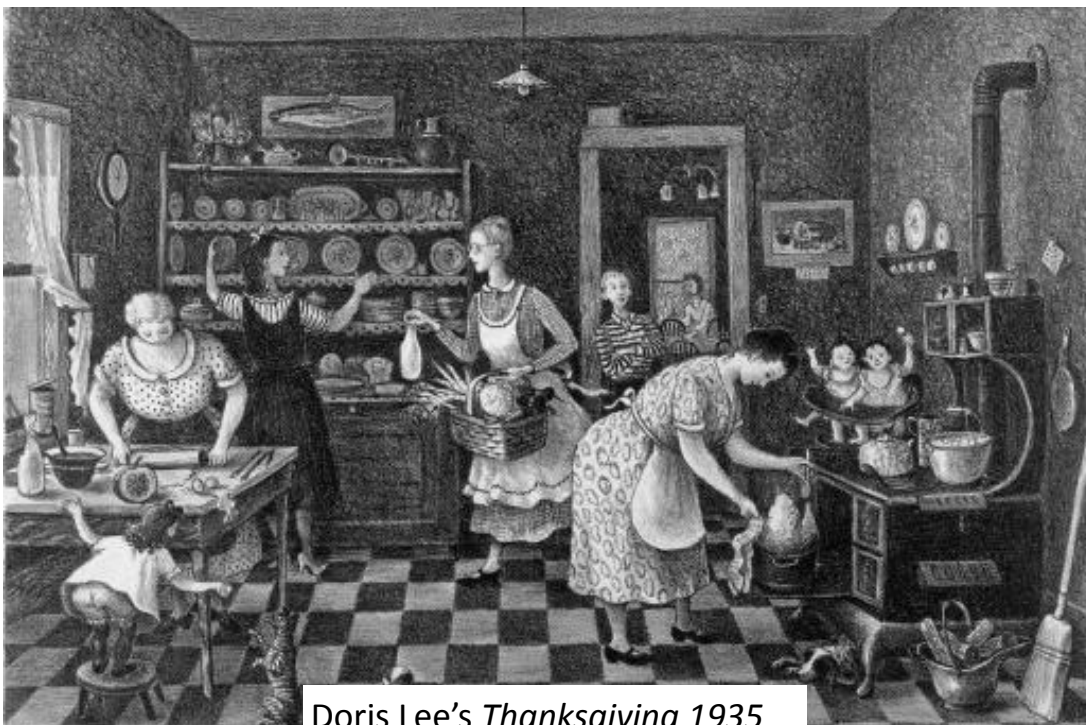
The meal we had was very traditional because my daughter and I put it together. She was out on her own and had learned how to cook. She made sweet potato pies and black eyed peas. What was weird was that I had never eaten black eyed peas on Thanksgiving before, and my girls had never helped me with dinner on holidays. We didn't overdo food because my ex-husband always wanted to go out for food. But what I gave thanks for most of all was that my three

children and I were together, and my first granddaughter was about to be born in a couple of months. **Tracey Cherry**



Two weeks before Thanksgiving my mom went into cardiac arrest and lost oxygen to her brain for over 30 minutes, leaving her in a vegetative state. On Thanksgiving Day as we were blessing the food, I couldn't

help but break down hurting so bad on the inside. For the last three years I have been incarcerated for the holidays due to parole violations and out of state rules, and this would have been my first Thanksgiving with my mom and family. To be honest, I really didn't feel thankful for anything, but that was a very selfish thought because my mom was there in great spirit in our hearts and in our thoughts. For Christmas I'm going to try my best to bring the holiday spirit to my family so we can enjoy these blessed holidays. My prayers go out to others who also went through the pain of a loved one they lost. Happy Holidays. **Tosumba Welch**
[Editor's Note: our hearts go out to Tosumba, whose mother died on December 6.]



Doris Lee's *Thanksgiving* 1935

FILM STARS





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