

# ODYSSEY ORACLE

## I LOVE...

*In class, Odyssey students wrote essays starting with "I love" in honor of Valentine's Day.*



**I love lying next to my son at night** and watching him sleep. When I lie next to him and see his little body cuddled up next to me, it's the best feeling ever. I feel like all the stress just fades away. As he breathes and I feel his

small breaths blowing on my face, it feels like a little bit of heaven. When he puts his hand on my face to make sure I'm there, it makes me smile just a little bit more. When he sleeps, he smacks his lips together because he thinks he has his pacifier in his mouth. His love for me comforts me. He is my heart and my everything, and I love how peaceful he is when he sleeps. **(Amber Turner)**

### In this Oracle . . .

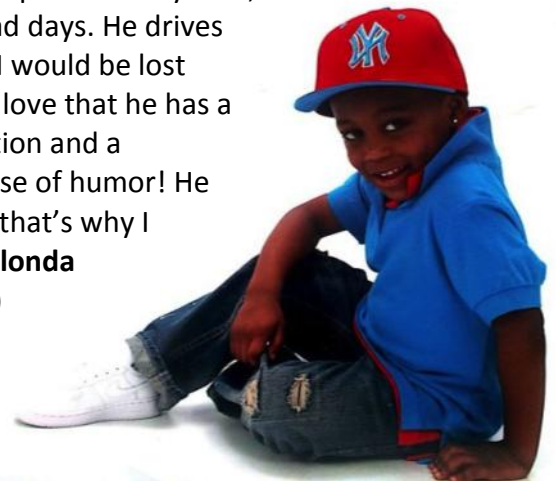
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**I love dark red roses.** They have a deep, pretty, strong color and smell wonderful. If you can smell them as closely as you can, it can be very special, whether it's one rose by itself or many of them together.

Dark red roses to me are the flowers of beautiful, strong, smart women that never die. **(Tanatnan Chaipang)**

**I love my son,** Jacary Noble. He is an energetic piece of work! He keeps me on my toes, even on my bad days. He drives me crazy, but I would be lost without him. I love that he has a great imagination and a wonderful sense of humor! He is my life, and that's why I love him! **(Shalonda Hilliard-Jones)**



**I love my daughter** more than words could ever express. Alleanah is a joy to wake up to every morning. She is always glad to see me. Her energy, love, and enthusiasm fill my heart to the fullest



capacity. Alleanah is so smart in her subjects in school. She seems ahead of her time with most statements she makes. She is like a sponge: she absorbs everything you say and do. Therefore, I have to be careful what I say and do in her presence.

I love Alleanah's voice. She sings to me every day. I don't think a day

has gone by that she hasn't sung since six months of age to the present.

Alleanah values me in a way no other person can, I like to believe simply because she's mine and I'm hers. I love looking into Alleanah's bright smiling eyes every day. I'm truly blessed to have her in my life. I love her with all that is in me, today and forever more. (**Sharisse Hancock**)

**I love my Webster's** with a great passion and sense of dependency. Webster's has never stood me up, let me down, or led me astray—never! It tells me secrets that sometimes no one else can even imagine. One time I was walking through a path of words and there were blank spots on the path. Out of nowhere, Webster's replaced those blank spots with words, and I was able to continue my walk.

Webster's sat me down one night and

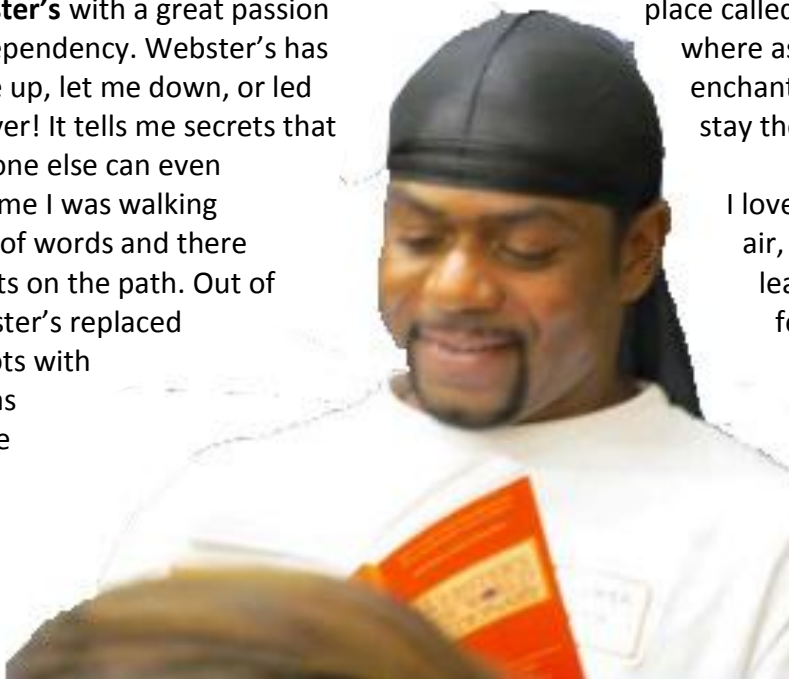
gave me an idea that landed me second place in an essay contest answering the question "Why Vote?" I have never known Webster's to be anything but perfect. Webster's has given me 230,000 reasons to be in love with it. I love my Webster's. (**Tosumba Welch**)



**I love a place called the River Road.** For me it's a place comparable to the enchanted forest. It's a place where not only can you get lost but you would be happy being lost there forever. It's a place where dogs run free and horses are your neighbors. It's a place where timber thickly grows while bald eagles and hawks fly free, a place where an Amish horse and buggy are common. I love this place called the River Road, a place where as the seasons change in this enchanted place the heart and soul stay the same.

I love the smell of fresh country air, the crunch of the gravel, leaves, and snow beneath my feet. I love chasing sunsets and eating apples from the trees on this place called the River Road. I love closing my eyes and standing still as I get lost in the timber listening to the leaves falling silently into

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# REVIEWS

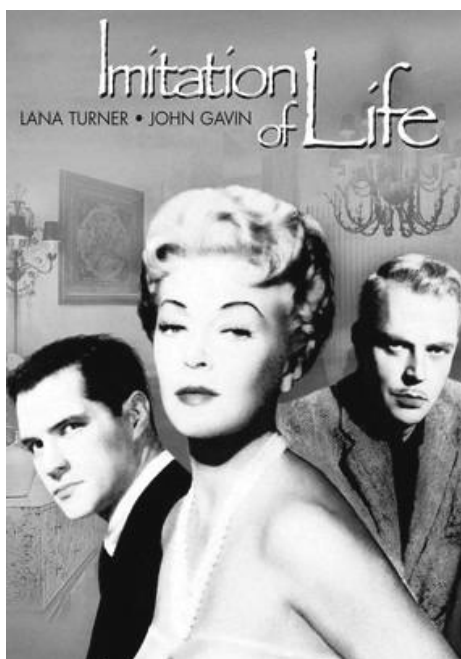


## **"Imitation of Life"**

**A Review by Michelle Whitman**

"Imitation of Life" was a heart-wrenching, tear-jerking, must-see-if-never-seen movie about mothers and daughters, black and white, rich and poor, love and hate, racism, sheer determination, and complete loss with no way of going back. This movie had so much emotion in it. I saw it years ago with my grandmother, years later with my daughter, and just the other day alone. I cried just as hard this time as I did when I watched it with my grandmother and daughter. This movie gave several variations of love, including scenes where love became sinister, unselfish, abusive, and even abandoning.

There were times I just wanted to jump into the movie. Have you ever loved someone so much that it just hurt? That's what I got from this movie—that sometimes people are so selfish that they fail to realize or even recognize the damage it can cause another. On the flip side, there was a love like a teacher, teaching others to love in ways that they



would never have known had a certain someone not come into their lives.

I guess you can see by now that this movie had a profound impact on me. You truly begin to care for the characters. In a world where so much is spent

on war and material things, the one thing we really need is to be taught to love. I have often thought in a room full of children of different ethnicities that when they are given toys they never take into account one another's color; they just play together. You see, it is so true when people say racism is learned. If you haven't seen this movie, please do.



## **"Django Unchained"**

**A Review by Munroe Whitlock**

What a beautiful movie! The star, Django, had character. He was genuine, love-filled, and determined.

He was also a quick learner and very good at analyzing a situation. The co-star, Dr. King Schultz, was intelligent and goal-oriented, and he began a true friendship with Django.

The opening of the movie showed one of the very lowest conditions in Django's life. . . . Imagine being shackled at the wrist and ankles to the point that the metal cut through your flesh, or to love someone so much that you want to be with that person for the remainder of your life but are forbidden from marrying because of the laws of the land. . . .

When Django and Broomhilda are separated, it is in physical body only. Their minds, hearts, souls, and spirits were yet unified; though separated, every moment they thought about, felt, heard, and saw each other. Truly they were not separated.

. . . This movie is the epitome of the statement "By Any Means Necessary." Django used wit, savvy, manipulation, and intellect. He used love, emotions, strength, and insight—all this and more to try to reunite in the flesh with his wife. But remember: they were never separated in their souls, minds, hearts, and spirits.



### **"Django Unchained"** **A Review by Britney Sinclair**

As I went into the theater to purchase my ticket, I saw it was a long line. My first attempt to get a ticket failed. The movie was sold out. When I went back, I asked for reviews. People came back with mixed emotions, but I was told, "You have to see it! It's a must see!"

I finally got a seat and was popcorn ready. I watched the movie, and to my amazement I loved it. It was like a black cowboy Western. It had humor, violence, and romance. I was taken aback by certain clips in the film, but overall I enjoyed it. It made me think and gave me chills at the same time. I also made the connection with the movie "Roots."



### **"Django Unchained" vs. "Lincoln"** **A Double Review by Jasmine Banks**

Django Unchained: Maybe my problem was I'm not a huge Quentin Tarantino fan and am not much on blood, violence, and the use of the word "nigger." Despite my own better judgments, I

made my way to the theater to see this highly anticipated and hyped movie. . . .

The movie set in the 1800s is about a white bounty hunter looking for a group of brothers that have a bounty on their head. The only problem is he doesn't know what they look like. So he seeks out a slave that has a history with the brothers (played by Jamie Foxx), enlists him as a bounty hunter, and off they go.

In my opinion, the best part of the movie is what happens when the bounty hunters end up at the plantation "Candyland" to free Django's wife Broomhilda (played by Scandal's Kerri Washington). From there it is nothing but sit-on-the-edge-of-your-seat enjoyment. As much as I love both Samuel L Jackson and Leonardo DiCaprio, they played their parts convincingly enough to make me cheer at their fate.

My target audience for this movie would be kids of color who don't want to hear or know about their slave heritage. Despite what they may have been told or taught, there were heroes among us besides athletes and rap stars. The music was a bit "cheeky" for my taste. I won't be buying the sound track, but the story line and acting are two thumbs up.

Lincoln: Going in, all I knew was Daniel Day Lewis was playing Lincoln and Sally Fields his wife Mary (or Molly, as he so lovingly called her). From the opening scene when Lincoln is speaking with Negro soldiers to the end when on his death bed, the movie was simply breathtaking.

This movie was in the time of the 1800s during the term in which the Emancipation Proclamation was enacted.

One thing I love is when I can learn from something, and during this







movie I learned quite a bit about Abraham Lincoln. I learned about the giant yet quiet strength of Lincoln, as well as the fact that he was a story teller and loved making jokes. I found it amazing how he grieved over the loss of his son and loved his family. The size of his heart,

his compassion, and his intelligence were comparable to none.

The portrayal of Lincoln by Daniel Day Lewis made me feel as if Lincoln were starring as himself. One thing that I truly enjoyed about "Lincoln" was seeing him not only as President but a father as well.

During this entire movie I was rooting for Lincoln even though a scene with his wife's chambermaid leads me to believe that he thinks freeing the slaves may not be the right thing to do.

I'm not one to watch award shows, but I did hear that "Lincoln" only won one Golden Globe. I was and was not surprised. In my opinion, the directing, acting, music score and cinematography were outstanding. But then again, what do I know?

Who would I recommend to see this movie?  
Anyone and everyone should see it.

Even though comparing "Django Unchained" and "Lincoln" would be like comparing apples to oranges, out of the two for me "Lincoln" came out on top.



### **From "Roots" to "Django"** **A Review by Dominique Haskins**

When I saw that "Roots" was coming on, I couldn't wait to see it again, even though I saw it years ago when it first aired on TV. I didn't watch all of the episodes then or even this time, but I worked harder to pay attention to what I did watch. I wanted to see how it all started and began with slavery.

I was still so angry at the treatment of slaves and the torture. To actually watch it being played out made me think that if I had been a slave I probably would have tried to take my own life. At the same time, I thank God I live in this time frame now. Look at how far God has brought us! We have definitely come this far by faith.

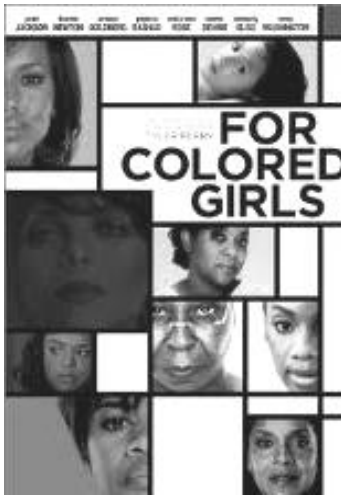
"Django," which stars Jamie Foxx, is about a slave who encounters a white bounty hunter from Germany. He seeks Django's help in finding these brothers, dead or alive. In exchange for Django's help, the bounty hunter promises his freedom. "Django" showed some scenes that were hard to watch, just like "Roots." It was very painful at times but also was a good depiction of slavery.



### **"For Colored Girls"** **A Review by Patrice Smith**

During break I decided to take my fiancé to a play at the Overture Center. We were lucky enough to come into free tickets; I was so excited, for I surely didn't have the extra money. The play was called "For Colored Girls." I had seen the Tyler Perry production of it, so I had some assumptions about the play already. To my surprise, it was totally different from what I had in mind.

A group of at least ten beautiful women ranging



from milk chocolate, caramel, dark chocolate, to even vanilla danced across the stage. I was curious to see just how these women would capture the audience with no stage settings. Tears, singing, and laughter filled the theater to the brim. These bright

young faces stared into a sea of women dotted with a few men. They bellowed out their lines creating the scene with smiles, frowns, tears, and serious and depressing facial expressions; no props were needed.

My heart fluttered with each character; somehow it seemed as if she were me. Every line dripped with emotion, ran down the stage and into the audience. For a moment we became one and shared the same teeth sucking, neck rolling, head shaking, sad and happy moments.

The women in the audience were snapping their fingers and verbally responding to the actresses on stage. Some women knew the play by heart and recited the lines. I felt as if I was at an all-women's club meeting and felt sympathy towards the men in the audience. After all, the play did display women's issues with men. At the same time, I was impressed with how the men, at least my man, could be open-minded and receptive to a woman's painful expression. Some of the men were smacking their lips and yelling, "Oh no, he didn't, girl!" The atmosphere was radiant with color, boldness, and purpose.

These women brought words to life. I was emotionally exhausted by the end of the play. The young women in the play were university students. I give them all an A+ because the play was awesome.



### **Winter Bridal Show at Alliant Energy Center A Review by China Moon Crowell**

During this academic winter break I participated in the 2013 Wedding Planner and Guide Winter Bridal Show at the Alliant Energy Center on January 12 and 13. I own and operate a cocktail catering company called Bartender 608 Intoxicologists which provides bartenders and bar service for hire in the southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois areas.

The attendance was promising, with 2,246 bride-to-be's and company on Saturday and 1,568 on Sunday. This was my first Bridal Trade Show, and I was nervous setting up on Friday night, only to be welcomed with open arms from some of the other exhibitors. . . .

Everything was beautiful, the exhibitors friendly and the attendees inquisitive. I received a lot of positive feedback from those who stopped by my booth and entered my raffle. I manned my booth all by myself and handled the pressures like a trooper. My business serves cocktails, mocktails (non-alcoholic cocktails), specialty cocktails, and beer and wine service. While speaking and engaging in conversation with those that stopped by my booth, I served a variety of tasty multicolored and multi-flavored mocktails to those that stopped in. Many people were refreshed to taste and hear about an option that was refreshingly light and easy on the palette for those that do not engage in spirits. . . .

Every day since the show, I've woken up to emails and voice mails inquiring about my business. I continue to struggle with advertising capital (these shows aren't cheap for a small business such as mine), but I'm staying positive, hopeful, and driven. . . . I enjoy being an entrepreneur; besides school, there's no greater joy than being up for hours on end concentrating and investing in myself.

# MOVED BY MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

*Here are excerpts from letters Odyssey students wrote to the spirit of Dr. King after reading his eloquent "Letter from Birmingham Jail."*



Dear Dr. King,

I would like to thank you for writing this letter. The most touching part of your letter was when you talked of children and how they could not understand the mistreatment of others around them. They are so young and innocent that the taste of prejudice has not even entered their palette. As an adult, it is extremely hard to grasp. Through the eyes of a child, it must look so foreign and strange to be discriminated against. You used clear examples of this when you stated how hard it was to explain to your "six-year-old daughter why she cannot go to a public amusement park that has just been advertised on television and see the tears welling up in her little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children." This statement was powerful to me, and it moved me. **(Mary Millon)**



I found your Letter from Birmingham Jail relevant to me because you, just like Abraham Lincoln, believe that all men/women are created equal. I am a young man that deals with discrimination every day due to my sexuality. Just like you are fighting for freedom for blacks, I want to fight for the right to love who I want. You struggle with blacks being treated unequal to whites because of their skin color. I have to struggle with being treated as unequal because of how I feel for a man. Just as

you said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere"; this is injustice. Dr. King, you have touched me deeply by saying that freedom is never given voluntarily but must be demanded. I appreciate you for giving me the strength not to give up on fighting for my freedom as a young male to love who I want.

**(Brandon Williams)**



We have waited for our Constitutional and God-given rights to not just be a dream but a reality. In 2013 we celebrate your birthday. Can you believe the world has celebrated the first man of color, Barack Obama, as our President?

What was meant to kill and destroy our self-esteem as people of color in America has made us stronger and more confident and empowered. We are no longer belittled but have become politicians, presidents, business owners, and American citizens whose dreams have been made in stone in history books. I can see a day when color will not matter. **(Derrick McCann)**



Being extreme for justice and equality was needed in the 60s and is still needed today in 2013. Just as people masked in the 60s, people are masking today. However, we've become more politically correct.

People don't as a rule outright call you a 'nigger.' However, white supremacy still lives today. I loved the fact that you referenced so many great people in history: Socrates, Jesus

Christ, Paul, John the Baptist. I loved the simile, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream," which was a quote from Amos. I thank you for your bravery and courage. (**Sharisse Hancock**)



I have read the letter you wrote from Birmingham Jail, and I must say that this letter has allowed you to state your case in a response to the eight white clergymen who argued that the battle against racial segregation should be fought in the courts,

not in the streets. You were arrested for parading without a permit. That seems unjust to me because it denied your First Amendment privilege. My favorite quote from you is, "Faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant." Well done, Dr. King. (**Dominique Haskins**)

It is strange that people can find a problem with demonstrators who demonstrate about an



unjust issue, but these same people don't find a problem with the unjust issue. That means they ignore it, act like it does not exist, or minimize it. It is clear, Dr. King, that a law created by an unjust process with the purpose of

inflicting injustice in the lives of humans is an unjust law. It is not an injustice to break those types of laws. To say that someone deserves to be treated unjustly because that person demonstrated against injustice is a thought bordering on mental instability. To ask a people to wait for Justice when they have already waited hundreds of years for that same Justice would cause that people to believe Justice is never coming. (**Munroe Whitlock**)



I admire how you made it your life's work to seek what Christianity has claimed but somehow has lost in translation: love and equality. You're right: the oppressed must demand freedom, or frustration will grow like an "ill-formed child." If we all feel injustice is being done, why are we afraid to take action against it? Are we afraid to sacrifice ourselves out of selfishness? (**Carrie Llerena Sesma**)



You argue in the letter you wrote from Birmingham Jail that "Anyone who lives in the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country." That specific statement caught my attention because very often I identify myself as an outsider, even though I have been living in the States for almost two decades. After reading your Letter from Birmingham Jail, I have changed my point of view about this issue. Also, while I was reading I was moved by your idea about "Justice too long delayed is justice denied." Unfortunately, this was a true



statement because it took so many years for black Americans to have equality in legal and social issues. **(Angelica Cuahuey)**



You alluded to Lincoln in his Emancipation of the slaves in saying the nation cannot survive half slave and half free . . . but didn't we? We all were not emancipated right away. I agree that sometimes one must stand and be willing to be "extreme,"

especially when it serves or represents what is righteous in the wrong circumstance of egregious issues. As you pointed out, Jesus was an extremist willing to die for love, truth, and goodness. Where would we be if he hadn't? **(Eunice Conley)**



I moved to the United States in 2006 from Southeast Asia. Today this country has more than just two races, black and white. Today we have black, white, Asian, Spanish, and Middle eastern. The world is so complicated and sensitive, and it seems like

everything is working slowly. People are afraid to lose what they have and are too lazy to change. We still have separation between black, white, Asian, and Mexican neighborhoods. I believe each one of us is just a person, and we all need love. I'm gently asking everyone of every color to let go of negative beliefs about those of other colors. **(Tanatnan Chaipang)**



It can be painful to stick to a non-violent route to try and restore order. Please continue to fight for our human rights. We do not and should not live in injustice. You said it was necessary, as Socrates said it was, to create tension in the minds of the

people as individuals. I admire you for being separated from your family and fighting for such a worthy cause as world change. I'm with you and praying to see the outcome of equality.

**(Angela Jordan-Jackson)**

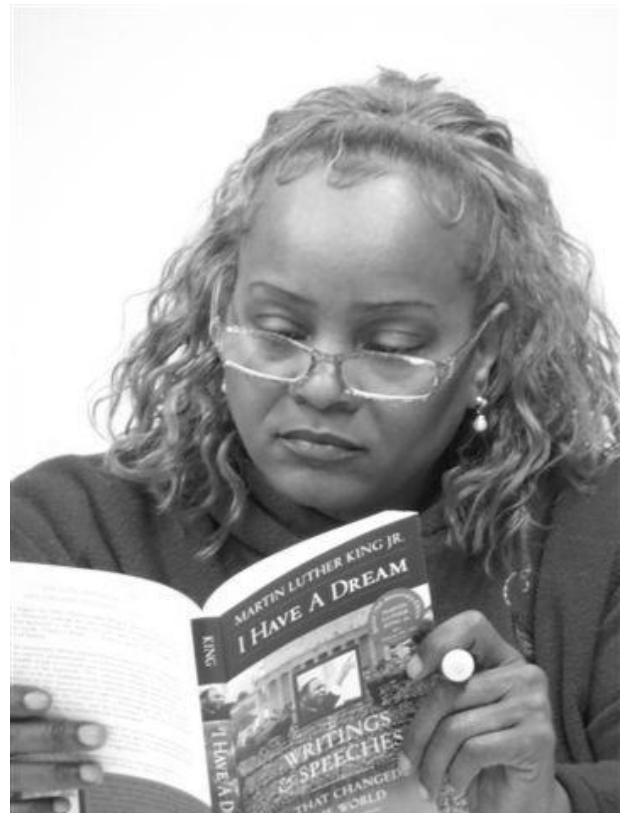


Sir, you expressed in your letter a certain level of disappointment in the lack of support by "white moderates" in helping the Negro to grasp his/her civil rights in a nation that bleeds hypocrisy. You said that you had "hoped that the white moderate

would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice, and that when they fail to do this they become dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress." I have been in full support of the move toward social progress for the Negro and shall continue to be, based upon his and her right to share fully the harvest of America, the harvest sown with the sweat and blood labor of every enslaved African brought to American soil. **(James Morgan)**



I had parents like you who told me to treat people as I would like to be treated. My mother said to me it doesn't cost anything to say hello to a person. I'm teaching the same lessons to my children. We all can learn from each other. Governor George Wallace



and the Ku Klux Klanners will lose the battle. People are tired of being put down, kicked, killed, and pushed to the back of the line. We stand tall, united as a body to go forward to help bring justice to all. **(Jovenus Price Pierce)**



I can never begin to thank you for all you are going through and what you've done so far for me and my generation of students. I am able to go to college because of you! Reading your letter is teaching me how to be more patient and at the same time to

hurry up and stand up for what's right. I love how you express that we no longer want to wait! I no longer want to wait to learn, to love, or to stand up right along next to you. I no longer am waiting to face life as you would want me to live. **(LoLita Phillips)**



Thank you for the way you surrendered your life for the cause of justice in this country. Your description of many effective techniques to support your beliefs against racism and your use of biblical examples show that your non-

violent actions were necessary for African Americans to move forward. You stated that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" and "whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly," which is the truth of the matter. **(Nancy Wambua)**



What is the difference between a just law or unjust law? You say "a just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law of God." My example is that a just law would sentence everybody equally when they commit

a crime, but an unjust law sentences people to unequal prison time or jail. You say, "We must see the need of having non-violent gadflies." You, Dr. Martin, can be compared to Socrates. He believed that you should be able to speak what you



want and talk the truth. **(Tracey Cherry)**



With President Obama's second term inauguration events happening this weekend, I feel the progress and the restraint simultaneously. Your metaphor of thalidomide was right-on regarding how we must always wait, and if we don't do things in a timely

manner, they come out all discombobulated, backwards, and off-cue. As a multiracial woman of color, I see things from more than a few points of view from the Yellow, Black, Brown, and Red sides of my family. I am not a confrontational person by nature. However, there are times when it takes all my strength to tell myself, "the jail time isn't worth it; I've got too much to lose" over the stupid and hurtful things people say. Many days, my extreme is to simply walk away and ignore people, leaving people feeling stupid and alone with their remarks. Inequality is everywhere. I do hope your letter continues to reach those in need. It reached me tonight, and I feel I'm a better person for reading, understanding, and living it. **(China Moon Crowell)**



As I was reading your letter written from Birmingham Jail, I couldn't help but see the terrifying similarities between a segregated South in 1963 and the "desegregated" United States of America in 2013. Why would

anyone forbid universal healthcare? I'm amazed at just how selfish and self-righteous a society we have become (or still are). As I read your letter, my heart began to break for so many different reasons—heartbreak because in my heart I think of the people who suffered the loss of their lives for my freedom; heartbreak at the thought of how far we've come but how many steps back we have taken; heartbreak that I live, my daughter lives, and now my granddaughter lives in a time where we are still judged "not by the content of our character but instead by the color of our skin." (**Jasmine Banks**)



I agree with you when you say the word "wait" is a prolonged injustice: "This wait has almost always meant Never." I find myself losing my faith in justice for all colors. But what amazes me is your ability to stand in the midst of this

storm, even when your fellow brothers and sisters have fallen short of reaching this goal. Your respect for former leaders and philosophers like Socrates, Lincoln, and Jefferson shows your understanding of their minds and beliefs despite the color of their skin. Your non-violent response to police brutality I find God-like, following the path of Jesus. (**Patrice Smith**)



To my amazement after reading your letter I cannot understand all you endured and still did not fight using your hands instead of your mouth. It dawned on me that it can be frustrating to be beaten, imprisoned, and taken advantage

of for unjust reasons, but what good is a man who uses his fists? A man with such power in his words can reach even challenged minds. In this age people have lost sight of what was fought for. We are still missing such creative extremists as yourself. So with your letter I do vow to take action to make the first movement within myself. (**Britney Sinclair**)



The letter you wrote while you were in the Birmingham Jail hit me deep down. The powerful words you dispersed in your letter brought nothing but the truth out on a sheet of paper. The explanations you gave on the law being just or unjust were

thorough and specific. It angers me to know that to get the rights of a simple human being was like hitting concrete repeatedly and not getting anywhere but a bruised and bloody fist. As it says in your letter, "Will we be extremists for hate or will we be extremists for love?" (**Amber Turner**)



Years ago in the South there were people who connived with officials to prevent blacks from registering to vote, and that is still happening now. Help me to understand how it is that a race of people so dependent at one time upon another race to raise their

children, cook their food, grow their crops, clean their homes, even breastfeed their children can think they are superior? How can such so-called superior races have such inferior behavioral patterns? . . . In tears, like a clandestine waterfall, I continued to read your letter, just thinking of all the sacrifices made and how 50 years later we are again stagnant. We are no longer a melting pot . . . we are a pot melting. I end my letter with one of your quotes: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." (**Michelle Whitman**)



This letter has brought me visions of just how unjustly we and our fellow predecessors were treated. The peace, patience, and pain you have all endured is more than any human should have lived with. . . . Black and brown colored people no longer worry to the extent that

they did 60 plus years ago. I thank my fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers who were beaten

for walking the streets in protest, rode the front seats causing disturbance, sat at all-white countertops, and showed that they didn't need violence to get their justice. (**Akilah Freeman**)



I'm impressed by and love the way you quote Socrates to show the clergymen that a certain kind of tension is created to help men to rise towards understanding and brotherhood. Dr. King, you represent a large part of our African-American mosaic of history. Your obdurate passion for desegregation

is mind blowing, and your eloquent voice has a roaring demand for equality and justice. . . . I'm joyful of those you have quoted in this letter to get your views across such as Socrates, Apostle Paul, Reinhold Niebuhr, T. S. Eliot, Paul Tillich, and others. . . . At last I want to thank you for putting a blanket over that malediction the clergymen added in their letter about the false deeds of the Birmingham police, not mentioning their very brutal ways of controlling a non-violent group time after time. Dr. King, your response to the clergymen's letter is one of the greatest, most mind-blowing and lion-roaring letters I have ever read. (**Tosumba Welch**)

## CLASS METAPHOR

BY AMBER TURNER

We are all a part of a picture, a picture that has different pieces yet fits as one in a single frame. Without one piece, we are not complete. Without the entire equation, you will never find the solution. Missing pieces will always make us incomplete. To be whole, we need to be as one: a part of a picture in a single frame.—Amber Turner



*(continued from pg. 2)*

the arms of Mother Earth. The river running through has a smell and sound like no other. I dream of sleeping under a sky lit up by twinkling stars instead of city lights.

Here on the River Road is where love lives and peace lies. Every time I leave this place, I leave a piece of my heart. I know that one day I will travel to the River Road never to return from where I've come. **(Jasmine Banks)**



**I love my dog.**

Reeko is my furry, happy, excitable eight-year-old labra-doodle. He is black and lovable.

One cold, rainy December morning eight long years ago, my husband called me

at work. He said, "I have a great idea. Let's get the kids a dog for Christmas. . . .The dog is in Neceda." I said, "Where's that?" and we jumped on the highway after we made up an excuse for me to leave work.

As we pulled up to a desolate and almost abandoned trailer park on a cold rainy day, I wasn't sure if this was what I wanted to do. A girl in heavy books that looked to be 15 or 16 waved us through a muddy, manmade driveway. In the distance I saw a huge male dog (poodle) pacing back and forth. In the trailer, I saw a feeble mama dog. We pulled to the back and up to a huge cage of puppies. They were all adorable cutie pies encrusted in mud. The owner had just put out some "slop." All the dogs ran to eat except the one little black dog with grey coloring. He came to the fence as if to say, "Get me the hell outta here now, please." I asked my husband if we should take him,

and he agreed. We forked over the money and drove away with our new muddy baby. I remember instantly feeling love.

My dog Reeko has gotten me through many hard times. He always greets me with a hug (literally), standing up and wrapping his 'arms' around me. He has done this consistently for eight years every day. Forget the kids: that's MY dog, and I love him to death. **(Mary Millon)**

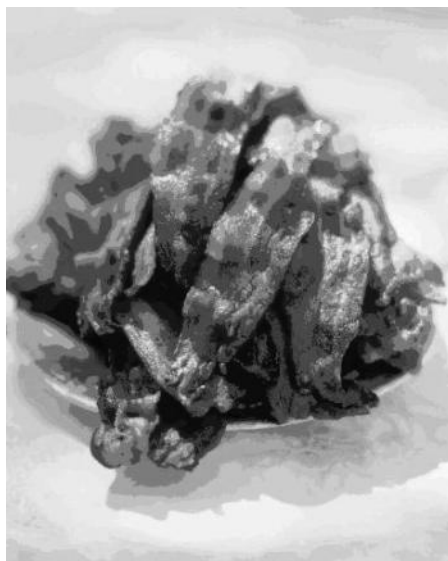


**I love, I love, I love my blackness**

I look in the mirror and I love who I am  
I see someone I've never seen before  
I love my skin, caramel in color  
My hair defines who I am,  
Strong and coarse yet carefully cared for.  
I love my blackness slightly bent  
but not broken

Short in stature, determined and strong willed.  
My blackness is like wine: it gets better with time  
I love my blackness, my blackness I love.  
I feel ageless as my blackness keeps me young.

**(Michelle Whitman)**



**I love bacon!** I love the smell and the taste of it! I cook it myself, and I don't fry it. I put it in the oven. Oh, my goodness! After it's been in the oven for at least 10-15 minutes, my mouth just starts to water. I go to the hometown buffet practically every Sunday, and to see the pan full of bacon just simply takes



my breath away and makes my mouth begin to water. I can hardly wait to sit down and take small bites at a time. I know pork isn't good for you, but bacon is so good. I'm thinking about it now and looking forward to fixing me some bacon tomorrow. (**Dominique Haskins**)



**I love fudge round Debbie cakes.** I love the sweet, thick, dark milky chocolate and the way it melts in my mouth so warm and soft that I cannot get enough. This great taste goes right with a glass of milk white like snow in the winter but warm like tea when you are sick. I feel this combination goes together like fish in water or like the stars and the moon. (**Derrick McCann**)



**I love being a creative person.** For me, being creative opens the door(s) to so many possibilities in life. It allows me to be open to the views and opinions of others and to see life in a way that's

fulfilling. Even in the act of breathing there's the capacity to create rhythm and rhyme in concert with each heartbeat.

I love being "kuumba" (creative) because it keeps and renews my relationships with others, with nature, with the universal creator of all things male and female, female and male, old and young, past, present, and future. (**James Morgan**)

**I love the time I get to myself,** each and every moment of it. Everyday activities, caring for a small child: these are the things that take away the feelings I once had. I remember waking up, leaving, going to school, coming home, and having



my days to myself when I was younger, still living in my mother's house. I remember the quiet I could allow myself when I wanted peace to write, to read, to truly be alone, engulfing myself in the sound of silence. Every day and many mornings, I take pride in giving myself alone time by waking up a little early, or I wait for my daughter to go to bed so I can bask in a quiet ambience. (**Akilah Freeman**)

**I love when I don't have to get up in the morning to go to work.** After everyone is gone to work or school, I lie in bed and snuggle under the covers. I take a deep, slow breath and listen to the sound of silence. I hear the beat of my heart, something I can't hear when everyone else is around.

I roll back and forth across my cool sheets that make the hairs on my legs stand up. My back and my neck crack in places that I didn't know were

stiff. The tension melts away and leaves no air between me and the blankets. Ahhh. Back and forth, I feel goose bumps all over me. . . .

I hear my voice, gentle and kind. I hear nothing else in the world except my thoughts, my heart beat, and the rustle of my body brushing under the covers. My toes spread wide, and the air hits them through the edge of the blanket. Stretch.... Ahh, I never want to leave. Nothing is more sensational to my complete self. (**Carrie Llerena Sesma**)



**I love my son** because he is my only one. Ever since he was born, he has been right beside me. I love his smile with his dimple. I love that he and I can come together in different situations and also that he is quiet, unlike his sisters who give a lot of feedback. I love him for bringing into the earth four handsome grandsons. I just love him because he's mine. When he got sentenced a year and a half ago to a lot of time in prison, it took everything out of me. Today I love him the same. Son, I love you no matter what. (**Tracey Cherry**)

**I love life** because when I wake up I know it wasn't an alarm clock that woke me up: it was my creator. My heavenly father has grace, love, and patience. He understands me. He knows why I was created. He holds me up when I cannot stand. He gives me strength when I'm so weak.

He lets me know I'm not alone. I love him so very much. . . . I love the Odyssey Project. I love the Class of 2013. I love my life. I'm so glad Emily and Odyssey chose me. (**Jovenus Price Pierce**)

**I love life.** This would be something I never imagined saying. Life once upon a time was lost and dark. I really didn't think I had much life or that it was worth living. I have now been restored. My mind has reset its thinking. Despite my obstacles I manage to keep a smile. I walk with a different stride and talk with so much confidence. The air I breathe tastes and smells invigorating. I love my new life. 'Single, standing strong, and living life' is my new motto. (**Britney Sinclair**)

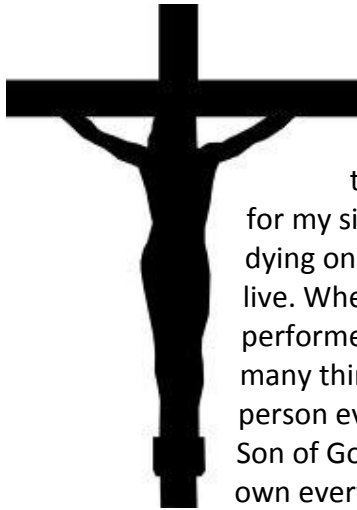
**I love my life.** When I stop time with the silence of my thoughts, I start to think of all the children who have been taken from homes against their will, before graduating. I love my life because I am free to soar like an eagle on a warm summer day. . . . There are people who have been put in a hole, but for some reason I was given a chance to grow like a sunflower in the winter days of Wisconsin. This is why I love my life. (**Brandon Williams**)



**I love my mother,** for she is the foundation of our family. Proof of this is in the accomplishments my daughter achieved. I remember my daughter once saying, "Daddy, I've done the things I've done in life because of the talks I've had with Grandmama." I said, "Oh?" She said, "I'm talking about your mama, Daddy." That statement blew me away. I was very surprised that they talked in

that manner. You see, my mother was a very busy woman and very committed to any task that she took on. She strived for excellence and loved very hard. What she expected of herself, she also expected of her children. It was surprising to learn she passed that part of our heritage to the next generation. Thank you, Mom. I love you.

**(Munroe Whitlock)**



**I love Jesus Christ** for the things that I heard and read about him. He was born and went through a lot of problems for my sins, and he ended up dying on the cross so that I can live. When he was on earth, he performed many miracles and did many things. He was just a simple person even though he was the Son of God. He had the power to own everything on earth or do anything that he needed to do, but

he chose to be tempted, accused, and beaten. Many bad things were done to him, but he did not complain or do bad things to those people.

**(Nancy Wambua)**

**I love a good road trip in the summer time.** I prefer to ride with the windows down, with the warm air tapping my face and the freshness of the air tickling my nose. I love the conversations and confessions that go on when confined to the car. No one can get up to leave the room. Those road trips are a good way to catch up. **(Michelle Reams)**

**I love being a child care provider.** The babies are such a reward. They say the funniest things and are brutally honest. One of them can't get my name right. He calls me Mr. Angie—so funny! They love for me to turn on music or Netflix so they can take turns picking out movies. I love laughing at their characters, and I love the fact that their parents trust me to take care of

them. The babies are always asking to come to Mr. Angie's house. God blessed me with the babies. It's called one hand washing the other. I help some of the women at my church out, and in turn it helps me. I love those babies as much as they love me. **(Angela Jordan Jackson)**

**I love my job working with children** because I enjoy it. They make my day. When they come, they open the door, run to me, give me hugs and kisses, and call my name—"JoJo." They make me feel so happy. The children are very amazing and give real love. With them, I learn a lot of things, like how to be patient. I never thought I could be able to work with



children. I

am so happy to hear the parents tell me that their child is so excited every morning to come see "JoJo." That's the name the children gave me.

**(Jovite Rayaisse)**

**I love my life and the people in it.** I am so blessed and loved. I can't complain about anything. I'm starting to see what life is really about. Each day I see myself becoming the woman I need to be for myself, my family, and my child. I'm stronger, wiser, and more determined, and I have goals. My family is my life and I theirs. We lost our brother in May 2012, and we have become so strong to not fall apart. They push me to keep going on, and when I need help they are there to pick me up. What else can I ask for? I have support all around me, and I love it. **(El-Rasheedah Wilson)**

**I love to fish.** I remember when my grandmother and I used to prepare for the next morning. We would get everything that we were going to need the next morning. We would make sandwiches



and get drinks, fishing lines, and a radio with full batteries. The next morning at the crack of dawn we headed out to one of the special spots hours away from the house. . . . I love the relaxation—the sound of the water crashing on the rocks, the singing of the birds, and the all-important sound of “I got one!” I love it no end. **(Lewis Black)**

**I love it when I learn!** I love it when I get so focused that unnoticeably my mouth grows wider and wider without my knowing it. I love it when I am so focused that I have not one question to ask until the very end of my learning moment when I have yet to ask but one question that I am only asking myself: how can I learn some more? When I am so focused that I can't wait to come back into the class for more, I love it. **(LoLita Phillips)**



**I love bartending!** Blue collar, short fingernails, fruit garnishes, therapist, confidante are just a few

names that describe it. Now me? I am an Intoxicologist—a bartender focused on taste, presentation, and chemistry with my fresh ingredients. I love to muddle fresh fruit; nothing is more exciting on my counter at home than buying a new spirit and concocting three new or classic drinks from it.



Liquor gets a bad name in Wisconsin, but my business (Bartender 608) is here to educate, entertain, and enlighten your palette! **(China Moon Crowell)**

**I love my mother's perfume** and its loud, choking, piercing, breathtaking, yet subtle and gentle scent. This scent is mixed with the smell of nicotine from her cancerous Newport cigarettes. It may seem odd, but this is what home, comfort, and LOVE smell like.

My mother loves the scent "White Diamond" by Elizabeth Taylor. It is a strong perfume that reminds me of an old woman. This is what I always end up telling my mother, but that doesn't change her opinion about it. When I was younger, I would lie in my bed trying to ignore the fact that it was time for school, but that was almost impossible knowing that my mother had dumped half the bottle of White Diamond perfume onto her deep chocolate skin! The strong smell would seep through the cracks from her bedroom door into mine, and that would instantly get me up and out of the bed for school. This was my way of knowing that she was headed towards my room to get me out of bed herself. This scent was almost like an alarm clock.

Although I hated the scent "White Diamond" when I was younger, it has surprisingly







grown on me. I will never personally wear it myself, but I love the fact that once my mother is long gone with the Lord I will have something nostalgic to remember her by. Every holiday is so easy to please my mother. We all know exactly

what she wants, and that's the loud, choking, piercing, breathtaking perfume called "White Diamond." If she loves it, I LOVE IT. (**Fantasia House**)

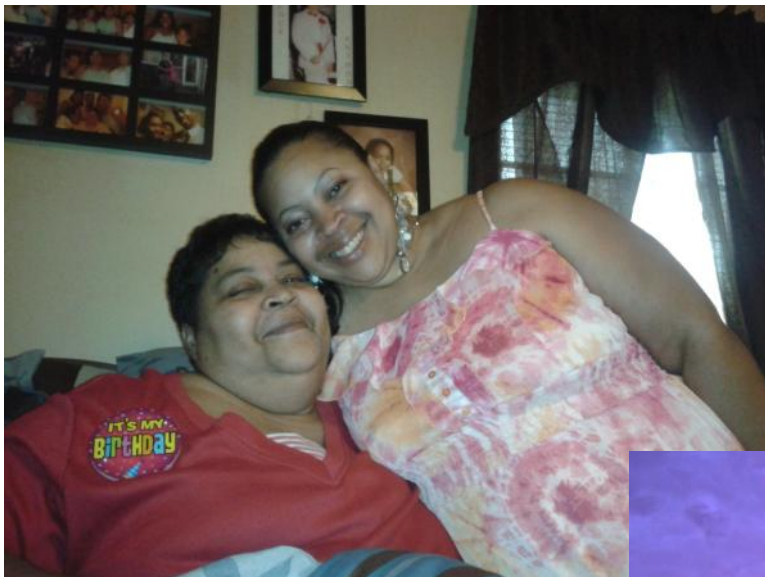
making a way for everyone around her, she is known for having a wealth of knowledge and being everyone's go-to girl! (**Eunice Conley**)

**I love Golden Girls re-runs** and the way they make my face tighten and my belly dance when I lose my breath laughing. My attitude changes



almost instantly, like flipping a light on in a room full of darkness. Even though these ladies are from the 1980s, I always feel their personality fill the room with laughter, brightness, and joy. Watching my Golden Girls late at night right before bed helps me to slip into a peaceful sleep with a smile on my face, thinking, "I hope my best friends and I are this close when we get to be their age." It makes me appreciate the Blanche, Sophia, and Dorothy in my life. (**Patrice Smith**)

**I love waking up every morning** because it is one of the most peaceful moments. Watching the sunrise is something I enjoy. . . . (**Angelica Cuahuey**)



**I love the strength my mother has.** She has overcome so many adversities in her life and still is overcoming obstacles that she is faced with. She barely makes it from month to month because of her health and shortcomings. She has been through domestic abuse, an enlarged heart, cancer (myeloma), diabetes, and poverty. Culturally rich and

