

Odyssey Oracle

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Editors/Contributing Writers:

Kegan Carter

Odyssey 2004 Graduate, Designer
uwodyssey@gmail.com
608-443-8637

Marshall Cook

Writing Coach
mcook@dcs.wisc.edu
608-262-4911

Emily Auerbach

Project Director
eauerbach@dcs.wisc.edu
608-262-3733/ 712-6321

odyssey.wisc.edu

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Moments of Prejudice

prejudice: *an adverse judgment or opinion formed beforehand or without knowledge or examination of the facts; a preconceived preference or bias; irrational suspicion or hatred of a particular group, race, or religion; the result of pre-judging*

I recall an instance when I was eight years old. My father, a black man, and my mother, who is part Italian, decided to take their children on a family vacation in the South. As children, we were excited about traveling through the Southern

states and visiting new places.

Our glory would be short-lived as we made our second stop in Tennessee. While there, we experienced one of the most devastating acts of prejudice.

My father pulled the family station wagon into a local gas station. At that time, there was full service offered, meaning an attendant would pump the gas. Because my father was black, the attendant *refused* to put gas in that blue monster. He stated, "We don't service n*****s around these parts."

My siblings and I wanted ice cream at the gas station too. My mother went into the gas station with us to buy ice cream. The attendant told my mother that she could buy the ice cream, but we could not eat the cones at the old-fashioned counter. My mother told us nicely that we couldn't have ice cream cones until our next stop.

I remember how quiet we were in the car that hot afternoon—no silly games, no car songs, no laughter. It was my sweet father and my sorrowful mother and us riding in the car, not knowing the prejudice, hatred, and ignorance we were up against for years to come. (Rhonda Johnson)



Working as a pharmacy technician I've been in predicaments where I felt like I was a victim of prejudice. For 10 years I've been the only black person at Bergmann's Pharmacy on Midvale. The majority of the people that live on Midvale are elderly white people. When I asked one of them if they needed help, they looked past me. I repeated myself. Still no response. They walked past me and asked my boss the question (she is white). It's just crazy if a person of color that's been in that field for 10 years can't help out a white person because they think that I might give them the wrong answer, the wrong drug.

Another time a white lady picked up her medications. Then 15 minutes later she called back the pharmacy and asked if we were getting robbed because there was a black person checking her out.

(Lavern Brown)

After passing the GAPI placement test for construction to be a cement mason, I went to my Union Representative

to get a listing of companies that were hiring. When I got to my appointment, the man was surprised to see me. We were sitting there talking about dues and meeting times when all of a sudden he said, "I'm going to be completely honest with you. No one is going to hire you."

I had to catch myself. "Why?" I asked.

"Because you're a woman, and in this line of work, women don't make it."

I sat there thinking that this man is full of **** and I'm not going to give up!

What I later learned (the hard way) was that I would not get a job. Whether it was the fact that I was a woman, black, or a convict, I will never know. But he was *so* right.

(Shanita Lawrence)

In 2002 I entered my three-year-old daughter into a daycare located on Gammon and Old Sauk Road. I was so excited because the quality of the daycare facility seemed so sophisticated. At first my daughter loved waking up at 5:30 AM to get on

the 6:30 bus which would get her to school, but after awhile she started slow bobbing, moving slowly to put on her clothes and walk to the bus stop.

One afternoon after work and day care it was raining really hard. A lady walked past and gave us an umbrella. I thanked her plenty because we were soaked. When we got on the bus, my daughter stated, "I don't know why she gave us an umbrella because they don't like us. The little girls in day care with me say I look like Boo Boo so they don't sit by me or drink behind me at the water fountains."

My three year old experienced prejudice up close and personal. It left a bad taste in my mouth about Madison, Wisconsin, and the rest of the United States. I cried and cried and cried, and I never took my daughter back to that daycare.

(Sherice Lewis)

When my son first started school in Stoughton, I saw that because I was African American and single, I was not expected



to be as involved and concerned with his education.

(Wynetta Taylor)

When my landlord came to collect rent one day, she met three of my four children. Immediately she asked, “Where are their daddies?” I asked her, “What do you mean?” She clearly stated, “I’m sure they don’t have the same fathers.” I corrected her and told her that all three were by my husband.

(Felicia Jones)

When a patient I was working with told her husband that I was from Mexico, he asked me how I was able to jump the tall wall constructed to keep us out.

(Erika Rosales Serate)

When I was working at EDS the recipients would call me “N***** B***** if I didn’t tell them what they wanted to hear about their Medicaid benefits. I told my supervisor what happened, and she said that I should get over it.

(Jaunté Willis)

I had been in the department of shipping and receiving at my job for about three months, doing well and with no complaints; then a young white fellow was hired in the department and I was helping to train him. Surprisingly, in conversation I found out that he was making a dollar and a half more than me. The new fellow was surprised as well. Both of us had established a pretty good rapport and recognized injustice.

(Edwin Shumpert)

When I’m playing basketball I usually get pre-judged because of my height and weight for the position I play, but when the game’s over I always get a compliment from the players or coach I’m playing against.

(Samuel Bester)

Being a big guy, I’ve always had people look at me as different. Being not only heavier but taller than others drew a lot of attention to me and remarks. I remember in elementary school, kids would say “fatso,” “big boy,” and “O God.” Many things would come out of their mouths.

Even teachers would say, “Otis, be careful playing. You’re bigger than the other children.”

These remarks could all have been very devastating, but as a toddler I grew up in a positive environment. My church offered spiritual progression, depending on God to take care of you. My family surrounded me with love and honesty and taught me not to be ashamed of what God made me. This gave me strength to be rubber to the negativity and to be an overcomer and conqueror. That is why today my hope and dependence on God continues growing, and I endeavor to conquer every obstacle.

(Otis Harris)

“Next?” the voice shouted from behind the counter. As I approached the middle-aged young man, he looked as though I had no business in this elegant store. I handed him my items as he stared at me from head to toe. I asked politely, “Do we have a problem?”

The man said, “Well, Ma’am, did your daughter want, or-- . . . are . . . are . . . you going to pay for



that?”

Immediately, I felt discriminated against. This man stereotyped me the minute I walked in the store . . . and saw me as suspicious for stealing.
(**Nicole Barnett**)

While working at Anchor Bank, I had an elderly, wealthy, white woman who refused to let me wait on her. . . . My boss advised her that she needed to allow me to wait on her. The customer replied, “I don’t want that girl helping me.” My boss responded, “You will need to go to a different Anchor Bank because we will not condone your ways or actions here.”

This customer allowed me to help her, and I tried my best to sway her old-fashioned beliefs. I treated and respected this customer as if she was my grandmother.

To this day she still remembers me and speaks to me.
(**Antoinetta Hayes**)

It was a type of backhanded complimentary racism. A white lady in our church came up to me to tell me how she admired me, being a part of the church and all. She told me that I was very “articulate” and smart. Even though I knew this was to be taken as a compliment, what she said next was what really insulted me. She said, “You don’t speak like the rest of the ‘coloreds’ I’ve heard.” I immediately let her know I didn’t appreciate what she was inferring. . . .

(**Charles Sallay**)

I had a problem with the Ft. Atkinson Police Department. My mom had a restaurant and club in that town. A police officer came in one night and pushed me to get in without any warning, so I filed a complaint against that officer.

The Lieutenant made an appointment with me. He said, “Instead of being against us, you should be teaching your

people that they should look us officers in the face when we are talking to them. They always put their heads down and don’t respect us.” I told him that in our culture when you are talking to a police officer or somebody you respect, like your mom—somebody that is telling you something you did is wrong—, you can’t look them in the face. That’s disrespectful. He judged us before even learning about our culture.

(**Karla Sandoval ’04**)

When I was an AFDC recipient and applied for a position at one of the local clinics in Madison, I got the job. My caseworker asked me, “How did you get the job?” It was not so much what she asked me but her tone of voice. The tone was so surprised, and it upset me because she put me in the same category as all her clients who might not have the ability or desire to better themselves.

(**Alice McDaniel**)



Every Wednesday
by Alice McDaniel

Every Wednesday you feed
our Bodies.
Every Wednesday you feed
our Minds.
Every Wednesday you feed
our Souls.

Thoughts on Thoreau

“Civil Disobedience” is an essay also known as “Resistance to Civil Government,” written by Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau was a lifelong abolitionist. “Civil Disobedience” is a most empowering piece of literature. Simply put, he strongly states that since the government is corrupt, we should not take part in its corruption. He said that to disobey an unfair law was the best way to serve your country. This would force government to change. He wrote this essay in the mid 1800s during the Mexican War and slavery.

Now in 2009, the government is even more corrupt. Unjust laws are everywhere in the land. We’re fighting a war based on lies, and it’s not even a secret; everyone knows. Our immoral Commander-in-Chief’s family’s wealth was built on oil. Our inner selves should be checked. We know these things aren’t right, and civil disobedience is a marvelous philosophy. We say that we disagree, yet our taxes fund the hypocrisy. This will matter to you if you are a just person, and it will awaken the courage that lies within you. **(Wynetta Taylor)**

“Civil Disobedience” is about showing the people how to make our government work so that all people would be treated fairly. I always believed that as long as I vote I’ve done my part, but I’ve done nothing but turned my back on my country. Casting a vote has little power; we the

people have the power to make our government work. When we see a wrong done to someone, we must stand up and help that person to be treated the way we know is right. Sometimes we will have to do some things we’re not comfortable doing.

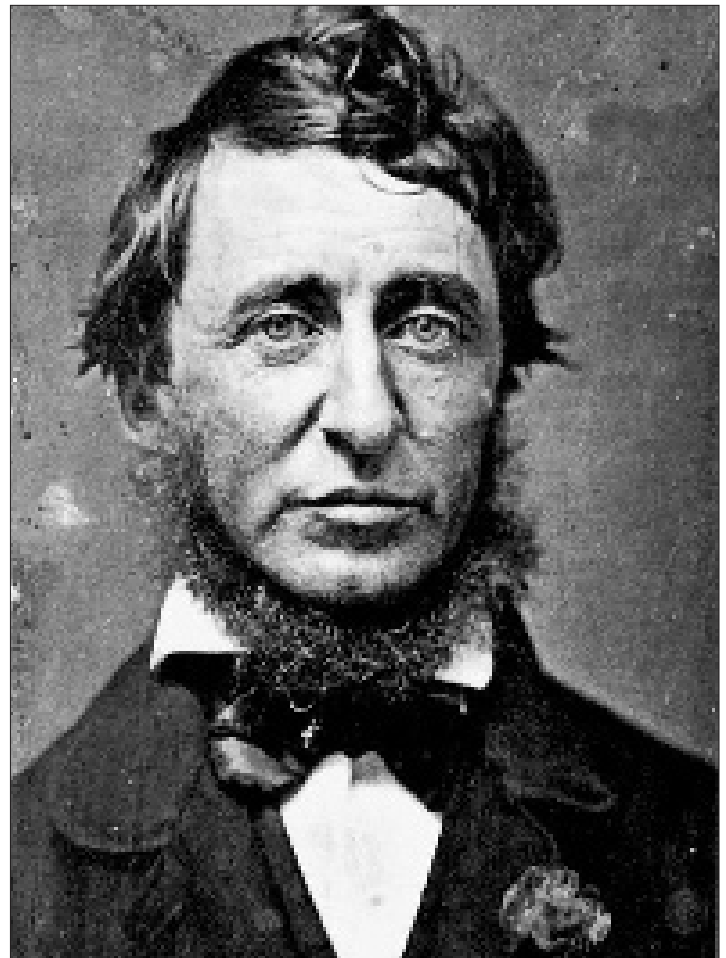
We must start standing up and make sure our government is doing what is good, right, and fair. I’ve not put this to practice, but I’m on my way. No government can work on its own. We have to stand up and be responsible, whatever the cost may be.

(Ricky Barners)

Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience” was inspired by his nonviolent approach to disobeying laws that in his mind (and the mind of many others) were deemed unjust. An example of this would be his refusal to pay taxes to a government that believed that slavery and an unjust war were good. Thoreau believed

that laws should be obeyed only if these laws were submissive under a “higher law” or God’s law (righteousness). He believed that if a conflict exists where a law is present, it is all right to break the law in order to stand for justice. For example, peaceful demonstrations, resisting paying taxes, and nonviolent protests were all ideas Thoreau believed in.

I too would follow Thoreau’s idea of civil disobedience if it came down to choosing righteousness over unrighteousness. **(Rhonda Johnson)**



An Unforgettable Afternoon: Madison Symphony Orchestra Review (January)

By Lavern Brown

Walking into the Overture Hall was breathtaking, and I felt like a famous celebrity. Getting out of my car, I felt like I was getting out of a limo, with my Gucci dress on, walking down the red carpet, while hearing a voice saying, "Right this way, Mrs. Brown. I will assist you and your lovely daughter to your seats." I felt like Julia Roberts in "Pretty Woman" for a moment.

While the lights go dim, a long note plays from the violins [tuning] and then the conductor comes out. The conductor puts his hands up, and it gets quiet. One stroke at a time, the conductor swings his hands back and forth, and out comes this overpowering of soft music of Mozart. I felt like I was at the Grammy Awards.

It's not over yet. Let's give a round of applause for Mr. Kraggerud, a solo violinist who played in multiple concerts throughout his life. He not only plays the violin but also the viola. If you could have heard him play, you would agree with me that it was like a lullaby to my ears, like music I used to sing to my children



when they were little. Mr. Kraggerud played three solos that were amazing.

Then there was the "Romeo and Juliet" performance, which blew my mind. The melodies were awesome. It went from soft melodies to hard drums. It had my daughter and me sitting on the edge of our seats. You heard every instrument being played by the orchestra. The guest conductor himself, Daniel Hege, did a wonderful job with his performance.

I can honestly say that it was one of the most wonderful days I had with my daughter. I asked her when the concert was over if she enjoyed the performance. She said, "Yes, I did, Mom. I enjoyed the drums and the way they played the violins." Hopefully it will be a day she will never forget.

Thank you, Odyssey, for giving my daughter and me the opportunity to spend this wonderful Sunday together. We both enjoyed it. Hopefully we will get this opportunity again.



Henning Kraggerud



experience: the act of living through an event

When we arrived at the building, my jaw dropped as soon as we stepped through the door. We had to go through three sections before we got to the actual hall. It was big, bright, and roomy. It was all really simple and elegant with great silver/glass accent and detail throughout the entire venue.

Once the ushers had escorted us to our assigned seating, I found it impossible to concentrate on just the orchestra, singers, musicians, directors, or conductors. There were so many exciting, enticing, eye-catching things on every surface, wall, and direction. There were even two gigantic angels with wings playing horns hanging from the ceiling. Even though I could hear all the beautiful, festive music coming from the instruments, it was a struggle to take it all in. It was hard to absorb all the visuals, lights, and colors the arena had to offer.

... When the music started up again, I thought to myself “Walt

Disney Pictures.” The music reminded me of the world famous animated movies of Walt Disney; they always have such beautifully arranged musical scores in every film. I haven’t heard music that lovely in a long time or at least not since Emily’s son came and played the viola for our entire class.

My favorite part of the Christmas concert was the delightful Madison Area Concert Handbells (MACH). They were all so talented, organized, and accommodating of one another on stage. They all wore uniquely decorated holiday vests. Who knew you could make such beautiful music with a bell?

Everyone on stage was dressed so nicely and all looked amazing. Their concert soloists, Gregory Turay and Jamie Rose Guiarrine, both looked so elegant and sophisticated. Jamie’s dress was blood red with gathers all over the match the big poinsettias arrangement on the center stage.

The Mount Zion Gospel Choir was also on the program. I recognized a couple of faces from my Odyssey classes. René Robinson did a solo, and as usual she did a phenomenal job. Their presentation was spectacular—just awesome! I’ve never seen a Gospel Choir sing while being accompanied by a full symphony orchestra before.

At the end all choirs and all musicians joined together for the grand finale. Everyone played and sang together. They blew the entire audience away!

My Overture Hall Experience By Mary Moore

The funniest part of the concert was the conductor himself: Mr. John DeMain. He definitely has a future in stand-up comedy if he ever chose to pursue it. He cracked me up all to pieces the whole evening long.

Finally everyone on stage stopped playing and singing to put on their Santa Claus hats. The whole audience died laughing out loud—what fun!

Thank God, the Odyssey Project, Emily Auerbach, [and donors Bob and Carroll Heideman] for the opportunity to experience all these things through music at the Overture Hall. I would never have been able to afford such an evening out on my budget. Not only did you bless me with a ticket, but you also helped me to be a blessing to my fellow classmate, Ms. Shanita Lawrence, who accompanied me. I think it’s safe to speak for her and say we both enjoyed it immensely. It all made me feel so classy, cultured, and upscale. . . . I had the best time I’ve had in a long time, and I can’t wait to go back again.



John DeMain

Student Sonnet Submissions

In the Class of 2009 Sonnet Competition, judges tore their hair out because no one submitted a perfect example of either a Shakespearean or Petrarchan sonnet. Some poems had too many lines; some had not enough. Some poems had too many beats; some had too few. Some rhymed in couplets only; others rhymed not at all. But all expressed heartfelt emotion and moved our judges. Here are some poems in full and some excerpts from others, followed by two famous examples of sonnets:

It's Official

By Mary Moore

At last on January 20th it will finally become official

The former Senator and now new President Elect Barack Obama

After all the other political promises proved to be artificial

Already starting to erase Black and White U.S. color line drama

He's charming and charismatic, drawing much love and international appeal

Come the inauguration, he'll be sworn in, no doubt in my mind—it's true

The hearts, loyalty, and trust of fed up Americans to win he had to steal

Much to the amazement and relief of ordinary citizens like me and you

Wonder if he ever hoped and dreamed that one day the President he'd be

Inevitable Biblical Prophecy of GOD, to be—it was unquestionably meant

My only regret, beloved transitioned family members did not live to see

To swear in this Nation's first elected American Black President

Right about now and from where I choose to stand it feels good to be me

Knowing that because I voted I'm a permanent part of Black and American History.

Restoration

By Felicia Jones

I started off having a pretty good life

Being a dedicated mother and devoted wife

Then I turned away from that familiar road,

I never knew how my life would soon unfold

There was so much pain, misery, and strife

All I tried then was to end my life.

I soon found out that wouldn't be

God had something better in store for me

With God's grace, mercy, and love I'm now free

To live my life filled with victory!

There are many things I have yet to do

One thing I know, God will see me through

I know He watches me from Heaven above

Constantly showering me with His unending love.

Father Was No Rolling Stone

By Rhonda Johnson

They say one's father is the one to go

I will prove you wrong on this account,

My father wasn't a rolling stone,

Though mother was one to doubt.

I'd wake up in the night,

To see my father watching,

As a child hoping to make things right.

Longing to make a dream catcher,

Though I knew it was far from the truth,

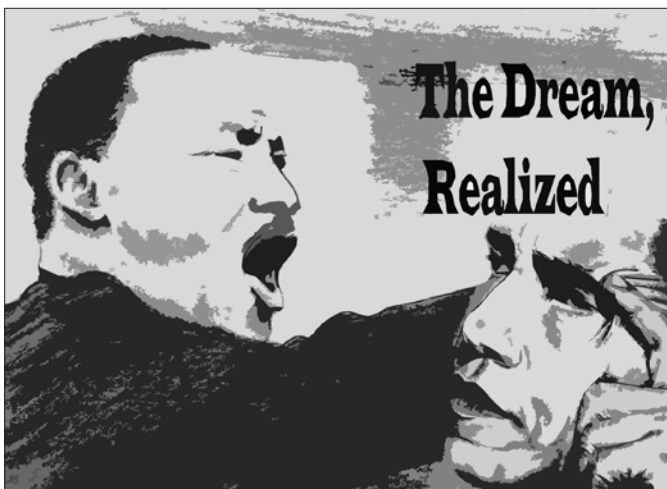
I hid my secret deep inside,

At the height of my despised youth,

I put on my prom dress with demise.

For my mother was a rolling stone,

My father, a man alone.



This Smile on My Face**By Sherice Lewis**

From time to time
 I stand here alone
 Thinking about these days of frustration
 As tomorrow awaits my arrival
 I strive to understand my loneliness of today
 For I smile for more than one reason
 And my tomorrow shall enjoy the grid
 of my experiences
 Of learning what this smile means to me
 As time awaits no man
 One shall smile because tomorrow will come
 I must smile because
 this is the smile
 On my face

My Odyssey**By Betsy Peltó**

The love we possess is real
 Belonging to you and me,
 Appeasing as a full course meal,
 We are meant to be,
 Embracing me tight,
 Sheltering me from pain,
 Never losing sight,
 Even what we've endured alas,
 No matter what the blast,
 Wisdom is what we hunger,
 Venturing from the past,
 Hand in hand we join the quest,
 Now it's time to show the world our best.

How Does One Compare the Moon to the Sun?**By Lavern Brown**

How does one compare the sun to the moon?
 One's bright and one's bare, so rare, do they appear,
 together?
 Sunshine wakes me as it lights up my room
 Peaceful is the moon, like the womb, that comforts
 me like a feather
 The sun is warm and so magnificently delightful
 At times it can beat you down and take energy from
 one's spirit
 The moon brings mystery, which can make the heart
 feel frightful
 Does the sun love you more 'cause you are able to
 feel it?

The moon is a familiar stranger, but some have
 touched its soul

The sun love can be felt from a distance, like the
 love of a mother

I think the moon loves me even though it's not
 always whole

The sun keeps me warm you can say earth's cover

How does one compare the sun and the moon?

They are the same; two hearts pumping through
 similar veins

They moon is my father, cold distant, and dream of
 seeing him soon

The sun is my mother there in the morning through
 all my growing pains.

The Dreamer and the Dream**By Mary Moore**

With notions of racial equality MLK Jr. was
 definitely a dreamer

Wonder what he'd say if he knew we've just
 realized his life-long dream

Frustrated tears of minority members falling and
 flowing like ribbon streamers

Past attempts to end prejudice blatantly ignored
 enough to make you scream

She refused to give up her seat and her name was
 Rosa Parks

Growing up listening to all the eloquent,
 inspirational speeches

All the Civil Rights Movement needed was her
 brave act to help start the spark

To this very day his articulate words, all hearts he
 still surely reaches

Any color citizen, without intimidation, can do
 whatever he/she chooses

Over the decades, there's now proof that we've
 gone from color to character

Without the threat of death, being beaten, or left
 with bruises.

Today I'm glad to say out loud that I'm proud to be
 an American

MLK Jr.'s dream to this day is still very much well
 and alive

Through President Barack Obama, Dr. King's
 dream is now realized.

From **Live Simply**By **Nicole Barnett**

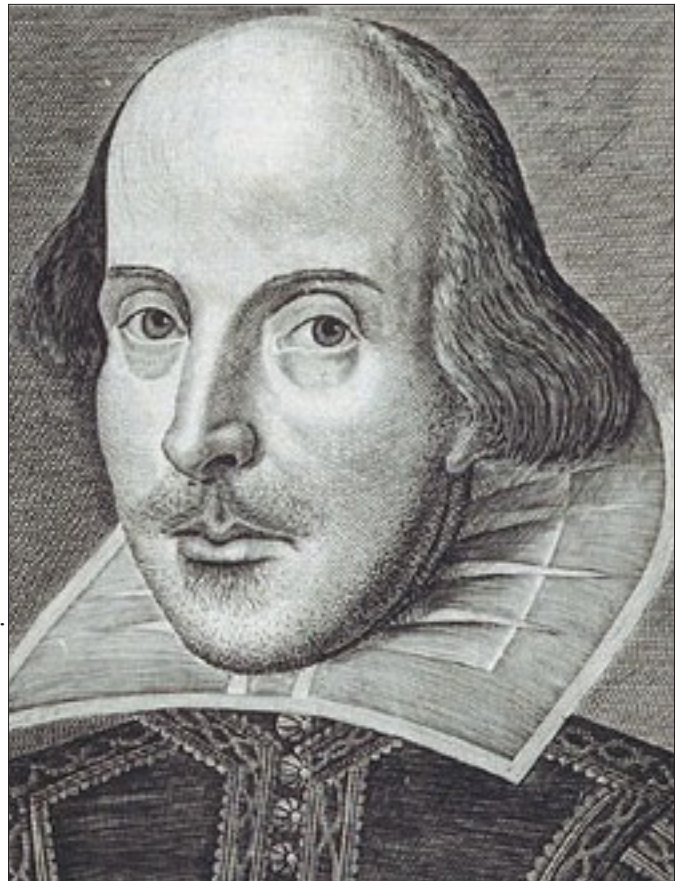
Live simply—so others may simply live
 For the Odyssey teachers, giving others an opportunity
 to achieve
 Their goals is truly a gift to give. . . .
 I've come out of the allegory, now I too have a story
 A story to tell, you see
 Education is the key. . . .
 I shall dwell
 In such place of peace
 Odyssey
 I now make knowledge
 Serve its purpose
 For me

TWO FAMOUS SONNETS:**Sonnet by Elizabeth Barrett Browning**

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
 For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
 I love thee to the level of every day's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
 I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
 I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
 I love thee with a passion put to use
 In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
 With my lost saints, --- I love thee with the breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life! --- and, if God choose,
 I shall but love thee better after death.

Sonnet by William Shakespeare

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove:
 O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
 It is the star to every wandering bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
 Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come:
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
 If this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.



Love in Brief

I don't want to miss a thing. I don't want to miss feeling my heart beat, eating fried foods and pastas, dancing, laughing, crying, running, sleeping, walking, watching movies or listening to music. I love living. **(Sherice Lewis)**

I feel good about myself when I take care of things that I am responsible for, be they big or small. **(Charles Sallay)**

Love God for blessing you with the breath of life when you awaken every morning and try to make the best of every day. **(Edwin Shumpert)**

I love to read! I love all the different places it takes me. **(Robert Garel)**

I love the turning earth. I love to look at the stars. **(Deb Scott)**

I love that every day is a new opportunity. **(Lea White)**

I love the fact that life is what you make of it. **(Emily Robinson)**

I love the chaos in my life. **(Cameron Travis)**

I love choices. **(Mary Moore)**

I love laughter. Laughter is a force that makes be

lieve "This, too, shall pass." **(Otis Harris)**

I love to laugh. Something so small and insignificant to some is my greatest pleasure. **(Wynetta Taylor)**

I love the struggle, I love that I am like no other, I love that I am free with my son. **(Shanita Lawrence)**

I love the fact that I wake up every morning to get my children ready for school and make them breakfast. **(Lavern Brown)**

I love the sound of my little girls' voices early in the morning with birds singing outside to awake me from a restful night. **(Nicole Barnett)**

I love cold winter days that allow me to go sledding with my children. **(Rhonda Johnson)**

I love doing my daughter Remy's hair. As I press my nose on top of her head, I can smell her innocence. **(Betsy Pelto)**

I love the fact that I was able to bring life. **(Jaunté Willis)**

I love that someone loves me-- my daughter Kimari. **(Dominique Christian)**

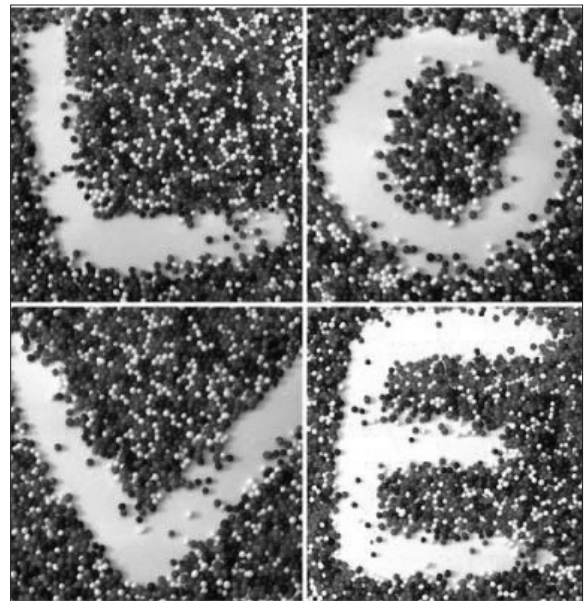
I love the sound of my grandchildren's laughter. **(Alice McDaniel)**

I love it when my daughter comes to me and asks me, "Dad, what does this word say?" **(Shannon Lawrence)**

I love my life and my daughter, Destiny. I love the challenges and obstacles I face every day. **(Felicia Anderson)**

I love nothing but my family. **(Steve Taylor)**

I love my children. I was 20 years old when I had my first child. I made a promise that I would show them love, teach them to love, respect and honor God. **(Felicia Jones)**



December Theatre Workshop with Baron Kelly

Thank you, Baron Kelly, for taking time out of your life to this cold place and show us a few things about acting.

(Shannon Lawrence)

Thanks for helping me find my voice. I have it but it's just hidden. I can tell that education did a lot for you, and you were just another motivational tool for me to go to and complete college.

(Stephen Taylor)

You can bring the best out of even the most introverted person.

(Edwin Shumpert)

Thank you for taking the time out to show us how emotional acting can be. Thank you for having my heart pound with adrenalin when I had to stand up in front of the class and act out a part of *Macbeth*. Our class laughed and smiled. I finally met a movie

star!

(Sherice Lewis)

You brought our class to life that night.

(Felicia Jones)

You helped wring out a "me" that I know was always there, but for the sake of protection, I kept it locked away. You have been a GREAT inspiration.

(Cameron Travis)

The coolest part about you being here is how you brought all of my classmates to life. I promise you that you kindled a fire inside some of the quiet ones.

(Betsy Pelt)

It was enlightening and refreshing, not to mention fun. It's been a long time since things got that physical inside a classroom for me.

(Mary Moore)

Thank you for such an empowering night. Emily knows

the right people to bring to class to inspire us!

(Otis Harris)

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to let our voices be heard. I really liked the part when you wanted us to breathe and stick out our stomachs. All I can say is that was way too easy for me considering me being 28 weeks pregnant at the time—sticking out was no problem for me!

(Lavern Brown)

I was afraid to participate in front of people, but when you showed me some techniques I was more confident with myself. I will remember your class for the rest of my life because you were so enthusiastic.

(Erika Rosales Serate)



