

Odyssey Oracle

Contents

Special Edition Oracle:

Year 8 #10 January 19, 2011

Making the Case for Semester Two



Today I found the challenge I crave.
Today I stayed locked in the moment.
Today I saw Jesus and for the first time left it all; feeling free.
I entered the place where inquisitiveness is currency
Today I gave myself permission to enjoy this Odyssey



I am shedding the skin of abuse
I am accepting the power of my pen
Pledging never to be a victim again

I am remembering my comfort zone
Understanding that those in this class
Can appreciate both my wit and sass



I am an individual revolution
Taking the time to tame my tongue
Relishing the fact that my song has not been sung



I am eating the honey of words
I am drinking from the fountain of
Life

I am rising, continuously....

So I implore you to let me discover
the treasures within this
Odyssey.

(Stephanie Pamperin)



odyssey.wisc.edu

Editors/Contributing Writers:

Kegan Carter, Odyssey 2004 Graduate, Designer kegancarter@wisc.edu

Emily Auerbach, Project Director eauerbach@dcs.wisc.edu 608-262-3733

Being here [in the Odyssey Project] is helping me overcome a gripping self-loathing depression that keeps me from allowing anyone from seeing the real me. This class, every bit of it, helps me see life in different colors and hues instead of just black and white like I normally do. It helps me slap myself when I come to class feeling down. I laugh with others who laugh and feel pride when I see someone who the rest of the world counted down and out rise up and discover something new. It's like, "If so-n-so is in a good mood today and is happy to be here, then I can be in a better mood as well."

I want to continue because I don't want to let certain people down—hell, I don't want to let myself down. It's time for me to stop feeling sorry for myself and start planning better, pushing harder, and stop being afraid to be myself.

(Takeyla Benton)

I still describe myself as a woman of strength, strong determination, and full of love. I really enjoy being in Odyssey. This class has made me use my brain more and more, and now I am a speeding train that will not stop. My interests are stronger now. When I first applied, I honestly didn't know what I wanted to obtain a degree in. Having a background in Accounting and Business Administration has always been what made me comfortable and I enjoyed doing it, but I have always had an inspiration to become a lawyer since the third grade. Now at 36, I'm still having that same "craving." That only means one thing: KEEP THAT DREAM ALIVE AND PUT IT INTO WORK! . . .

This is MY ODYSSEY! I not only want to continue this program, I need to continue for the sake of myself and my family. Furthering my

education and obtaining my degree will lift my financial burden long term, and it will give me more blessings because I didn't stop.

My Odyssey classmates have given me more strength and motivation to push. Listening to the challenges that others have overcome brings so many joyful tears to my eyes. . . . I love my classmates. I love my instructors. I love the staff. This is my new family, and you guys are stuck with me "Till Death Do Us Part"!

I push myself very hard, and when my kids see that in me, it inspires them as well. . . . My first day of class, I didn't know what to expect. I was scared and excited all in one. When I got the first assignment returned to me, I knew from there that I'm not stopping until I'm done completely. Odyssey is just the beginning. I am going to continue with what I have started to be a successful attorney. . . . **(Michelle Bozeman)**

Who I am today is quite different from the person I was half a year ago. Half a year ago I wanted to go back to school to become an elementary school teacher but because I really didn't think I could ever accomplish this I was okay with settling being a playground aide. Today that is not okay with me. I no longer find it acceptable to allow myself to get sidetracked. Today I realize that I allowed myself to get sidetracked so therefore I can (and will) get myself back on track.

Some of my friends saw the movie "For Colored Girls," and most of them told me they just didn't understand the poem parts of the movie. This actually made me want to see this movie even more. Once I saw the movie I was in tears from the same poems they all didn't understand. The poems



recited in this movie were some of the best poems I had ever heard before. I really believe that if it were not for the work I have put into my Odyssey class I would have been like most of my friends, lost and confused. I was able to sit back and close my eyes, listen to the words and visualize everything that was being recited. Thanks to the Odyssey I was able to have an experience at a movie that may have gone over my head otherwise.

With all the things that I have endured this past month or so I have slacked on my work. Thank God things are somewhat going back to normal so I am able to come to class and get my assignments done. I think I should be back next semester because there is still so much work I have to do to reach my goal. I can't do this without a support system. I know that Odyssey is that system.

(Morgan Chichester)

The class has opened my mind and allowed me to think of the future. I realize that 20 years from now I will be more disappointed by the things I did not do than the ones I did. While I was sitting at the table with my son, doing homework, he asked me, "So Mom, what do you want to go to school to do?" I told him "Phlebotomy." He then asked me, "What's that?" I told him that I could draw blood at a doctor's office or in a hospital. He thought that was good for me to want to go to school again to do something different than daycare.

Because of this class, I am throwing off the bowlines, sailing away from the safe harbor, and catching the trade winds in my sails. I know what I want and what I need to make my dreams come true, and this is the start. Different circumstances don't make me, they reveal me. How I choose to

live my life that God has given me makes me. This is my first step. **(Tracy Cunnigan)**

I know I want a bachelor's degree in business accounting. I believe in myself now, and I know I can achieve a higher education. I want to continue the second semester so I can learn new things. I want to graduate with six credits. I want to be enrolled in MATC by fall 2011. I know I can do this if I apply myself. I know that now I'm more confident in myself. I already know I'm going to be successful! Odyssey has helped me to learn things I thought I would never learn. . . . I'm reading things I never would've read in my life. I honestly haven't read this many books in my life. I'm just more focused on my goals! I'm looking forward to next semester!

(Kian Cunningham)

I describe myself as a motivated individual who is dedicated to what is put in front of me and the task I have to take care of, even though there might be oppositions and obstacles thrown at me to maybe try to stop me from succeeding. I am determined to finish this course and get all that I can get out of it. My interests are to finish this course and continue my education starting at MATC and going off to the UW-Madison to continue my studies in a field I've not yet figured out.

I want to continue this odyssey because I hate to begin something and not finish it. Also I want to continue because I love meeting on Wednesday nights and being around a class of such good people. I should be allowed to continue this journey because I feel I'm getting a lot out of it, and it's helping me in areas I feel I was once weak at. It has



strengthened me a great deal, in my opinion. The only thing I regret is the three days I missed because I feel I missed things I should have been a part of. I will be honored if granted the privilege to finish the second semester. **(Dwayne Ellis)**

I love to write, read, talk, mix and mingle, and learn new things. I get to do all that and more in Odyssey. I want to be able to accomplish things, set goals and meet them, and be an inspiration to my children and others. This opportunity is affording me the chance to do just that. I believe I said earlier that I felt elated, excited, and empowered, and I still do. In addition, I feel excellent, efficient, and event exalted. I feel Odyssey has raised my senses, my self esteem, and my ability to do more. I have gained more confidence to proceed toward my educational dream of a college degree. I feel it is obtainable now. I must be in Odyssey second semester . . . I can't stop now. I am eager to see what I can accomplish after all I've learned so far... **(Eleita Florence)**

Now my interests have expanded from when I began this Odyssey. I love to read, and I am a writer filled with stories I will soon share. I read daily. I am working on my story, hopefully to be released in the summer of 2012. I plan to attend UW Madison in Fall 2011 as an Odyssey Project graduate. I'm also working on a business plan which will be up and running by the spring of 2012. I am more confident in pursuing my endeavors to improve myself, my family, and my community.

I need to continue this journey second semester to prepare me for my upcoming UW Madison experience so that I will succeed in this particular

college setting that I've heard so much about. Unlike Odyssey, which is a tight knit community of family members whose unique strengths I can draw on, I've learned from some of my readings (Brian Benford) that we can't always find these connections at the UW. I really do need my classmates' support and strengths, as well as my instructors here at the Odyssey Project. **(Bonita Greer)**

I waited until the last minute to write this essay. At first I was trying to think what made me stand out in the class, but I came up with nothing. I started to think. I feel that I have really started to grow up, and I know that I want to do something with my life. I do not want to be another statistic on welfare, with three or five kids, on food stamps; I want to make it. I have seen my mom struggle to make the best out of what she had. Well, I am going to make the best out of what I have. I am going to use this class until I can't use it anymore.

Every Wednesday I look forward to coming to class and hearing Edwina's laugh, Emily's smile, and smelling the great food. I am so very thankful to Emily and God for giving me the opportunity to be in this class. Thank you! **(Kiara Hill)**

I am now again around people. For the past several years, I have not really been around people much, nor did I want to be because of some tragedies. This class has helped me to come out and participate. I have more of a yearning for learning again. I am gaining more confidence being in this class. I am starting and have started to live again.

For the past several years, I have been in a



huge dark non-existent cave. I was always in the public eye in the community and across the country, but then I got sidelined big time when my beloved daughter passed away. . . . I wanted to crawl underneath a rock literally! But now through meeting Emily and the push she's given me I am gaining some more good ground for myself and my family. Thanks be to Jesus Christ for through him all things are possible. Even when I go through the valleys and low times, he puts people in my life to help pick me up so that I don't rot and wallow in despair.

I am going all the way to the finish line and beseech you to please grant me another opportunity to continue this odyssey—a journey I have started that has allowed me to have to use my mind again. It has restimulated my brain and stirred up life again in me. I want to further my education, earn a couple of degrees, and give back. I have been feeling pretty good about being in school again, laughing, etc. Although I have those times when some fears creep in because I haven't been to school in years, I try hard to shake those fears off and keep moving forward. This journey is helping my entire family. My kids are happy for me and about this Odyssey! I am learning to think again. **(Marie Hill)**

I am truly blessed to have been acknowledged as part of the Odyssey Project! I think that I am a very complicated individual. Sometimes I am way too interested in too many things at once. I need to keep my focus and concentration on the most important stuff in the here and now. Keeping organized is key. Self control and self discipline are the tools that need improvement. Facing the fears and anxieties I have is definitely necessary to obtain the many

gracious gifts I need and want. Asking for help is not a downfall but an opportunity.

After going through this first journey, I have more interest in the beauty of life. Life is good. People are more understanding and open minded than I used to think. My self acceptance has improved. Hope for the future has become bigger. Acquiring the knowledge and wisdom I have from the Odyssey Project is of much wealth and value—priceless.

I give much praise to being in recovery! Because of living clean and sober, my life has greatly improved and blessings are plentiful.

I definitely want to be here in this class, in this amazing, awesome, appreciated, awe-inspiring Odyssey of life and education. I need this. I have to have it. . . . I so look forward to next semester!
(Ray Migizi Hopp)

I want to be here second semester because I still want more in life than what I have now. I have not been a consistent student this fall semester, but I am getting better. I will start taking my homework more seriously and start getting it in on time. I have been having a lot of things happen to me the past two months, but I am letting things go now—things that won't help me in the long run. So please excuse my performance so far and know that things will change. **(Trendell Johnson)**

When I first turned in my application for the Odyssey Project, I had no idea what to expect! I was a little apprehensive because I have always been the sort of person to take on too many things at once. I knew it would be especially difficult considering the fact that I'm going through my liver treatment. I



thought that maybe it would be too challenging and stressful.

I am so blessed by this whole endeavor. I have learned so much and have been inspired, not just by the authors who wrote the beautiful literature but also by my amazing classmates. It gives me so much hope when I come to class because I see the strong individuals who come to class week after week, giving their all no matter the setbacks.

I've always liked English, and I've always thought that I was a pretty good writer. After attending this class for just one semester, I've fallen in love with the words of English Literature. Nowadays I sometimes wonder if I want to pursue an English major in college. I just love how words flow together to make an amazing story, whether true or fiction.

I also feel that since this class started my tastes in reading have changed immensely. I have recently just started reading some Tolstoy (*Anna Karenina*). It is pretty complicated, but with the knowledge I've gained I really enjoy a challenge.

I want to continue in this class so badly! I cannot wait to jump into the next semester and be even more inspired to write. All the teachers and students really add to the learning experience as well. I wouldn't want to start off in any other class! . . .
(Leah LaBarre)

When I look at myself now, I see a strong African American woman. I have goals and a wonderful child. I feel that I am capable of doing anything, as I am very bright, beautiful, and gifted. I will soon accomplish being a veterinarian, and I will be successful by any means possible! I love Odyssey. It gives me a chance to speak because

all who know me know that I love to talk! I can definitely see how Odyssey has given me a stronger voice, and I have always wanted to finish something all the way—to the end. I've always been the kind of person who would start something and never finish it, like books. I can't really tell you how many times I've started one, read two or three chapters, and never picked it up again.

I want to be able to tell my son, "Yes, Mommy graduated from school two times!" I would also love for Odyssey to still be around 16 years from now so that Lamont can also say, "Yes, Mom and I went to the same class!" That would be a dream that I would love to see—me at 37 years old walking my son down the stage, and maybe Emily or even somebody else, super short and cute like now, will be standing behind him! So when I see myself now and looking back at the time of our interviews, I can definitely say that I am in a whole new place, mind, body, and soul. **(Precious LaShore)**

I am very happy and very excited to come to class every Wednesday. I am doing a lot more reading and hanging out a lot less. I want to continue because I am striving for higher education. I am more dedicated than ever before because I would like to go to MATC or UW. I also love being considered a college student. **(Pamela Lee)**

At the beginning I was too excited that Odyssey was/is a chance of a lifetime. Many wish to have a spot in the class, as did I. . . . Along with suffering from a cut in hours at my job, deciding on two other jobs, and contending with passing a CII test, to put icing on the cake I have a five year old whose mom isn't being cooperative. I raised two beautiful



daughters that are now 29 and 30, after picking them up from a foster home in Denver when they were one and three. My interest in the Odyssey class is as strong as ever, but the difficulties in my life have placed a delay on my learning process. I've been in the mud too long. Now I'm coming out and washing off. Believe me, I'm trying to get on with my life and education. Please bear with me, and don't give up on me. **(Dennis Listenbee)**

My name is Diance, I'm Hmong and I am a single mother with two kids and big dreams. I'm interested in broadening my horizons and my career while expanding my knowledge each and every minute I can possibly get as my world around me keeps growing. The gift of being part of The Odyssey Project and continuing on to second semester has opened a whole new door for me to walk in a different direction that I never would have thought of having ever in my life time.

Standing in front of me are 29 other students who have changed my views, my motivation, my dedication, and my strength to a whole new level that I cannot describe. I am thankful to be sitting here right now with 29 other students right by me. I am striving to make myself a better person for me and for the sake of my kids. My list for accomplishing goals here in Odyssey has a big number by it and it's going to keep growing. I need to work to stop holding myself back when I'm seeking for that something.

Being in Odyssey, I can see myself shooting farther than before with the help of others around me and the courage that they feed me. Thank you, Odyssey, and thank you, Emily, for giving me this chance and opportunity to mold myself into

someone I thought I could not be. Now I am just waiting to walk across that stage and move forward to a new level along with my fellow peers who have helped put in the effort to make that day come.

(Diance Lor)

First off I would like to say the coming semester will be a lot harder, but I'm ready! Last semester was hard for me. . . . I have been given an opportunity to achieve in education but wasn't putting in 100% like I should have been. I have realized that I do want this opportunity. I know if I don't continue with school I won't have anything positive in my life. I promise I will improve everything and all my work.

(Michael Lozano)

When I started the Odyssey Project I was elated, and I still feel this way. But now I can say I have more feelings than just being elated. Don't get me wrong: there are times when I feel overwhelmed and like I should just drop out and be done with it, but then I think about how good it feels to have support from my fellow students and professors. I'm able to call and talk with someone when I'm feeling down and out but also able to be the one on the other end to listen and give advice. . . .

I would describe myself now as more knowledgeable about things that I wouldn't have ever known about if not for the project. I can say that I feel inside that I will open up more as far as classroom participation goes. I am very much interested in writing more now. I love US History, and even Philosophy is igniting a flame inside me. I believe the things I am learning will help me when I do become a peer specialist of adolescent girls.



I will be able to share my knowledge of Socrates, Frederick Douglass, Henrietta Lacks, Plato, William Blake, Maya Angelou, and many more wonderful people of history. I would love to continue this journey because of the hunger I have inside to better myself not only for me but for my children as far as education goes. I want to continue because I want and need to have the proper and right information if I want to inspire and teach others. I want to continue because I know that I can do this and succeed. I am determined to learn all that there is to learn. . . .
(Catina McAlister)

I promise second semester I will do well. Fall semester I have had a rough time, but things are getting better and I promise to do my best. I love this program. It's something like the bigger family outside of immediate family that I don't have. As I have been in this class, I see my future better now. It's motivating me and pushing me to do my best. I want to be a lawyer. Taking this program has awakened me and shown me I must get more focused. Please don't give up on me.
(Nikyra McCann)

I would describe myself as someone who often times is misjudged or overlooked because of my C.P. [Cerebral Palsy]. I am intelligent, soft spoken, down to earth, genuine, outgoing, kind-hearted, mellow, and very ambitious. . . . I love to read a lot more than when I joined the class. Thank you so much for that, Emily—feeding my mind with Henrietta Lacks, Socrates, Frederick Douglass, the Bill of Rights, William Blake, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and so much more, and Coach with

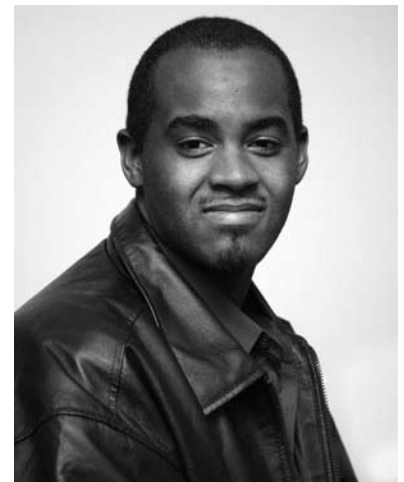
interesting and different vocabulary words every week.

I want to continue this once in a lifetime opportunity of Odyssey. I'm loving everything I have learned and also the friendships I am making with 30 of the most resilient, charismatic people I have met in my life. It's been an honor being in the Odyssey. I'm quite saddened by the fact that it will soon come to an end. I'm truly going to miss every Wednesday night. But I'm looking forward to what's about to come—my journey after Odyssey, what you've been preparing me for.

I need to continue doing this. . . . I can't go back to where I was before, trapped in a cave with no real hope for the future, struggling from job to job and being terminated for uncontrollable circumstances. Odyssey has brought me out of the cave, giving me new life and hope and the chance to go back to school to better myself and support my family in the way that I need and want to. . . . I want a career and to be the first or second one to finish college in my family next to my sister [Tasha McKenzie, Odyssey '10]. **(Marseills McKenzie)**

The time has passed by so quickly, and I'm still excited about the outcome and where this road is going to lead me. While being grammatically challenged, I yearn to learn more about myself and my interests after the Odyssey Project is completed...

I now realize the positive effects related directly to being involved in the Odyssey Project. People look at me differently when I speak, and they listen to the excitement in my voice when I talk about the program. I tell them how alumni have gone on after



graduating from Odyssey to obtain higher education and degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and other institutions of higher learning...

Through hard work and perseverance, who knows what the end will be? I stand committed to the great opportunity of a well-rounded education and all the advantages of being given a second chance. . . . **(Helen Montgomery)**

I have thoroughly appreciated having time set aside each week to focus on reading, philosophy, history, and other topics which I have always enjoyed. I am excited to move on to the second semester of this class and continue to explore new ideas.

One thing that being a part of this program has helped me improve is my past issues with organization, procrastination, and social phobias. In the past they were my major downfalls. I would like to personally thank everyone in the class who has helped me with my social phobias. I can be a little awkward when talking to people, so . . . big thanks to all! In the coming semester I plan on exploring and creating solutions to these problems I have faced my whole life and hope the Odyssey family will help me. I'll do my best to help anyone else out, too.

(Dalonte Nobles)

Since being accepted into the program, I have had the chance to grow in ways never offered to me before. I have had a lot of ups and downs, and my classmates have been very supportive.

I am open minded to art, words, and cultures. I am seeing myself in college and getting a degree.

Before this program, it was only a dream. But now I know it's a reality.

I want to continue my growth and really want to graduate and continue my education. I want a career instead of a job. I believe that if I am allowed to continue, I can be a role model for those behind me and those who have walked in my shoes. They will see that if I did it, they can as well.

(Marvin Pratt)

I have grown so much since the time I described myself before [on my application for the Odyssey Project]. Today I am a woman who can do anything. I have learned not to blame others and to take responsibility for my life. I learned I need an education and that I enjoy reading, writing, and talking about Socrates and Frederick Douglass. I will always remember Socrates. I will ask myself what do I believe in and what do I stand for. He has encouraged me a lot.

This has been such a great enlightenment for me. Wow! I would have never thought this would be me. I look forward to class on Wednesday—the discussions, my teachers, my classmates. I'm learning to respect others' opinions because their ideas must be heard and honored. I was told I would never be anything. I have come out of my cave of believing a lie. I now know that with hard work and study I can be pretty smart. I will never be the same. Thank you, Odyssey, for bringing me out of my cave. I was lost in my mind and my thoughts about myself.

I am so proud of who I am becoming. It's like being born again—a new me. I am willing to continue my studies after Odyssey. I would like



to be a social worker or work with people with addiction. **(Edwina Robinson)**

I still want to become an English teacher. I just wish the road to dream had a fast track to it. I have been in school my whole life besides taking a year off. . . . I want to continue this class because I know after this class I'm just one year away from going to the UW. Once I'm there, I think my dreams of being a teacher will seem a little more realistic for me. **(Shardestra Ofori-anim)**

I would describe myself now as a person that's highly ambitious and highly motivated to accomplish everything that I put my mind to. I want to be able to utilize all my God-given talents and abilities and use them positively, in a way where I'm allowed to give back freely, and to bring out the best in others. My interests consist of finishing my education and starting my own organization(s) that would help to foster and support the development and growth of the people.

I love reading, writing, and researching a variety of topics. I also love delivering people information in a way that promotes change from within. I love meeting new people and traveling to new places. . . . I should be allowed to continue this Odyssey journey because I understand the importance of bettering myself and striving to be more than I am today. I possess a certain type of drive and uniqueness and am ready to bring it to the table. At this point in my life, I'm ready to grow. **(Eric Rodgers)**

I feel it has taken me this first semester to warm my mind up to knowledge. I have struggled to find the discipline to sit down and do my reading and homework, but as it gets colder outside I feel a fire being ignited in my mind. I will shake off the winter blues with new knowledge, new people, and a warm place every Wednesday night.

I feel this process is so different from my normal routine of caring for small children, and it gives me a new hope for my life. I keep worrying about what the next step will be after this is over, but after meeting so many graduates who are on their way, I have hope instead of fear.

I think for the most part my interests are the same as when I started this journey, though through reading Blake and Socrates I feel I understand myself and some of my thought processes better. I don't feel so alone, or trapped in my own head, and I love reading about great thinkers.

I feel that I am starting to see the vision my parents had for me, and I am developing a clearer vision for my own children. I was raised to think, to question, to not conform to societal norms, and it is nice to know that great thinkers had some of the same views.

I love coming to class. It is the only time I get to be an adult, away from the constant needs of family life, and I cherish the teachers and am excited about having new friends in my life. If I couldn't continue this next semester, I would feel a great piece of my life was missing. I am so thankful for this chance at a new existence for myself.

(Danielle Rosales)

