

ODYSSEY ORACLE

ODYSSEY EFFECT

Odyssey has affected me in a very profound way. I've met people from all walks of life. I've been given a chance to revisit my old love: school.
(Michelle Whitman)



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Photography by Richard Baker, Laurie Greenberg, and Keith Meyer; Sketches by Stanley Sallay '07

Odyssey is making me continue on with school no matter how tired I get! (LoLita Phillips)

Odyssey has changed my life in so many ways. It has pushed me to follow my dream of continuing my education. Not only has it changed my life in that way, but when I was struggling and thought I would give up, I could come here and be comforted and happy. No matter what, Odyssey was there through hardship.
(Amber Turner)



I talk louder and clearer.
(Tanantan Chaipang)





It has affected me in a great way. It is helping me to strive towards my goal. Being in the Odyssey Project has been a help to me, and earning six credits is a start. (**Dominique Haskins**)

I've been very aware of history and the meaning of a lot of big political words. This was

something I wanted to do for a long time: return to school and give my children something extra to value about me. I'm a victor not a victim.

(**Angela Jordan-Jackson**)

Odyssey has a generational impact. (**James Morgan**)

It's a feeling of friends, and it's good to know others are going through the same troubles and good times as you. I feel that I'm not alone. (**China Moon Crowell**)



Odyssey has helped me to be more open than before. (**Nancy Wambua**)

This is a positive foundation that has given me more confidence and love. I can really see a vision now of a bright future. (**Derrick McCann**)

The Odyssey Project has given me a second chance at continuing my college education.

Odyssey is giving me the confidence I need to continue college. (**Sharisse Hancock**)



I moved from a small town in Arkansas and left my family behind. The Odyssey Project has brought me closer to people who are similar to me. Even though I struggle being happy



with myself, my classmates and teachers always make me smile. (**Brandon Williams**)

This is a new beginning, a new day, a new year of learning. (**Jovenus Price Pierce**)

Odyssey has given me an opportunity to reflect on my own natural talents and has brought to me a great promise of the future. (**Tosumba Welch**)

I am more outspoken and have an extended vocabulary. (**Lewis Black**)

It motivated me to reassess my emotional response to life and who I am. (**Munroe Whitlock**)

It has helped to motivate me to do better and to grow positively. (**Eunice Conley**)

Odyssey is affecting me positively. I am getting confident. My grammar and vocabulary have been rich. For me it's the first step and a good start for planning to go back to school. (**Jovite Rayaisse**)



ORACLE OVATIONS



TANATNAN CHAIPANG

I am ever so grateful that I am encouraged to be a part of the Odyssey Project. What really touched my heart was Tanatnan's writing about how she's questioned as to why she's in school. I couldn't imagine why anyone would even think to question the idea of education. I am proud that she continues to push on for herself even with negative thoughts around her. So often do we as people allow doubt to second guess ourselves. I deal with self-doubt and questioning myself, and fear often creeps in. Reading a strong response such as Tanatnan's encourages me to keep pushing. (**Patrice Smith**)

Coming from another country and speaking different languages, I can understand what Tanatnan is talking about. I would like to encourage her not to listen to what other people are saying. I'm so happy for her that she has never given up, no matter what comes her way. I wish her all the best in everything. (**Nancy Wambua**)

CARRIE LLERENA SESMA

"We have seen and learned lots in so little time."
Agreed! I feel Carrie's description of us as a class and her as an individual reflects some pieces within me. I



too yearn and am taking the steps to advance. . . . It just goes to show that no matter your nationality, background, or experiences, if you want to open your mind and close your mouth (for a while), you will learn something! (**China Moon Crowell**)

Carrie's mother was definitely a remarkable woman of courage. As I read, I couldn't help but think of my own mother. Carrie's mother is strong, and through her own hardships, she never lost focus of what was truly important, her children. Even as an adult, I know my mother is still there whenever needed. No abuse, illness, or person could break them or their love for lives they created. Ms. Linda Sue is a proud example of a woman of courage even in my life. (**Akilah Freeman**)

MICHELLE WHITMAN

Reading Michelle's story about her niece Shavon was awesome because no matter what she faced she sounded like someone who would have encouraged me to keep my head up no matter what obstacle got in my way. I like that she loved giving hugs because growing up I heard hugs make things better. For her niece to be so positive with Down Syndrome and diagnosed with pancreatic cancer lets me know I should never give up on myself, no matter how low I



allow someone to make me feel. (**Brandon Williams**)

Michelle Whitman's story "A Special Shero" literally brought me to tears when she revealed her niece's struggle with cancer and the conversation they had when Shavon was in the hospital. Her niece thought that her mother would be mad if she died. Michelle responded, "No, she won't be mad at you. No one will be mad at you, only sad." It was truly touching and hit my emotions, which produced tears.

(**Sharisse Hancock**)



TOSUMBA WELCH

I enjoyed Tosumba's "Making a Case" response very much. This guy has had one heck of a journey and he has one amazing personality. The reason his writing locked me in was because he lost his mom and yet he stayed strong and didn't let it break him from his success. From what I know about the way he speaks of his Odyssey journey, I can definitely say that he has earned his way to second semester. I give him all

the props for staying strong and pushing. If you don't, you will? (**Amber Turner**)

Tosumba, you're the life of our class. I know once I walk in that class you're going to bring it to life. I'm sorry about your mother. My condolences go out to you and your family. Keep on striving and being such a great classmate. (**Shalonda Hilliard-Jones**)



LEWIS BLACK

Lewis Black's story in the Oracle Winter 2013 was a great and simple way to pay tribute to the grandmother he felt was a woman of courage. Lewis's grandmother had some incredible traits that held his family together, through the good and bad. . . Lewis expressed how he would not be the person he turned out to be if it were not for her guidance and words. I feel the same about my two grandmothers. . . Lewis loved his grandmother till her last breath. I am inspired and admire how strong he is. Today we get to celebrate Georgia Thomas, a great woman of God. Her spirit lives on forever. (**Derrick McCann**)

JASMINE BANKS

What Jasmine wrote about her mom is so touching. The way she wrote makes someone feel and imagine what her mom went through during those difficult times. I've put my feet in her shoes, and I can't imagine receiving a voicemail from my mom with that kind of news. What her mom went through was very tough. Truly she was a woman of courage



because she never complained or lost hope. God will always bless Jasmine for the good care that she took of her mom during the hard times and will continue giving her strength each and every day. I'm so sorry for the loss of her mom. (**Nancy Wambua**)

Jasmine's "Making a Case" put a pin on how I truly feel about the Odyssey Program, as if the words were taken out of my mouth. According to Emily, no excuse, unless it's a death, is a good excuse to not show up for class. Just like Jasmine said, Emily put her faith in us and our classmates to not be quitters. In Jasmine's "Making a case for semester two," she really puts her finger on why it was time for a change and why Odyssey has been my best first start. (**Akilah Freeman**)

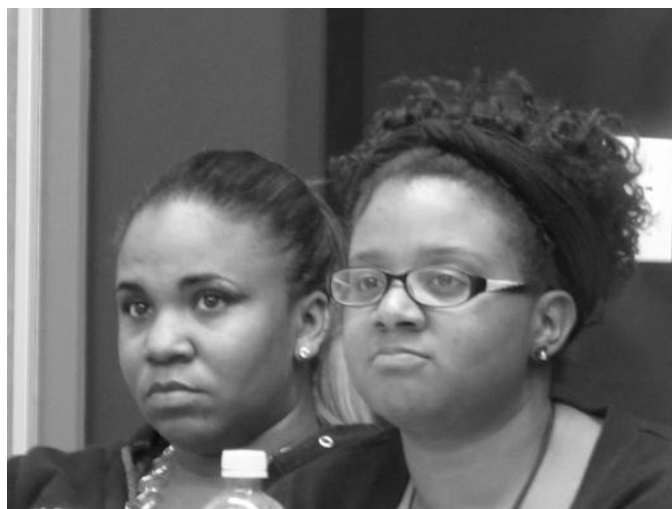


BRITNEY SINCLAIR

The story of "Forgetting the Handicap" stuck out to

me the most as I read the Women of Courage article. Britney and I have a similar situation: her mother has one hand, just like my mother. I never considered her handicapped because from birth her having one hand was the absolute norm for me. I am so glad that Britney saw her mother in a different light, even though they've had their ups and downs. Britney saw beyond that and still appreciates her courage to stay strong. (**Fantasia House**)

"Forgetting the Handicap" by Britney Sinclair describes Britney's mother, an inspiration to all women. No mother comes home from the hospital with a handbook about how to have a baby and keep a baby. Britney's mother learned to do everything on her own. We all have some kind of handicap. Britney's mother is a special rose in God's garden, and Britney is also a special rose in God's garden. Women in abusive relationships come out stronger than before. (**Jovenus Price Pierce**)



BRITNEY SINCLAIR AND AMBER TURNER

Their stories about their mother gave me more love and understand of their mother's strength. We all attend the same church. She is indeed a wonderful and strong woman. (**Angela Jordan-Jackson**)

DOMINIQUE HASKINS

In the Women of Courage issue, Dominique Haskins' profile of her sister stood out to me. Dominique used the phrase "God chose my sister Barri to be the one to be there with our mother." Her words resonated with me, especially since I was the caregiver for my dying father. He was difficult to care for at times because he suffered brain damage and had a very weak heart. We were told that he needed 24-hour supervision because his attention span was only 15 seconds. . . . When the need arose, I was right there with my sleeves rolled up ready to do what was needed. I now know that God chose me to care for my father. **(Michelle Reams)**

I always go back to Dominique's "Making a Case for Semester Two" page because she inspires me to do better. I am grateful for Dominique. Even on days when I am down and out, she is right there boosting me up. She says, "It is easy to quit, but boy does it take faith to go through to the end." She is 100% right, and every time I get to a really low point in this class, mostly because of outside overwhelming circumstances that I feel have taken over my life in the past six months, I think of Dominique. So I would like to say thank you to her for keeping me on my toes and continuing on, even when I feel I can't see two feet in front of me! **(Mary Millon)**

BRANDON WILLIAMS

Brandon's case for second semester spoke about struggling with money and paying bills. That's how I felt in the beginning of this course. It was like I couldn't really focus and concentrate on homework, work, and study too. I was so behind on some bills, but I finally got help. Regardless of my situation, I was determined to press forward. Brandon stated, "No matter how many times I fall, as long as I get back up and try, I will succeed!" In the words of a gospel song, "We fall down, but we get up!" **(Dominique Haskins)**

Brandon, I think it is awesome that you, as such a young man, take a serious interest and step in continuing your education and realize that it can help you succeed. The world is full of obstacles and distractions. Hold on and know that you are the one who knows in your heart what is right for you. I am impressed and will always advocate for young leaders of tomorrow. That is what you are: a leader. You are showing your peers that you can make a change. Keep it pushin'! **(Carrie Llerena Sesma)**

CHINA MOON CROWELL

I, like your mother, am a child advocate. My mother also impressed upon me the importance of being a child. I think we are the closest to being

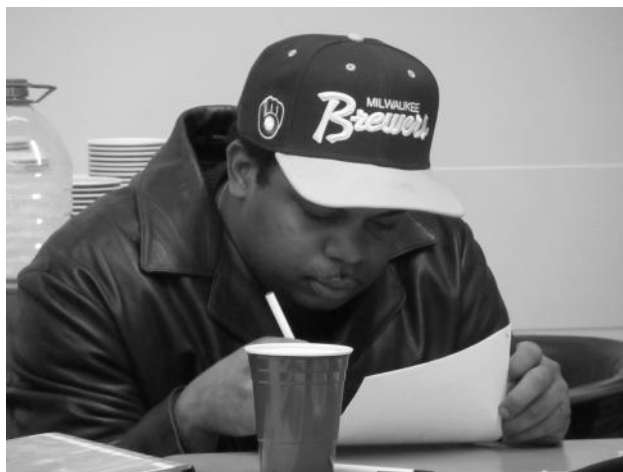


perfect and closest to being in heaven when we are young. The world draws us farther away from that, ourselves, in true form. I have three beautiful sons who I cherish and spoil because they are gifts and one day will leave me to go into the world, away, to venture into new things that will change them. God help them and all of us stay true to ourselves while we struggle through life. **(Carrie Llerena Sesma)**

China Moon says, "Every Wednesday distracts me from the distractions of my week." I couldn't agree more. Worldly things, life, always takes place, and not on my timing. I know when I walk into class to leave my problems outside that glass sliding door. I must admit I'm still learning to leave them (my problems) at the door. It's often why I'm so quiet and preoccupied with life's disruptions. I fight hard to stay focused in class because I know this is a foundation upon which I will build. **(Patrice Smith)**

JOVENUS PRICE PIERCE

Jovenus is the sweetest woman I have ever met. She is smart and witty and loves to learn. She is the true definition of never being too old to keep learning and growing in education. Education has no age limit, and that is a real inspiration. I enjoy sitting next to her while she enjoys her "Odyssey Night Delight." **(Fantasia House)**



DERRICK MCCANN

I once read that "a man will never possess knowledge if he doesn't take time to be a student." We've asked ourselves the same "Who am I" question that I believe is important for any man or woman seeking their true selves. The external struggles (racism, injustice, bad relationships, etc.) in hindsight can often become the guide-post to answer the "Who am I" question. I'd like to encourage you to pursue your goals and dreams, build upon your strengths, and learn from your weaknesses. We all have them. For all of us here at the Odyssey Project:

"Come to the edge," he said.

The people answered, "We are afraid."

"Come to the edge," he said.

They came.

He pushed them.

And they flew. —Guillaume Apollinaire
(James Morgan)

MUNROE WHITLOCK

Munroe's "A Phenomenal Woman" was very clever, as you did not know who he was talking about. After finding out it was about his daughter, I was touched. He has a very amazing daughter. He should be proud. **(Britney Sinclair)**

Munroe speaks of his



daughter in his profile of a woman of courage. I never fail to feel bliss when hearing about a black woman overcoming

statistics and thriving. Reading his story only gives me more motivation to do more, try harder while I'm still young. I had a kid young but never let my child be the reason I gave up. She has been the push to keep me going. I commend Munroe for creating a young woman that could set an example for young mothers, especially young black mothers. She is a woman of courage. **(Akilah Freeman)**

Munroe's "Making a Case" connected with me. I myself had a lot on my plate. I haven't been in school for over 20 years. It's hard for me to start my lesson. I have too many distractions. I love learning, and I love learning in the Odyssey Project. My main goal is to walk across the stage in May 2013. **(Jovenus Price Pierce)**

ANGELA JORDAN JACKSON



The what-ifs and wonders that we speak of in class often get my creative juices flowing. The lessons in history often dance around in my mind as I

come to an understanding and try to visualize what I wasn't born to see. As my understanding grows, so does my curiosity. Odyssey moments creep up on me from time to time and I smile. I agree with Angela when she says, "I feel sunshine and watering as I continue this Odyssey." **(Patrice Smith)**

AKILAH FREEMAN

I really liked Akilah's "To live is to learn" piece. Even though she was a teen mom and endured many struggles with education, she kept pushing forward. She did not let being a teen parent stop her dreams and goals in life. Her mother did the



Odyssey Program and it inspired her to apply. Akilah is an inspiration. I don't know if I would have the strength to keep pushing forward with a child. My best wishes go to her! **(Fantasia House)**

NANCY WAMBUA

Nancy, I can imagine how your grandmother went through all this being in a society where women did not have a voice in public and trying to save money to send her children to school with no support. You must be so proud of her. She is a brave woman. Thank God her children were successful at school because that made her happier. **(Jovite Rayaisse)**



MICHELLE REAMS

Michelle Reams's aunt (and Amber and Britney's mom) lets me see that regardless of my disability, I can make it and someday be able to achieve my need to help others.

Service work is my calling, but I haven't been able to do a lot of the things for people because my body [with Multiple Sclerosis] betrays me sometimes. In her accomplishments, I see that I can't let myself be defined by my disability. (**Eunice Conley**)

NANCY WAMBUA, JOVITE RAYAISSE,
TANATNAN CHAIPANG, AND ANGELICA
CUAHUEY



"A fighter for education . . . she set a good example to many." Tanatnan, Angelica, Jovite, and Nancy, these are words that I'm sure

people not only can but do use to describe each of you. To have the strength and courage to leave your birthplace to come to the land of "freedom," only to



be faced with obstacles that one can only imagine, now that in itself is courage! The four of you have something in common that makes you stand out (in a good way) from all of the rest of the class: English



is not your first language. . . . With each little journey you overcome, I wonder if you feel like true champions, as if there is nothing that you can't do. If not, you should! You are women of courage.

(**Jasmine Banks**)

ODYSSEY CLASS OF 2013

I have read both Oracle 8 and 9 from cover to cover. I found it very difficult to just pick three pieces to respond to. Both Oracles had such strong stories. There was so much of who we—my classmates and I—are in these stories. Everyone seems to open their souls in Oracle 9 when telling their personal stories of the courageous women in their lives. I felt a

connection of sort to each of those Sheroes. I saw my mother, my sister, my grandmother, my aunt, and I even saw me. These are women who have left an imprint on several lives—and now mine. I couldn't possibly single out one, two, or even three. Oracle number 8 was somewhat an Oracle of testimonials of how Odyssey has begun to transform 30 more lives. So sorry to say I cannot single out any because they were all so powerful. (**Michelle Whitman**)

While reading "Making the Case for Semester Two," I noticed that many of my classmates were encouraged to apply to the Odyssey Project by friends and family. They in turn are encouraging friends and family to apply. This is a unique program that is the beginning of change in many lives, not just a change in the lives of the students in the class. The effect of the change seems to be very visible, like ripples in the water. Emily and her team have a hand in the change that is taking place in the 30 students, and those 30 students are influencing change in the many people that know them intimately enough to see the difference and want to change, too.

(**Michelle Reams**)



LINCOLN'S LANGUAGE

countervailing garrison aggregate niche vehemently
consummation discordant insurgent unrequited
providence deprecated ascribe acquiesced
execute atonement engrosses ventured perpetuate
wen immunities aforesaid SCOURGE fervently
subvert dissevered naturalization contiguous
hallow invoke emancipation repress proclamation
ere belligerent henceforward extinction consecrated
avowed augmented malice candor insurgents



MEMORABLE PLACES



Stepping into an enclosed space with a sea of blue seats, I feel a sense of relief once I find my number directly next to the window. Placing my MP3 player on my lap ready to go, I wait for strangers to be seated, anticipating my feet, body, and mind taken into

an elevation even the birds can't reach.

Instructions . . . done; take off in action. I recline my seat, hit play, and close my eyes.

The shift in my stomach lets me know I'm there. My head faces left and I open my eyes to endless baby blue and pure white for miles around me. My imagination takes me to a peaceful place, and I'm floating in this sheer cotton at slow motion, it seems. I can't measure how far we've moved until I see a funny shaped cloud. Some look like mountains of marshmallows. I am in a place of peace elevated above the ground. (**Patrice Smith**)



The Goodman South Madison Library on Wednesday night is a delight to come to in order to be with a class consisting of 30 students who feel blessed, honored, and privileged. I love to meet and engage in ideas with students from all backgrounds,

students living a dream come true.

I'm showing my granddaughter how important it is to engage in education. I am learning to push ahead and go forward to land in a place where education is part of my life. My parents worked hard so my brothers and sister could have a better education than they had. . . . I love coming to Wednesday night class. I know it's going to be a class

act of delight and learning that opens my mind to new things. (**Jovenus Price Pierce**)



We call this place the "Hood." Poverty and broken bottles of glass seem to never end on the sidewalk. I see a tall, brown skinned man with wet curly hair that dripped on his silky tight jogging suit. A thick, long, golden chain is way down on his neck like the accessories in the

rearview mirror of your favorite car. He is cautiously looking around like a cheetah in the jungle, not wanting to become prey in a place where if you don't watch your back, like a soldier in a war you will become a victim.

I am a short innocent kid who will soon learn the lessons of the streets. I admire this man who has in his hands a thick, green, dirty bank roll that is thicker than three dictionaries. This man has bright golden rings that are shiny and bright like the headlights of a car in a dark alley. He looks at me like a father proud of his son and says, "What up?" I am amazed, as if a number one fan has just been acknowledged by his idol. In this tall man's hands I see small white hard blocks. Around his tight wrists I see diamonds that shine like the sun on a hot steamy day.



An old white man with a furry, unshaved face and yellow-brownish crust on the tips of his teeth is anxious for what is in the man's hand, like a kid waiting to open a toy on Christmas Day. I hear loud bumping music from a bright Corvette the color of a stop sign. Then I see a car with colors on the side that resemble the American flag. I see colors flashing on top of the vehicle that light up like fireworks on the Fourth of July. The man inside this caged vehicle has eyes that open bright like a snake that has found today's lunch. Soon many cars in groups like twins seem to surround this man I once admired. There are long metal guns. I am shocked, like seeing a ghost in a haunted house. Soon I run to safety, like a baseball player trying to get a homerun from third base. **(Derrick McCann)**



My grandmother's house is a place that I love to hang out. It has taken her a lifetime to complete her decorating. Not one thing in her house has been purchased new. She would have never been able to afford the quality that she has if she purchased it new. It has taken her 60 years of garage sales and estate sales to get it just so.

When you enter through her front door, the living room rises up to greet you, saying, "Welcome, come on in and have a seat." It looks formal but is very comfortable. When you sit on the couch or a chair, they kind of hug you as if to say, "Stay a while." **(Michelle Reams)**



Since I like to spend time outdoors, my grandmother's garden has been a special place where I have spent hours sitting on a white metal bench. The back yard of my grandmother's house has special meaning for me because it is a

place where I like to meditate. It is always a joy listening to the birds singing while watching the light blue sky. The colorful flowers and the cool breeze create a pleasant atmosphere of joy. I believe my grandmother's beautiful garden has been the best place I have ever known. **(Angelica Cuahuey)**



I will never forget my home in Detroit, Michigan. Even though it had its downfalls, it was such a joy when I was a child. I would go to church as a little girl with my long pigtails and my navy blue polka dot dress on. I loved wearing it with my white socks with flower designs and my pretty white dress shoes that had a strap in the middle.

In my childhood we had a big, pretty, light yellow house with the best dog in the world. Co-Co was a black and brown dog and I loved her. Co-Co was a huge part of my life back then. Once we gave her away, she tried to run away and come home but didn't make it; she got hit by a car. That was the worst time for me because she was the best dog.

My life back then felt like a rainbow shining down on me every day. I miss every moment. **(Amber Turner)**





Whatever city I'm living in or visiting, I am most at comfort and in friendly competition with myself on the dance floor. Salsa is a soulful and upbeat style of dance with so many dialects, rhythms, and branches.

Some dance floors are the kitchen floor or my tia's living room floor or porch. Others are jagged tile floors with mosaic pieces missing from long ago. Some are smooth, buffed, and shiny wood floors laid out for the salseros in us all.

(China Moon Crowell)

One of the most beautiful places I enjoy going to when I can is Ephraim, Wisconsin, in the summertime. My father's great aunt Katy had a cabin there . . . a very small cabin, decorated with books, toys, newspaper clippings, old blankets, and lots of windows. . . .



My favorite spot in her yard was a hammock that was laid out between an apple tree. I could lie there for hours and experience the true wrath of nature! There were bees buzzing around and dragon flies that actually terrified me.

Birds chirped and sweet-smelling wildflowers were in bloom just beyond the trimmed part of her property. . . .

I wish everyone could enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells of Door County and Ephraim, Wisconsin, with its homemade cherry wine and apple orchards, the smell of Lake Michigan and the sight of boats and fishermen, swimmers and paddle boaters. It is one of my favorite places in the world to be.

(Mary Millon)



The bookstore is a place I call the place of peace. I normally go to the bookstore during the midday. This is the best time because a lot of people are at work or school. I will then have a store full of books to myself. It's like an empty playground. I would enter the doors with a whiff of fresh book paper. I love the smell of a brand new book. I could never understand how someone could read from a Kindle instead of a book.

Once I get a couple of books I want to read, I then proceed to the coffee shop. I prefer a hot mocha latte with whipped cream on top. The aroma clears my senses and prepares me for the new words of life I will read.

As you can tell, there's so much peace in this place with new books and coffee. I wouldn't trade my place of peace for anything in the world—except, of course, for my children. They are invited to the bookstore as well—at times.

(Britney Sinclair)



safe place from the outside world. Sleeping under my blanket has me thinking I am far away from my problems. (**Brandon Williams**)



Each summer for two weeks when I was a girl growing up, my mom, sisters, nephew, and I would call home a two-story brownstone set

perfectly in the middle of the block. My grandparents' living



Surin Beach is the beach in my heart. Every time I think about it, I have peace, happiness, and freedom. Sunset and sunrise at Surin Beach are peaceful. The waves at Surin Beach are romantic. The smell of Surin Beach is healing. Everything at

Surin Beach is happiness. (**Tanatnan Chaipang**)



Lying here I feel as if I am on Cloud 9, floating away to the stars to reach what my heart really desires. Soft as a feather, my head is relaxed like I am on a calm, warm beach. I

lie there, body stiff as a board, super unconscious. The blanket keeps me warm as if I am in Africa.

I never want to wake up because the stars are my goals. As I sleep, my heart seeks things my conscious body is afraid to go after. My bed is my

room with the enormous picture window let in not only the bright city sunshine and the sweltering heat of the June summer sun but the bustle and bustle of the city block as well. We would end our days finding places to sleep on the plastic-covered yellow with white flowered sofa and my grandfather's Lazy Boy recliner. We would convene for the best meals you could ever imagine: homemade biscuits, hot sausages second to none, peach ice cream and homemade pies, and the smell of hot peppers. In a kitchen big enough only for a table for two, my grandmother would cook from scratch each day to feed her own personal army, the army that would visit once a year for two weeks each

summer. The aroma alone that came from that kitchen during mealtime was enough to make you fat and full at the same time.



As the two youngest, my nephew and I slept in the room where my grandparents slept. My nephew shared a bed

with mom and PopPop, and I slept alone on a cot underneath the window sill. This was a place where my imagination began to form and grow. When the house was asleep and when I couldn't sleep, I would quietly look out of the blinds onto the city street below. I could hear the sounds of the nighttime. My nephew and I didn't have to share our grandparents with anyone but each other. This is where I felt like a princess the entire summer. **(Jasmine Banks)**



The first time I got here to the U.S., I was impressed to see such a big airport in New York City, especially when compared to those in my country [Burkina Faso in Africa]. It was so big with trains from one terminal to another, lots of airplanes, and many shops. I was amazed to see that everywhere it was very clean. People hurried to catch their flights. I was lost because I did not know which way to go and was not able to communicate with anybody because of the language. I had to call one of my brother's friends who works there to come help me. **(Jovite Rayaise)**



Steel and concrete foundation. Wooden shelves with just enough room to place a few meager possessions: soap, towels, books, and last love framed.

Four-legged cot, square and unsteady when sitting or lying upon for comfort, comfort that's elusive during

wakefulness. Gray-green, blue walls scarred by previous occupants leaving a legacy of despair. "John was here May, June 1970-forever."



Faded porcelain becomes witness to the urinated, odor-filled defecation-laden decisions that built this palace royal.

Metal upon metal, clang clang clang, is the mind's circuit breaker, and escape requires that the walls be painted red.

Mail call! Mail call! Welcome home #221341. Your circulatory system has a new address. **(James Morgan)**



In this six by nine with a gloomy base-tone paint, I can reach from my bed to flush the toilet. I have become used to the stale smell of old urine. I lie in this metal cot with a thin mattress trying to be still to avoid the pain of the metal frame. As I take the very short steps in the cage, I count over a thousand times the bricks that hold this box together. As I take my pencil and strike away the days to freedom, I know I will soon walk out of this bathroom-sized living quarter back into the world. **(Tosumba Welch)**



My home is my special place. I'm comfortable there. I'm aware. I love my home and my privacy. I'm not judged there. I can think and get peace of mind there. My space, my creations, my smells, and my colors: everything in it is mine. **(El-Rasheedah Wilson)**

REFLECTIONS ON TONI MORRISON'S "RECITATIF"



Morrison chose not to tell us which girl is black or white because she wanted to cause more reflection in the reader. This way, the reader's own racial prejudices may come in. **(Jovite Rayaisse)**



I think we as the readers really want to identify with the characters based on race, but Ms. Morrison won't let us go there. We are forced to come up with our own opinions on who is who. Both of these young girls were from broken homes. . . . I felt like Twyla was black and Roberta was white. **(Mary Millon)**



I assume Roberta was a black girl. When Roberta's mother came to visit, she had a big Bible and she cooked a lot of chicken. . . . The reason I thought Twyla was white is because her mother was a professional dancer who didn't have time for her daughter. She was consumed with herself. She didn't want to shake a black woman's hand. Twyla was hungry all the time because her mother didn't like to cook or didn't know how to cook. **(Jovenus Price Pierce)**



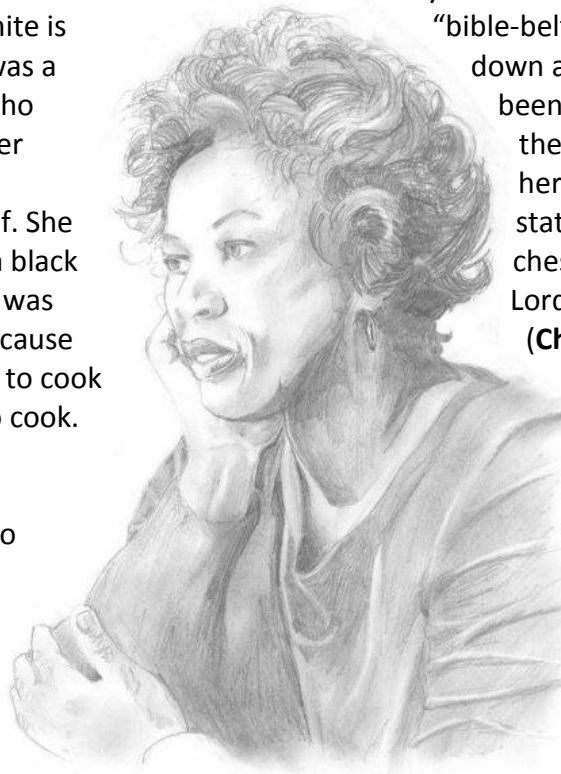
I believe she wanted to leave it to the reader's imagination of this story to figure out the race of these



characters to bring a reality of how we racially profile people. **(Tosumba Welch)**

Based on our own personal stereotypes, Twyla and Roberta could have been either/or, black or white. How easy it is to stereotype and pre-judge others. **(Jasmine Banks)**

I enjoyed not being told the characters' race. This made it near impossible to classify/categorize the characters from the start. While reading, I could see the point of view of each character; it changed even by paragraph or page! I thought about their ethnicity and social classes. Was Twyla's Mom, Mary, the out-of-place white woman dressed inappropriately for service, always out dancing with no money even left for lunch? Or was she the black Mama in the tight green slacks with the big booty who cursed at this "high and mighty think she's too good to shake my hand" bible-thumping white lady? Is Roberta's mother the big white "bible-belt-like" mother looking down at the black folks she's been introduced to? Or is she the buxom black Mama with her trusty big bible, large in stature with an even larger chest-size cross, loving the Lord as much as a good meal? **(China Moon Crowell)**



The race of the girls didn't make a difference to me. When Twyla and Roberta were eight years old, the circumstances that put them in St. Bonny's (i.e. poverty, lack of



family support, and a school system that didn't care) are unfortunate and happen to families of all races. . . . I am not 100% sure which girl is black or white. I am leaning towards Roberta being white and Twyla being black, but either one could be either race. Nothing in the story really convinced me of their race. **(Michelle Reams)**

I feel the message of "Recitatif" is that we all are different in many ways. We should not judge one another based on the outer appearance. We should take time to know the person. Everyone has a story and has been through things in life that shape their views and thinking. **(Derrick McCann)**

While reading the story, I went back and forth, trying to figure out who was black and who was white. I learned that I often make assumptions on names, or even based on the description of the mother's behind sticking out in her slacks. Toni Morrison may have chosen not to reveal which girl was which race to encourage readers to have an open mind. **(Patrice Smith)**

I really didn't like the story as much because I couldn't picture the characters. **(Britney Sinclair)**

This story helped me to understand that I should not make conclusions about others defining them by their colors. It taught me to appreciate other people no matter their colors, disabilities, religions, etc. **(Nancy Wambua)**



I have to be honest that I'm not sure at all who's black and who's white. I would guess Twyla is a white girl, and the black girl is Roberta. I think it's more fun to not know who's black and who's white. It makes me wonder the whole time.

(Tanatnan Chaipang)

Reading this short story taught me that no matter what your race is, you are still a person and have flaws like we all do. It tells us to treat others that are different kindly. **(Brandon Williams)**

It taught me don't be so quick to stereotype. I figured by the names that Twyla sounds like an African American name. **(Shalonda Hilliard-Jones)**

Race didn't matter to Twyla or Roberta as children; however, as they got older society's emphasis was forced on them. . . . My assumption is that Roberta was white because of the way she handled integration of her children's schooling.

(Eunice Conley)

I think Toni Morrison wanted her readers to be able to suspend their judgments, characters, and prejudices while observing the behavior of these two girls. Through the 'race' of the characters I'm reminded of social stratification, economic and educational disadvantage in the lives of people, and the impact on their quality of life.

(James Morgan)



OBAMA'S ORATORY



In his Second Inaugural Address, Obama refers to Lincoln when he says our country cannot be half slave and half free. We must follow the

same things that were set into place by our forefathers of 1776. He refers to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." . . . He refers to Martin Luther King, Jr., when he declares that people came to the Mall "to hear a preacher say that we cannot walk alone; to hear a king (Dr. King) proclaim that our individual freedom is inextricably bound to the freedom of every soul on earth." He asks the new generation to carry on what those pioneers began.

(Sharisse Hancock)



I believe this address points out the important steps we need to take as one nation to have everyone on the same page. It states that we as North American citizens should all equally have and deserve a measurement of "security and dignity." In a near perfect

world we wouldn't still be arguing about who gets health care and who doesn't. . . . The following sentence stands out to me personally: "We do not believe that in this country freedom is reserved for the lucky, or happiness for the few."

(China Moon Crowell)



Obama starts out by giving honor to the Declaration of Independence by quoting its second paragraph, which I believe is a great way

to start his speech. He makes the



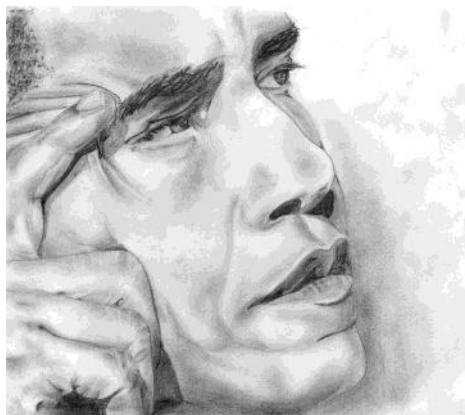
speech about our country and not just himself. . . . He uses Lincoln's idea in saying "no union founded on the principles of liberty and equality could survive half-slave and half-free." The President starts a lot of his sentences with "together." He stands firm as a leader willing and ready to get his hands dirty. When he says "Fidelity to our founding principles requires new responses to new challenges," I see him giving honor to those presidents and leaders before

him. **(Patrice Smith)**



Obama's speech embodies to me the feeling of teamwork and cohesiveness, much like Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address and Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech and "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." All of these are about us as Americans. As inequality

should be all of our problem, so should injustice and partiality. People have died and fought for this country to be what it is today. We aren't perfect but must strive to be. That is our purpose: to empower our less fortunate to be able to secure liberty and happiness at all costs. One sentence that really stood



out to me was, "What makes us Americans is our allegiance to an idea articulated in a Declaration made more than two centuries ago" and the statement that our common creed describes "tolerance and opportunity, human dignity and justice." Equal opportunity is a right every American should share.

(Eunice Conley)

SONG OF THE ODYSSEY CLASS OF 2013

Inspired by Walt Whitman



We are the Odyssey Class of 2013.

We have lived in Madison, Milwaukee, Las Vegas, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Mexico, Thailand, Kenya, and Burkina Faso.

Our relatives speak Spanish, Spanglish, French, Dioula, Moore, Soma, Creole, Swahili, Thai, Lingala, and English

And call themselves African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, Pentecostal, Catholic, Muslim, Methodist, Jehovah's Witness, Buddhist, Spiritual, and Atheist.

We have worked as a lifestyle coach, aerobics instructor, steward, basement water proofer, Oscar Mayer Wiener Tunnel worker, receptionist, Orange Julius cashier, bank teller, bartender, housekeeper, janitor, McDonald's burger flipper, fan assembly worker, toilet cleaner, grocery bagger, bus driver, babysitter, cook, waitress, car washer, and massage therapist.

We are tall, exciting, fun, social, large, loud, expressive, funny, compassionate, smart, kind-hearted, fair, honest, hardworking, outgoing, caring, selfless, busy, sporty, stylish, determined, happy, shy, responsible, respectful, quiet, reserved, helpful, tough, careful, ambitious, focused, loyal, humble, productive, determined, self-driven, thoughtful, honest, sincere, hopeful, blessed, trustworthy, loving, emotional, angry, sad, preoccupied, exhausted, curious, diligent, sweet, innocent, and versatile.

We are the Odyssey Class of 2013.



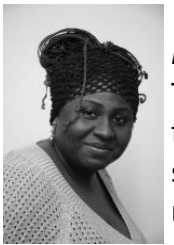
THOUGHTS ON THOREAU



"There are thousands who are in opinion opposed to slavery and to the war who yet in effect do nothing to put an end to them." Many people sometimes stand by and watch bad things happen to others, even if they disagree with what's happening and possibly have the power to change it. **(Mary Millon)**



"The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think is right." If something goes against your better judgment or your intuition, if it doesn't feel right to you, then don't do it. **(Jovite Rayaisse)**



"A wise man will only be useful as a man, and will not submit to be 'clay.'" The sentence encourages me to be firm and not conform to my surroundings. This sentence inspires me because I often don't find the courage to stand on my personal beliefs. **(Patrice Smith)**



"Others—as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office holders—serve the State chiefly with their heads, and as they rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to serve the devil, without intending it, as God." Because they are serving the State, they are removed from their own judgment, morals, and faith. They therefore can act out commands that are the opposite from their own beliefs and without intention serve the Devil. **(Munroe Whitlock)**

"I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's



government also." What I think he means in this sentence is that he wants nothing to do with a government that will enslave the people it is supposed to be serving. If they'll do it to the African Americans, who's to say they won't do it to others? **(Michelle Whitman)**



"The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies." This sentence to me speaks to how one may give up one's autonomy and will to serve, support, and perpetuate an 'ideal.' The ideal, whether functional or not, in its application has for the individual become the principal focus and condition to which 'choice' becomes imprisoned. **(James Morgan)**

CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS

PASS-----TEN SE

By James Morgan

Annihilation:

No more Medgar, Malcolm
Martin

Too many
Martyrs?

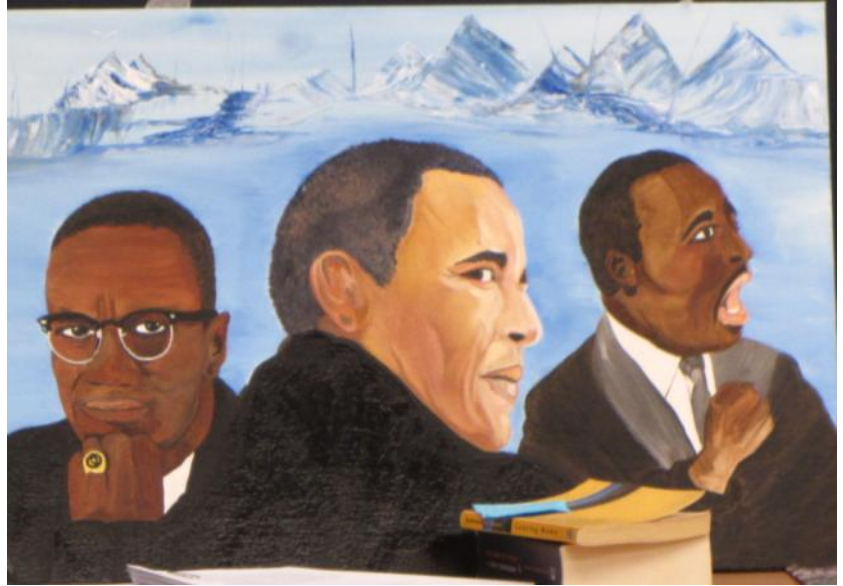
Hell comes burning

Cold-chills

Every black girl-boy child:

Runs red----blood flowing,
SCARED!!!

"YES WE DID"
a painting by James Morgan

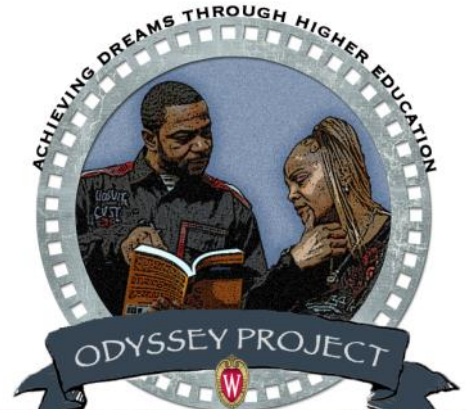


ODYSSEY PROJECT ON FACEBOOK

www.facebook.com/UWOdysseyProject

Come join the Odyssey community on Facebook to stay connected with Odyssey alumni and current students, and stay up to date on news and events involving the Odyssey Project.

If you have ideas for additions to the Odyssey Facebook page, contact Beth McMahon at bethtamani@gmail.com



WANDA AUERBACH MEMORIAL ODYSSEY SCHOLARSHIP

Wanda Auerbach (1927-2012) believed passionately that the richness of a liberal arts education should be available to all, regardless of income or background. Born poor in Appalachia without running water, she was an avid reader who loved books and nature and hated discrimination and injustice. She became the first in her family to attend college. After graduating as the valedictorian of Berea College, she went on to earn advanced degrees and to pursue a career as a UW reference librarian. She was a loving wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother who radiated beauty, compassion, generosity, and a love of learning.



Wanda Auerbach was an ardent supporter of the UW Odyssey Project, reading every student newsletter, attending every graduation, and rooting for the success of every student trying to overcome adversity and achieve dreams through higher education. In her name, the Auerbach family has established an endowment so that scholarships can be awarded annually at the May graduation ceremony to past and present Odyssey students facing hardship as they continue their educational journeys.

If you are interested in being considered for this award, please mail or deliver your application letter to Odyssey Project, 21 N. Park St. Room 7468, Madison WI 53715. Applications must be received on or before **April 1, 2013.**

Application Instructions:

Please submit a letter addressed to the Wanda Auerbach Scholarship Committee. Please type if possible, or make sure your handwriting is legible. Keep your letter to no more than three typed pages, and make sure your name is on the application. In your letter, please try to answer these questions:

- 1. Describe yourself briefly. What hardships did you face in your life prior to starting the Odyssey Project?
- 2. What difference did the Odyssey Project make for you? What were some of the notable books and ideas you encountered while in the course?
- 3. What are your educational and career goals?
- 4. What hardships will you continue to face as you go forward toward those goals?
- 5. If you were awarded a \$1,000 scholarship, what difference would that make to you?
- 6. Is there anything else you would like the committee to know?

