

A learning tool for students of the UW-Madison Odyssey Project

Odyssey ORACLE

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El Salvador

By Naomi Kharrazihassani

I was born in Santa Ana, a city in El Salvador in Central America. In the place where I was born, there are a lot of houses made of brick and houses made of adobe (heavy clay). People who live outside of the cities often use sheet metal for their roofs, and the poor people in the mountains live in huts. The sidewalks are made of cement, but the roads in some places are made of stones. Some of the stone roads have been there since ancient times

the volcanoes were active.

The weather is hot all the time like Florida and California. There are brief cold spells in November and December when you need to use a light sweater.

The food we eat includes shrimp, calamari, fish, beef, turkey, and chicken. For lunch and dinner, we have a salad and homemade tortillas. We also eat a lot of tamales made in banana leaves. Our country is well known for the pupusas, which is a typical dish in my country. I miss



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the food in El Salvador. . .

In El Salvador the neighborhood is almost like one big family. If you have children, neighbors will watch out for them. Here in the United States, everybody minds their own business. . .

We have fireworks to celebrate Christmas and New Year's. I remember when I was a kid I saved money to buy a big mortar that would cost me \$5. When I was able to launch it, I'll tell you I couldn't hear for several hours because it was so loud.

In El Salvador, by tradition you do not leave your mother or father until you get married. You are expected to be a virgin when you get married for the first time. You usually marry someone from the same social economic class, although there are some exceptions.

I remember school when I was a kid. I was required to wear a uniform until I finished high school. After high school, either

you go to a technical institute or directly to the university. It is hard to finish a college degree in my country due to the lack of money for most families. . .

There are several things that make me homesick. I miss the people from my country, the food, and doing things together with my friends there. I especially miss my family and being able to be with and take care of my grandma because she is old.

On the other side, I am glad that I am away from seeing many of the injustices done to the people.

I don't know what American people know about my country. We are considered a third world country, but I wish everyone could know that in my country there are a lot of capable people. It is just that people don't have financial resources to pursue their goals.

Attitudes

By Charles R. Swindoll

Submitted by Valerie Williams

Words can never adequately convey the incredible impact of our attitude towards life. The longer I live the more convinced I become that life is 10 % what happens to us and 90% how we respond to it.

I believe the single most significant decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my choice of attitude. It is more important than my past, my education, my bankroll, my successes or failure, fame or pain, what other people think of me or say about me, my circumstances, or my position.

Attitude keeps me going or cripples my progress. It alone fuels my fire or assaults my hope. When my attitudes are right, there's no barrier too high, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme, no challenge too great for me.



The Country of Swaziland

By Nosihle Lukhele

Swaziland is a small country found in the southern part of Africa. It is a land-locked country surrounded by the Republic of South Africa and Mozambique. As of 2007 its population was 1, 133, 066, and it covers only an area of about 6,700 square miles [about the size of Connecticut]. Swaziland is an absolute monarchy (ruled by the king and queen).

Languages spoken include English, Siswati, and Zulu. English is taught in every school since it's spoken world wide. African people make up 97% of the population of Swaziland, and Europeans are 3%. The literacy rate is 82%, yet the unemployment rate is 40%. The reason why so many educated people are without jobs is because the population is high and the country is small. The job supply is less than demanded.

The country is divided into four regions: The Highveld (largely

mountainous with hot, wet summers), the Middleveld (a warm climate all year round, with most of the country's agriculture), the Lowveld (subtropical, with cattle, goats, and sheep), and the Lubombo (also subtropical, with citrus fruits and sugar cane).

In Swaziland we have different kinds of music, including folk music, modern rock, pop, and hip hop music. Traditional instruments are the kudu horn, calabash, rattles, and reed flutes. . .

The Swazi people have been able to keep their unique traditions and customs. There are two important ceremonies held by the Swazi nation once every year.

The first ceremony is the Incwala (First Fruits) Ceremony, held for several weeks in December. The king, queen, king's wives, and children always join the Incwala. This is mainly a male gathering where all males attend at the royal kraal at the royal palace for traditional dancing.

The second ceremony is in August and is called Umhlanga (Reed Dance) ceremony, also attended by the king, his wives, his children, and the queen mother. All unbetrothed young maidens have to attend this female gathering. The purpose of this ceremony is to pay homage to the king.

The Swazi king has the right of choosing a young woman at the Umhlanga ceremony if he likes. He can only choose a young woman from the age of seventeen to be his wife. He now has 13 wives. The national anthem is sung at this ceremony and at the Incwala ceremony, and it is also sung in school and at the royal palace.

The Swazi coat of arms, which is mostly on Swazi currency, includes the lion, elephant, traditional shield, and king's crown of feathers. The lion symbolizes the king, the elephant symbolizes the queen, and the traditional shield symbolizes protection. The king's crown of feathers, which is above the shield, is worn during the Incwala ceremony.



What's in a Name?

"What's in a name? that which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet."—Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*
Odyssey students were asked to explain the significance of their names.

Sherri Genell Bester

... My mother said that throughout her pregnancy with me in her belly's protection, I was a firecracker bursting



across her stomach's sky in the midnight of her sweet yet sleepless dreams. ... She said she knew right away that I was a dancer who danced quite a dance of unique creation. Yet my mother explained to me that after I was born, when she looked into my little, curious, searching face she decided to name me Sherri because she had read that it was by meaning defined as "the little darling one." She expressed to me that when she finally beheld me in her arms, to her I appeared so sweet, kind and peaceful, a dancer of great love and energy from conception unto birth.

My grandmother gave me my middle name, "Genell," which I have always been told means "the gracious one." She passed on this name to me as a family name of my ancestors from one generation to another, and another, and another, and another as a blood promise to bring love, mercy, and peace into this world with faithful grace, beauty and eloquence.

My last name is Bester and was given to me with love after I vowed my love to my best friend of more than half my life today, James Bester. I first met James as a UW-Madison football player and brother of my roommate and friend at UW-Madison campus. . . Our love overflowed endlessly into a fountain of two lives streaming forever together in rushing waters...

My family nickname "Cuppie" was created from a famous, popular, delicious ice cream dessert that I was addicted to when I was a little girl growing up down South melting in the undesirable heat of Greenville, Mississippi. The dessert was called Cherry Cup and was overflowing with fresh, sweet, red cherries showered with soft, cold, smooth whipped cream and covered with thick, dripping, sticky caramel. My grandmother started calling me Sherri Cuppie ever time I indulged this dessert after church on Sunday until eventually my family just called me "Cuppie" as my family nickname of love and endearment.

Mandisa Izegbe Hayes

Although there is some merit to what Shakespeare



writes about names in *Romeo and Juliet*, I think names are significant. Mandisa Izegbe Hayes is the name on my birth certificate. As a child I went by the last name Lizwelicha though that was never my legal name. Mandisa means sweet. Izegbe means long awaited birth. There was time I hated my African names and wished for a more "normal" name. My sister and I even made up names we called each other. She was Tina and I was Jessica. In grammar school, I let people call me Mandi for short.

As I got older, I began to appreciate the uniqueness and significance of my name. In most situations, I am the only Mandisa. I don't have to be identified by a last name all the time like many of my peers with more common names. I also think my name suits me. I don't think it is just a coincidence that my name describes who I am today.

Thelona René Robinson

My first name is a combination of my Dad's and Mom's names. My dad was named Thermon, and my mom was named Zelona, so



I became Thelona. Because I have seven sisters, (Ellen, Cathie, Florence, Marilyn, Jessica, Angela and Cheryl) with common but beautiful names, I was very curious as to what happened in 1959. My mom told me that my dad wanted to do something different. She also said there was a musician named Thelonious Monk. . .

I was stuck on “Why me?” I was ribbed my entire childhood by classmates who called me Oscar Meyer Bolonee (phonetically spelled), Walonee, Falonee and anything else they could think of, all because my parents wanted to be different.

I’m not sure where my parents found my middle name, René. I had always heard it was French; however, I never looked it up until later on in life, only to find out it’s spelled wrong. My parents actually gave me the masculine version, René, rather than the correct feminine spelling, Renée. Oh well, they tried. For whatever reason, René became the name by which I was called at home, in the neighborhood, and at church.

My last name Robinson belongs to my ex-husband, and even though we are no longer together, I still use it because I like the way René Robinson sounds. . .

Since my mom’s death, Thelona has much significance. It’s a part of my mom and dad that I am blessed to carry outwardly every day. As I grow older, I see a lot of my mom and dad in me and the family leadership that is required of me, which makes me believe they

knew what they were doing. I’m their namesake. For a change, I’m proud to be just that!

Maria Louisa Torres

I was named after my father’s mother . . . and know that Maria comes from the Virgin Mary.

Louisa was actually spelled wrong on my birth certificate: it should have read Luisa. Luisa to me signifies that my father and mother were thinking about my grandmother when they named me. Although I have never met her, I feel having her name brings me somewhat close to her, maybe makes me somewhat like her.

Maurice Eugene Bell

The name my mother gave me is Maurice Eugene Bell. Maurice means moor or black, Eugene means well born, and Bell

means just that—a bell, a hollow metal instrument that emits a metallic tone when struck. Rockameem Ben Elohim is the name I received from the Black Hebrew Israelites in Chicago, Illinois. This name holds spiritual meaning for me



to tell me what I must become. Rockameem=mercy, Ben= son of, Elohim=the divine ones. It is a given name. They anointed my head with oil. I am, that I am, I am. . . .

Socorro “Candy” Gonzalez

My birth name is Socorro Anna Marie DeLa Rosa. My adopted name is Socorro Anna Maria Gonzalez.

Socorro is a Hispanic name mostly in the Mexican community, and it means help. It’s funny that I was given this name because no matter if I have the means or not, I’m always trying to help someone. DeLa Rosa means “of the rose”; that’s cute, I guess.

I don’t really care for either my birth or adopted name. I am now called Candy. That name was given to me by one of my foster mothers when I was about 11 years old because regardless of how much money I would earn, I would faithfully—rain, sleet, or snow—make it to the candy store.



Rhondalyn Elizabeth Jones

My classmates, friends, and professors know me as Ronnie. I received



the name Rhondalyn from my mother. It was as close as she could get to Rosalyn [her own name] without having to put a Jr. behind my name!

I inherited Elizabeth, my middle name, from my beloved grandmother. It is her middle name as well. I'm honored to be able to share the name with such a magnificent woman!

I have been proud to be a Jones since I was old enough to say it! Jones is a name that shares love for God and family, grace, morals, values, and tradition, all at the same time. My last name and what it stands for plays a strong role in my heart. It gives me strength, wisdom, and courage.

Naomi Carolina Kharrazihassani

Naomi is a Hebrew name meaning "pleasant, charming." In the bible Naomi is the mother of Boaz



and mother-in-law of Ruth. My dad told me that he gave me this named because he liked a secretary named Naomi who was a pleasant, nice person, but he never told me what my mom said about it.

Carolina is a French name meaning "song." My father said he gave me the middle name Carolina because he had lived in the USA for a long time. There are two states—North Carolina and South Carolina—and he

really liked the name, and there is also a Spanish song he liked called "Carolina." In my country [El Salvador] I have a nickname: some people called me Caro, Carol; other people just said the last part, Lina.

I think my name, Naomi Carolina, does match my personality.

Josephine Lorya

I was named after St. Josephine Bakhita, who was born in Darfur, Sudan, and was sold into slavery.



She was beatified in 1992 and canonized 8 years later.

My dad picked my nickname, Matakio. My brothers always joked with me that I was scared of chickens because they make the sound "kiok."

My last name, Lorya, is a unique one that I love so much. I believe it's Italian.

Nosihle Fundile Lukhele

My first name means goodness or mercy. My mother gave me the name because she loved the way it sounds and it's not a common name in Swaziland. My middle name, "Fundile," means



educated, and my aunt gave it to me. I do want to make sure that I get an education.

Sheriah Kwartiakor Quartey

My first name does not mean anything in particular; my mom actually didn't mean to give me that name.

She was trying to name me Sheree, but I am so glad that it ended up being Sheriah because there are a lot of girls with the name Sheree. My middle name is Kwartiakor. My father gave me this name, and it means second child. My father is a Ghanaian man from the tribe of GA in West Africa. I don't know a lot about him other than the fact that he gave me this name. My older sister and I both have middle names that come from my father's West African background.



Ivonne Ramos

My mother named me Ivonne after a name she learned while learning French. She purposely spelled it differently. In high school one of my fellow students told me my name meant "anchor," and it's nice to be associated with something stable.



I believe my work requires me to be an anchor no matter what I feel in my personal life.

Ramos is my grandfather's last name on my mother's side and means bouquet of flowers.

When I went to school in Boston, my classmates called me "Sundari," which is the Sanskrit word for "the beauty of ayurvedic knowledge." As a Kabbalah student I was taught that my name is a sacred, powerful thing that affects everything. . . Finally in Egypt I was told that any name that ends with the letter "e" represents truth. . .

John Lee Shields

I am called John because of my mother's brother, my uncle Johnny B.



However, technically I was born without a first name because I'm a twin and my parents were unsure of what names to call us. Therefore our birth certificates simply state "Boy One" and "Boy Two."

Lee was a middle name I gave myself when Jesse and I were around twelve and thought it would be nice to have middle names. I picked the name Lee because it was short, concise, and strong. As I grew older, I came to realize that I had named myself in a "country" manner.

The Shields name comes from the men in our family.

Brenda Sue Tompkins

Brenda Sue Tompkins is so much better than Jonnie Mae Ford, the name my mother thought of first. My Aunt Jean said she pleaded with my mother not to name me that since I was her first daughter. I have thanked her a thousand times.



Back then Jonnie was a feminine name, but it sounds masculine to me. At that time my mom already had four male children, so I assume she could only think of male names. My aunt said my mother wanted another boy but —oops—out comes me!

Albert "Poochie" Watson

My mother named me Albert after my grandfather. From my understanding, Albert is a name that originated from royalty—"Prince Albert."



Nicknames run strong in my family also. My nickname is Poochie. My mother said when I was born I looked like a little Poochie. As I got older, I changed it to Pooch. No grown man should be calling me Poochie.

I'm not sure where Watson comes from because I don't know much about my family beyond my grandparents.

Tara Wilhelmi

My mother's favorite movie is *Gone with the Wind*. She picked my name from all the characters.



. . . Tara was the name of the plantation. It is Irish and means earth or mother earth.

Debby Loftsgordon

Loftsgordon means a small farm in Norwegian. Loftsgordon Avenue in Madison, Wisconsin, is a street named after my forefathers.



Valerie Ann Williams

I called my mother last night and asked her about my name. She said she had always liked the name



Valerie, so that's what she settled on for my first name. I was given the middle name Ann after my grandmother's sister, Ann Purcell. I never knew that, and it made me feel special. . .

Paraphrasing Thoreau

“Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it.”

Let people know what you really think and state your opinion no matter what. Let people know that you disagree and that

you do as you think is right, not what other people think is right.

(Maria Torres)



“If I have unjustly wrested a plank from a drowning man, I must restore it to him though I drown myself. . . Truth is stronger than error.”

If I do wrong to anybody consciously or unconsciously, I must do everything within my power to make that wrong right even if I die trying to

restore that evil into good. The price of righteousness and truth is worth the richest of death when necessary to debt's payment. I believe as the Holy Bible states



in the book of Corinthians that “love does not keep a record of wrongs.” I believe and live by the belief that all that really matters above all rules and laws of life is LOVE. Beyond my human nature, LOVE must prevail past the greatest of all things, of all times and of all purposes of life itself. For in the end of all life it is LOVE that lasts, I believe, forever and past the greatest of all evil and good in life's eternal purpose and laws of righteousness.

(Sherri Bester)

“They who know of no purer sources of truth, who have traced up its stream no higher, stand and wisely stand, by the Bible and the Constitution, and drink at it there with reverence and humility; but they who behold where it comes trickling into this lake or that pool, gird up their loins once more, and continue their pilgrimage toward its fountain-head.”

Some people, for whatever reason, know only what they have been taught via the Bible and Constitution and have not ventured anywhere further.



They wholeheartedly believe in those truths and follow the laws accordingly. However, there are others who see not only the water but the source of the water as well; accepting not the laws as they are. They obtain the courage and strength necessary to fight for what they believe, knowing that if change is to transpire, inevitably the change has to start at the top. (René Robinson)

“It does not keep the country free. It does not settle the West. It does not educate.”

The government is so trapped in its own façade that it doesn't represent the people, their desires, wants, or needs.

(Ronnie Jones)



“Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison.”

Today this nation is notorious for locking “criminals” up for years and YEARS. These people, mostly minorities,



are already poor to begin with and are trying to make ends meet by selling drugs—drugs they don't ingest themselves but sell to users who choose to use. So we're locking up these "criminals" for years to essentially gain a profit—to lock them up and put them on parole or probation with a hefty monthly fine. . .

(Severn Anderson)

"Can there not be a government in which the majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience?"

Why does the majority get to decide what's right and what's wrong in a government instead of a person's conscience?

(Nosihle Lukhele)

"Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence."

Make a difference by taking action, not just going to the polls, filling out a ballot, and dropping it in a box. If you are in a position of employment that requires you to be dishonest,



unfair, or just morally wrong, then you should quit. If you do not agree with the war and you are only joining the army as a useful expedient for going to college, then don't sign up for the military.

(Sheriah Quartey)

"My civil neighbor, the taxpayer, is the very man I have to deal with—. . . he has voluntarily chosen to be an agent of the government."

It is not the law itself that has power. The power of the law is the enforcers of the law. Thoreau also points out that the concern is the volunteer who is not even forced but chooses with his own will to be part of a system that oppresses others, and that is the true venom. The government is a snake, but we choose to add the poison. So instead of the government being a harmless, biologically useful garden snake, it becomes a poisonous rattlesnake. Most of the prey chooses to be deaf to the rattle of the snake.

(Ivonne Ramos)

"Moreover any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one already."



Anyone who thinks slavery is wrong and does not support the government and has God on their side is larger than the mass who continues to support slavery. . . . I have never used civil disobedience but plan to use this tool if necessary in the future.

(John Shields)

"In other words, when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is . . . conquered . . . and subjected to military law, it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize."

What Thoreau is saying in this sentence is a persuasion for honest men to recognize the hypocrisy of a nation that began with a revolution for liberty but then forcibly denied liberty from a sixth of its own population, and he calls on them to revolt against it.

(Tara Wilhelmi)



“I, Henry Thoreau, do not wish to be regarded as a member of any incorporated society which I have not joined.”

Henry Thoreau refuses to join or be a part of any organization without his complete consent.

(Debby Loftsgordon)



with morals and the rights of individuals by submitting to a formula of decrees that can be applied systematically to all defendants regardless of circumstances.

(Tom Gardner)

“I think we should be men first, and subjects afterwards.”

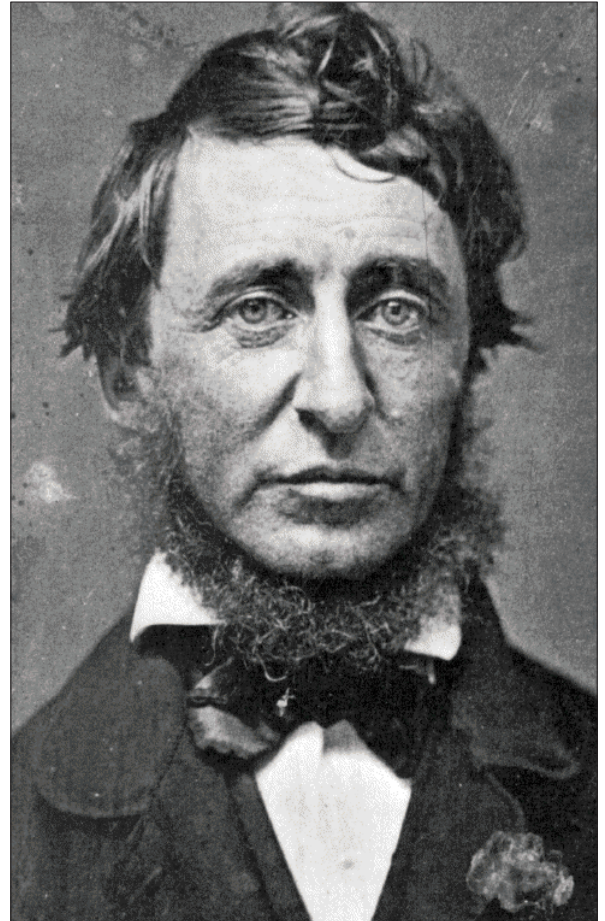


He means we should be people, humans thinking for ourselves, before we're made to do something.

(Candy Gonzalez)

“I felt as if I alone of my fellow townsmen had paid my tax.”

Here Thoreau is saying that even though he was the one being jailed for failing to pay the tax imposed by the



Henry David Thoreau

government, he is the only one paying the price. It is easier to pay the monetary tax and avoid the true cost of standing up for what he believes.

(Mandisa Hayes)

“The lawyer’s truth is not truth, but consistency, or a consistent expediency.”

The courts are jammed with defendants who have no economic means of defense. So the court will dispense



Go confidently in the direction of your dreams! Live the life you've imagined. As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler.
Henry David Thoreau

Star Struck: Dr. Mae Jemison

By Ivonne Ramos

Dr. Mae Jemison is the first woman of color to go into space. A few minutes into her lecture on Friday, November 2, on the UW-Madison campus, I began to appreciate the fact that I was privileged enough to listen to her holistic transformational message. She leaves the audience not only questioning what role they should play in honoring humanity but also understanding where to begin the healing cycle.

Dr. Jemison is a kinetic force. Her message is serious and comes to the audience with a blend of sincerity, critical thought, and wit. She presents questions to humanity, not just Americans—important questions that are foundations to human survival. Dr. Jemison stated that while she was in space looking down on earth, she was “struck by the strength, beauty, and

preeminence of the earth and stars.” She continues to present the audience with a new paradigm by explaining “Save the earth! They’re wrong: it will be here.” Every message Dr. Jemison shares links all of humanity as she shares a perspective many of us believe as a society but are too afraid to say aloud. The earth will be here, but what will happen to the people? Our ideas must transform into action for our own survival.

Dr. Jemison addressed the importance of promoting science and technology by asking, “How do we make everyone included?” It is important for our citizens to have the universal capacity to have an understanding of science, so that matters such as global warming and Ph (acidity) in our environment can be understood. We need a metamorphosis into an educated public that can achieve a holistic society through educated votes. As Dr. Jemison observed, “It’s important to think your way through the day.”

Even though Dr. Jemison is a living encyclopedia of scientific experience, she reminds us to remember that technology is for humanity and should fulfill the needs of people. She believes every person needs love, safety, and individual happiness.

Other topics of

humanity that were covered were business and the environment. She

states that businesses have responsibility wither they like it or not. People are the decision makers, and improving the world truly is a humanitarian responsibility. Dr. Jemison advocated for optimal health care and said as a medical student she was only given the norm rather than a vision of a more humanitarian health care system.

Dr. Jemison’s lecture left the audience motivated and feeling as if they were on a quest to tap into their true kinetic energy. One audience member asked, “How do I start?” Dr. Jemison answered, “Start in your own sphere of influence.” She added, “If I can leave you with one thing, it’s that there is nothing wrong about caring about people.” She puts words into actions with programs that she has created to address our youth. For example, “The Earth We Share” program gives kids the opportunity to learn problem solving and critical thought.

I believe that when Dr. Jemison looked at earth and was “struck by the strength, beauty and preeminence of the earth and stars,” she was looking at a part of herself. After all, she is now a star, and all of us are said to be formed from stardust.



Unhealthy Rules and Roles of My Childhood

By Elizabeth Red Cloud Krohn

My childhood was far from normal. My mother was a prostitute, drug dealer, alcoholic, and drug addict. I was taught to bag and transport drugs. My brothers sold drugs as middle men for my mother. Criminal behaviors were taught and encouraged. A family meeting in my house consisted of who stole or sold the most, lectures on how to hustle, and whippings to whoever came up short.

The definition of *role* is a character assigned or assumed or a socially expected behavior pattern usually determined by an individual's status in a particular society—but in my case determined by family.

I was put in the position of the parent, while my mother took the role of child. It was my responsibility to cook (when we had food) or to steal the food, clean the house, and answer the phone. When the school called, it was my responsibility to excuse whoever had a “mission” that day and was absent from school, or to write an excuse note when they returned. . . . When it got too bad or my mom needed to run, we moved to a different town or state.

My sister and I were also forced to do sexual favors for men to support my mom's drug habit and, after awhile, our own. Drugs were introduced to us by our mother. It was accepted in my family to be a drug addict. I think that was my mom's way

of teaching us how to escape the harsh reality of things we were taught to do to survive. She was raised the same by her mother. My family is a downward spiral of addiction. My family is the true definition of dysfunctional.

Never before having a curfew, I didn't know how to act right when I was placed into foster care. “Be in by 10:00? What? Don't nothin' jump off till then. That's usually the time I leave out.”

Yes, my childhood was unhealthy, but I'm a survivor. The harsh reality of my childhood has only made me stronger. By



writing and talking about it, I take back control of the memories. No longer do my mother's actions define who I am!

I'm the first of three generations to break this vicious cycle of addiction.





Leave her alone, give her life back, and stop calling her back to you. Let it be, let it go, because it's not fun for her anymore.

I mean it never was, but the curiosity killed her. She's no longer curious.

You have a hold on her, and

A Plea for Her Life

By Sheriah Quartey

she thinks that she can't live without you, which is not true. In life, everything used to matter: kids, home, church, appearance. The selfish hold you have on her only allows her to want more and more of you, and nothing else matters anymore.

I wish you didn't exist, and I wish you would go away, but you have too many followers, and you help a lot of people to get paid. You are like God to many and Satan to the rest. I think you are more than that to her; to her, you're the best.

Personally I have never dealt with you, and I promise myself that I never will. I see people lonely and sad, becoming

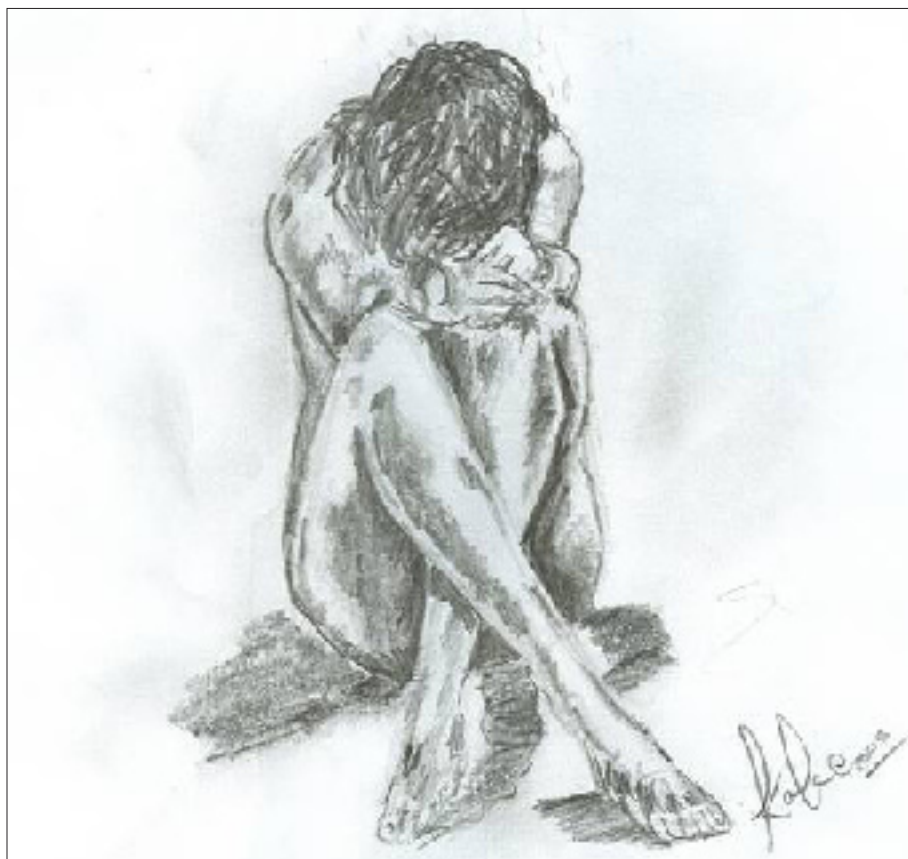
frustrated and every other day mad, and they run to you. You make them happy even if only for a short while. When they come to visit you, you never let them down. It often makes me wonder why I shouldn't just give you a try, but then I stop and realize that it's a false comfort you provide.

She feels empty, and you make her feel full: full of company in her lonely soul, full of enjoyment in her depressing life, full of happiness in her sad world. But your entire fulfillment is temporary, and it could never equal up to the love that one's family could provide.

It's funny because I sit back and reflect on how good things used to be. I remember when she didn't depend on anything or anyone to make her happy. I see her smile, and I hear the words of wisdom that she always gave me, and then I tell other people how much she means to me.

But when I see her and what she has become since she started back dealing with you, my anger at her weakness will not allow me to express my deep concern for her. The result of that makes her run back to you, and the cycle just repeats itself.

It's too bad you can't hear me, and it's too sad that you can't see my tears. But I wonder if you had a heart that beats and could feel the pain that I feel, would you realize that she is my mother and I miss her and love her? So please give her back to me.



Depression, By Karla D. Jean

Waterboarding

By Tom Gardner

When I read about the increasing acceptance of waterboarding as a form of torture, I vividly recall how in 1968 members of the Memphis, Tennessee Police Department believed I could tell them information about Civil Rights insurgents arriving to create havoc. Forty years later I still hide my serrated scars.

I was 14 years old and forgot I was a black boy living in racist America and heading for the Devil's den of discrimination. Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* stimulated my raging hormones for truth, justice, and the American way. Like the main character in his book, I stuck out my thumb for a ride from my home in Wisconsin. I was so excited when someone pulled over for me that I went in the wrong direction. After hitchhiking the rest of the way from Milwaukee to Memphis with no trouble, I put out my thumb for the last ride to my

grandfather's place. I was sure he could take me to demonstrate alongside Martin Luther King Jr. to support his recently announced policy on poverty and Southeast Asia.

"Boy, where you from?" asked the toothpick-sucking officer in the passenger seat as his partner walked around the car to me. At the station Tennessee police officers beat me because I was a threat to the status quo of time-honored Uncle Tom behavior. In retrospect I would have kept the King's English to myself, shuffled my feet, and goggled my eyes in adherence to the South's renowned sacred social rule for young black bucks.

The physical and verbal abuse heaped upon me caused several broken bones in my body and several dozen switches on my 14-year-old skull. I guess these seven policemen were trying to protect the good citizens of Memphis from more of Dr. Martin Luther King's peaceful demonstrations. Between the baton blows to my body and over my screams of youth and innocence, their loud accusations that there were people supposedly coming to Memphis "to stir up trouble" kept ringing in my ears.

Who were these people I supposedly knew who were ready to disrupt the city's infrastructure? My wild eyes could only register pain as the large men kicked, punched, and beat me with nightsticks because I was unable to speak coherently between my sobs of sorrow and



moans for my mother.

I went over in my brain the moment when I stuck out my thumb for one more ride and noticed it was a police car driving by. When they pulled over to talk to me, I knew to have my I.D. ready, but I never could have been ready for the pain and anguish they distributed upon me.

Recent victims of waterboarding must have felt the same excruciating, indescribable pain administered to me by seven Memphis police officers. Forty years later, I can only hope that when Canada put America at the top of the list for human rights violations, they were also talking about America's recent increase of police brutality against black men.

The legacy of Memphis police in 1968 may have influenced CIA torture methods. I am not sure what waterboarding victims in our own times tell their captors, but my experience tells me that nothing said under such forms of torture should be regarded as truth. I acted quite contrite as I admitted to being the vanguard for hundreds of Civil Rights workers heading for Memphis to be with King for acknowledging



1.—The Water Torture.—Facsimile of a Woodcut in J. Dambouille's "Praxis Et Criminalium:" in 4to, Antwerp, 1556.

the number of black men drafted, wounded, and killed during the Vietnam “Conflict” (what a euphemism for war!).

Like relentless Stalinists, the policemen gave me a few hard, calculated kicks with steel-toed boots in my back and ribs for making them exhausted from their beating. I promised them the names of protesters, when they were coming, and what they were driving. I could hardly speak from my busted lips, chipped teeth, and broken jaw, but I forced words from my mouth that sounded like what they wanted as long as they stopped their feverish beating to decipher what my cracking voice was revealing.

But I didn’t know anyone, and I certainly didn’t know about a conspiracy to take over Memphis. So I have since apologized for naming as co-conspirators Ralph Waldo Emerson, Hermann Hesse, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and any other author I ever read. I kept looking from face to face of my seven captors trying to plead with them individually by offering each a name. I worried that one would recognize these names and decide to kill me and dump in the river, like so many other black men who had been crucified in the South.

Then one of the white men with sweaty armpits shouted out, “I know the name of Faulkner but I can’t remember where.” My heart seemed to explode. I held my breath while biting my lip in preparation for the repetitive beating from well worn nightsticks. Then another cop said, “Wait a sec. It sounds like

one of the names from our list of people to look out for.”

The next thing I remember was being thrown onto a crowded jail cell’s sticky, dirty floor with inmates shouting to the guards that I belonged in a hospital. As they looked over at me with unmasked pity and sympathy, I tried to mumble “please, no police” because I was in no hurry for them to finish the homicidal job they started. When an old prisoner with callused fingers tried to prop me up to drink putrid water, I remember saying, “No, thanks, Mr. Bojangles,” before I passed out again.

I woke up in a hospital bed with the sunlight streaming down on my shackled, cast-encased arm. Seeing me regaining consciousness, a black nurse

dressed in blinding starchy white rapidly walked across the ward floor to my bedside. As a bulky white police guard looked on, the nurse whispered in my ear, “Martin Luther King is dead.” Now death was also stalking me, and I started to hyperventilate.

My experience at age 14 in 1968 leads me to conclude at age 54 in 2008 that no torture is justifiable. No one has the right to harm another human being. Information obtained through such barbaric 12th-century methods cannot be trusted to be the truth. The amendments of 1789 to the Constitution through the Bill of Rights denounce personal violation at home. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights should extend those morals abroad.

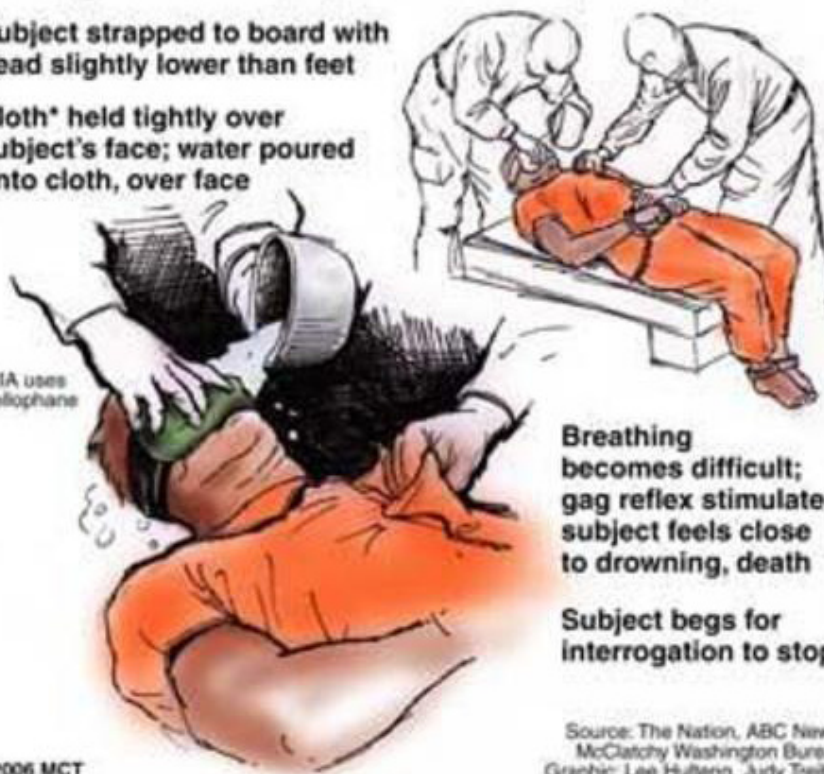
What is water-boarding?

Water-boarding is a harsh interrogation method that simulates drowning and near death; origins traced to the Spanish Inquisition.

Subject strapped to board with head slightly lower than feet

Cloth* held tightly over subject's face; water poured onto cloth, over face

*CIA uses Cellophane



Breathing becomes difficult; gag reflex stimulated; subject feels close to drowning, death

Subject begs for interrogation to stop

Source: The Nation, ABC News, McClatchy Washington Bureau
Graphic: Lee Hulteng, Judy Teislie

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Regarding Love

By Candy Gonzalez

Most of my teenage life I didn't think there was any human being alive that could possibly care about or love me. I didn't believe I could ever love anyone either. I guess in my head I figured if my birth parents could abandon ALL their children for no good reason, then who could possibly have "real" love for me? . . .

When I was 16, I got pregnant with my son. At 17 I gave birth to him and learned how to love. I was given a beautiful gift, and

I was beginning my family tree line. It was then that I realized it was possible to love another person. When he would look at me, I knew he loved me as well, and it was true love. It filled that gap in me that I had for all those years.

Even though we have had many problems and things haven't been perfect, it's OK because no matter what, I know I have my children and they know they have me. And now for the first time one of my children, my son,



will be separated from my two girls and me for six months. He will be going to boot camp. We're only going to get to see him twice and talk to him once a week for about 10 minutes after the initial two weeks. This will be extremely difficult for me because it's always been the four of us. . .

It's kind of weird because he's now 17, the same age I was when I had to grow up due to some decisions I had made. Now it's the same with him. Due to some choices he made, we've had to decide to do something very difficult for my entire family.

But that's OK. He knows I'm here. He knows that we will miss him dearly and that no matter what, we love him much!



A Second Chance By René Robinson

The main character within *A Christmas Carol* is a grumpy, selfish, and unhappy man by the name of Ebenezer Scrooge... Christmas Past, Present, and Future visited him. During each visit, Scrooge had



an opportunity to reflect back on himself as a child, young adult, or man. He also had the chance to see how exactly he arrived at his predicament. Last but not least, he saw how life was without Ebenezer Scrooge, which frightened the Dickens (get it, Dickens) out of him.

Now with all this said, Scrooge finally awakened. He was ecstatic at the thought of having “A Second Chance,” an opportunity to get it right.

This brings me to my point. Each day that God allows us to breathe, work, walk,

talk is a “Second Chance.” It is an opportunity to get it right, to do better than we did the day before, and for that we should be happy. We should jump for joy like old man Scrooge when he realized it wasn’t over. We should live each day like there is no tomorrow. If you have done someone wrong, apologize. If you see someone walking down the street, smile and wish him or her a good day; it doesn’t cost you one cent.

Let’s remove those Scrooge characteristics and replace them with love and joy, not just for you but for all mankind. Each day is a “Second Chance,” but treat it like it’s your last.



Norman Lewis, “*Harlem Courtyard*” 1954

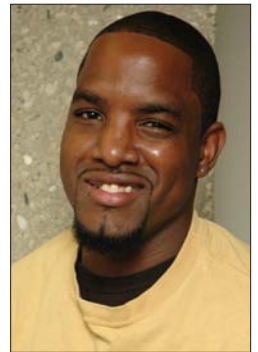
Personal Reflection By Charrod Miller

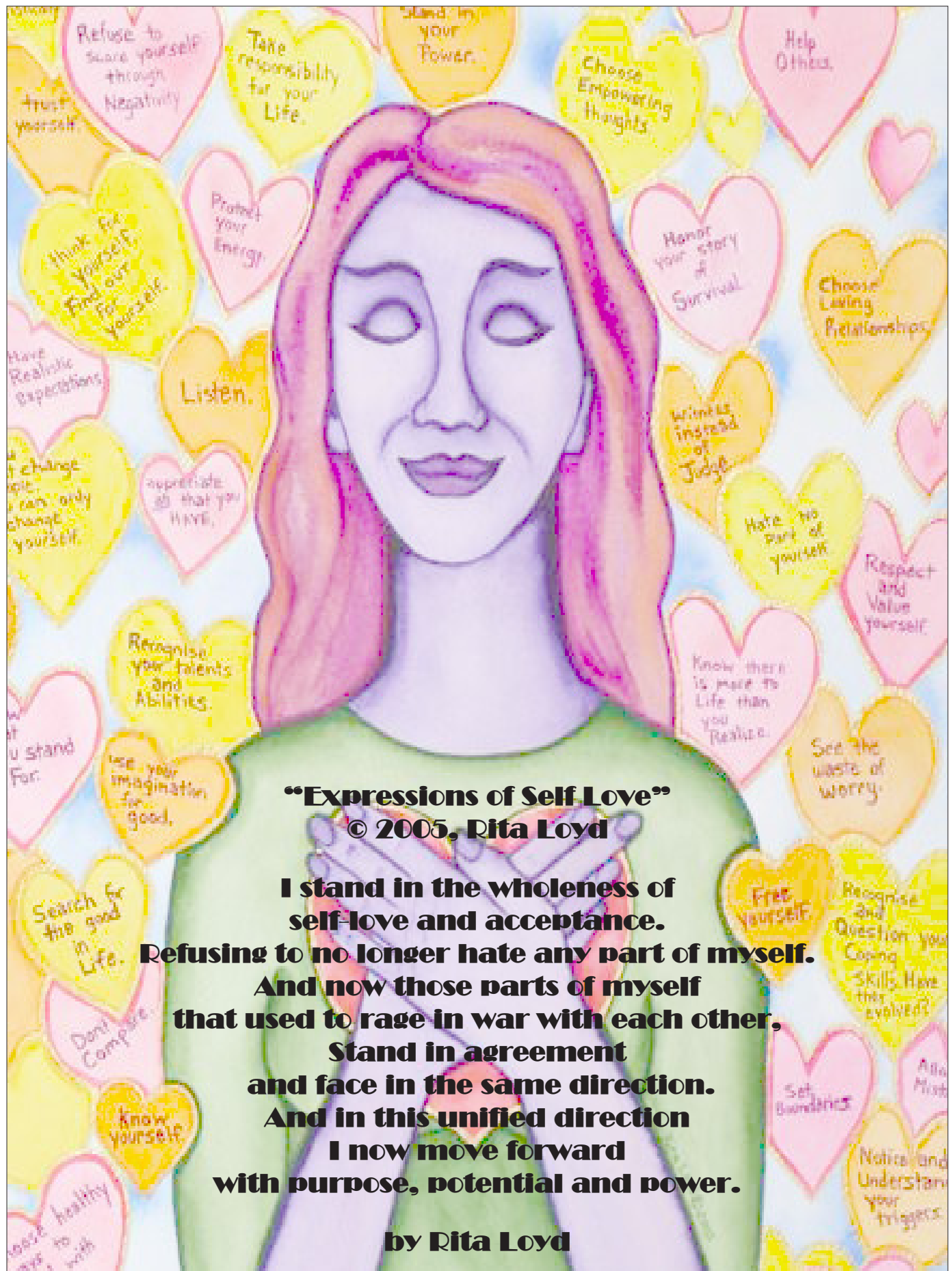
I have many things from my past which I am ashamed of; however, if I had to pick one event to change from then it would have to be my first criminal charge of misdemeanor theft. Although it was a mere misdemeanor charge, it was enough to change my life forever.

It was a week after I legally became a man. I had been working at my new job for about the same length of time. I worked the shift that no one else wanted, third, and it hit me: a way to pay my outstanding bills. I printed up two money orders and cashed them out when I got off the next morning.

The next week the police questioned me, and I lost my job. One year later almost to the date, my parents got a letter that the D.A. had decided to press charges.

If I could change one thing from my past, it would have to be this one because out of all my charges, this one is the one that broke me.





Things You Feel

By Justin Wilson

From the time I was a kid I was raised with fantasies and dreams. My mother, who was the biggest dreamer of all, once told me anything is possible if you believe in it enough. So what's the result? I spent all my early years chasing my fantasies.

Then the real world intruded. Rape and child molestation came to the hood. Drugs were introduced. Guns were fired at night. Wallets were snatched in broad daylight. Candlelight replaced electricity. Heart attacks started dropping loved ones. People started losing their houses. People began living on the streets. Social workers, police, and D.A.s started

coming around. Whole families were ripped apart. People started having babies. Unprepared fathers did what they learned by example. I ran.

When reality hit, I ran. What else could I do? I ran until I lost myself among the crowd of people. I ran until I forgot who I am and where I came from. I ran until fantasy replaced reality.

Then something happened. I started meeting others who went through similar circumstances—people who inspired me to stand and fight, not to run anymore. You see, I took a class about striving for your dreams. In that class, my Odyssey class, I met people just like



me. But do you know what the difference was? They all faced their problems head on. They showed me what it means to be an adult. . .

So I make this vow. I will make the most of every experience from now on. I will not hide my abilities or thoughts from anyone. I will go after what I believe I am worth. I will pay all my dues. I will be a real model. I will not run anymore.

Letters to Professor Baron Kelly

Before you came to lead the drama workshop, my voice was non-existing in my eyes. That all changed for me November 28th, 2007. I thank you sincerely from the bottom of my heart because if you hadn't been here that day working on different exercises, I would've still been stuck in my chair! **(Ronnie Jones)**

I found a confidence within myself that I didn't even know I had. The way that you are able to draw that voice out of people—that voice that they are sometimes scared to let out—makes me have a lot of admiration for you. Thank you once again for making the time to make the difference in so many people's lives.

(Sheriah Quartey)

I used to think acting was easy, but you

taught me that there is quite a bit of preparation that goes into a good performance. . . . It's fun to just leave who you are for awhile and immerse yourself in that role. **(Valerie Williams)**

Since this workshop, I now view the art of drama as a real craft that can be developed. One thing I



is not my forte, I did enjoy the experience and now am able to say that I have worked with a Famous Actor. Everyone was nervous, but you seem to have a way with people that comforts. I will forever remember you and that day the remainder of my days. **(Jeffery McCarroll)**

When one of my classmates who worked with you at Emily's

party for you came back to class and shared what she had learned from working with you, the power in her voice and her body language was Awesome.

RJ Knight)

Class was so fun; I really had a great time. I've love to be an actor too but because of my shyness, it's impossible.

(Nosihle Lukhele)

learned from the evening was that it is possible to understand and recite Shakespeare. This was something that I thought I would never do.

(John Shields)

Although acting





As a result of your coaching, I found a voice in me that desperately wanted to go for a walk or two. **(Kevin Schoen)**

I had big fun, and I think I learned a lot about how to express feelings and keep my head up when I talk to people. **(Rockameem)**

Thank you so very much my dear profound, creative, irreplaceable,

talented, handsome brother! You led a drama workshop that I will never, ever forget! . . . A rebirth occurred just from being in your passionate presence. **(Sherri Bester)**

I was impressed with your techniques that all actors and entertainers go through to warm up. **(Jack Crawford)**

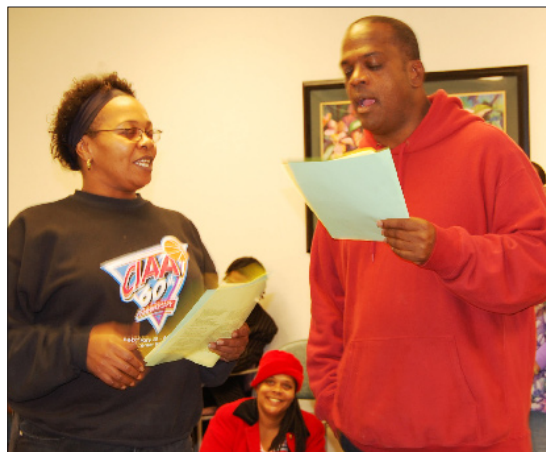
I'm actually working on some dialogue outside of class homework hoping someday to speak those lines with the forceful techniques you showed us. **(Severn Anderson)**

You strengthen all our spirits as well as our voices. Thank you for remembering your roots. **(Jessica Bhan)**

I learned how to breathe when talking. Hopefully one day when I am famous, I will make you proud by doing a good job on TV. **(Josephine Lorya)**

Now after you came and taught our class I understand that through different kinds of expression I can portray myself differently. The breathing exercises got the whole class going. **(Loretta Smith)**

It was delightful, refreshing,



educating, as well as entertaining to have spent two evenings with you. You unearth the promise out of your students. **(Haroun Omar)**

Your enthusiasm, great sense of humor, and wonderful personality made acting/drama seem so easy and fun, even for the shyest of the shy. **(Candy Gonzalez)**

I can now say that I've acted with one of the best! Move over, Denzel. **(Dwayne Blue)**



Youssou N'Dour at the Wisconsin Union Theatre

A review by Rockameem and his wife, Afi

Rockameem: Youssou N'Dour was off the hook, baby! He was all of that, the special dipping sauce, and the extra chips!

I had so much fun. The sound of the band and the smell of the people in the audience made me feel as if I was back in Senegal. The whole house was rocking. It was a presentation not to be missed, and I was glad I was there.

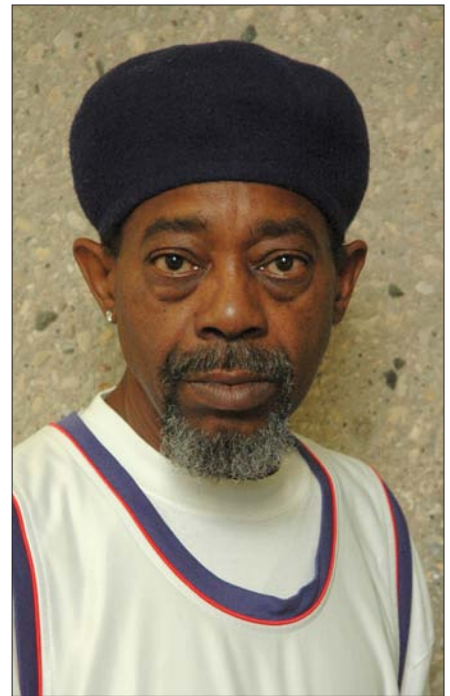
It was a very long set so you got your money's worth. His drummer—wow! I wanted to follow them home. I danced in the car all the way to the house. I knew a lot of the music, and I

could play it!

I say “it was off the hook, baby!” I'd like to thank Emily and the Odyssey Project for letting me be a part of this blessed journey.

Afi: From the moment we entered the Union Theatre you could feel the electricity in the atmosphere. The falling snow outside was not a deterrent to the anxious Madison fans, who ranged in age from toddlers to the more seasoned music lovers.

As the musicians entered the stage, the audience's anticipation rose to meet them. After the first song, people flooded the front



stage area to get closer to the action and to Youssou N'Dour. The crowd loved every minute of the 90-minute show, and so did I.

Youssou was first introduced to the U.S. by Peter Gabriel. Back then his show included female dancers in colorful dress, and he played as well as sang. Tonight there was one lone male dancer who came onstage from time to time. His dance was accented by his masterful drummers marking his movements. A few members from the audience who obviously were fellow Senegalians joined him onstage to express their joy in being there by dancing for him...

Youssou did not disappoint those of us who braved the weather to come out and see him. After the long set he returned to the stage for bratta (meaning a little something extra).

Thank you to Rockameem and the Odyssey Project for a wonderful evening.



Review of the Madison Symphony Concert with Dawn Upshaw

By Valerie Williams

My daughter Ebony and I were lucky enough last fall to see the Madison Symphony Orchestra at the Overture Center with soprano Dawn Upshaw.

Carl St. Clair conducted this wonderful performance. He is the first non-European to hold the position of General Music Director and Chief Conductor of the German National Theater and Staatskapelle in Weimar. He has been a guest conductor for many orchestras all over the world. . . .

Soprano Dawn Upshaw is the recipient of a Macarthur Genius Award, has premiered more than 25 new works, is a four-time Grammy Award winner, and is featured on more than 50 recordings. This was Ms. Upshaw's first appearance with our very own Madison Symphony Orchestra.

I beseech anyone given the opportunity to see the Madison Symphony Orchestra. Music is a truly universal language that can be understood by all.

My Night at the Christmas Symphony

A Review

By Sheriah Quartey

Going to the Christmas Symphony in December with donated tickets from Carroll and Bob Heideman is an experience I will always remember. It was more to me than just going to see a concert. There were so many first times for me in one night: the first time I was ever in the Overture Center, the first time I was able to see a symphony, and the first time that singing made my sister cry.

It was an overwhelming experience. I know to a lot of people it is not really a big deal to go to the Overture Center because they have been there on numerous occasions for various events. I walked in and all of a sudden I just felt different. I no longer felt like I was just a broke black person that would not think twice about seeing a concert like this. I felt like I was on a higher level, even if it was only for a

few hours, and I will cherish this moment forever.

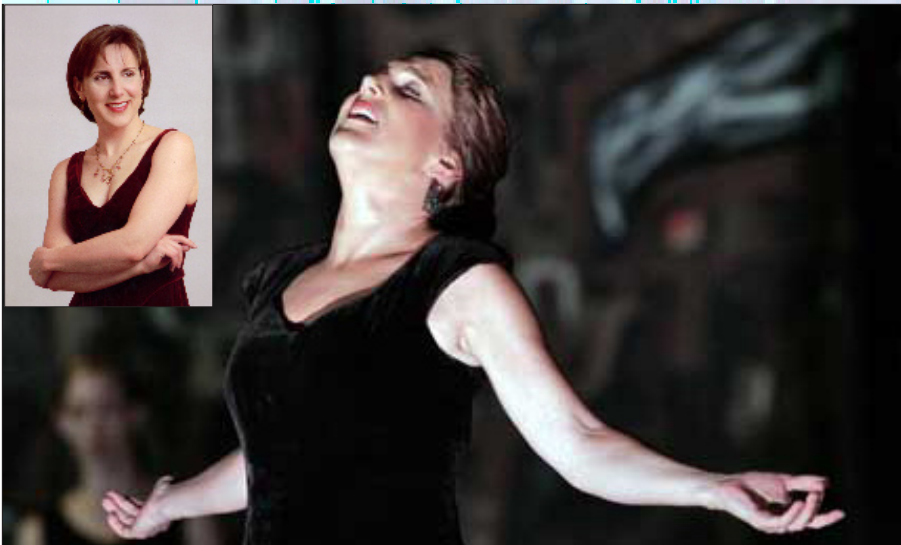
The orchestra and the choirs performed so excellently. I closed my eyes and envisioned that I was somewhere far away. I didn't have any place specifically but it was a place of peace. It was truly a bittersweet experience because I was happy that everyone sounded so good and I was happy to be there, but the Christmas songs made me long for the time when I would have been at an event like this with my family.

The tenor singer, Carl Tanner, had a very powerful voice. He would come out and speak in a monotone and so calm, but then when he opened up his mouth to sing his voice resonated through your whole body.

My favorite part of the show was when the Mount Zion Gospel Choir performed. They performed several Christmas classics including *The First Noel*, which is one of my favorite Christmas carols. Everyone in the choir was so full of energy. They really got the audience involved with the singing and the clapping, and it almost felt like church.

The finale included the Madison Symphony Chorus, Madison Youth Choirs, and Mount Zion Gospel Choir all singing together with the audience. Just seeing the mixture of people and all of the different singing styles all coming together in unison was amazing.

Before I went to the concert, the only thought in my mind was "Bah, humbug," but I left that concert feeling like I wanted to say "Happy Holidays!" to everyone.



Meet the Odyssey Kids

My Name is Jonah



My name is Jonah Priest Anderson. I'm 7 years old and I love to draw. My mom's name is Ozanne Anderson, and she goes to the Odyssey School. I really like going to the kids' Odyssey school because it's fun. My favorite is the coloring and all the other stuff, and the food's kind of good too!

I've got two brothers, Noah and Micah, and we all like to go to the Odyssey school. My favorite thing to draw is Batman and other Super heroes—I'm really good at it.

When I grow up I want to use the computer to make video games, or make skyscraper buildings.

My mom and dad named me Jonah because of a man in the bible. My brothers have bible names too.

My family is special because we all are super heroes. I am Fire, my brother is Ice, and my baby brother is Earth Man.

This year I am better because I plan to listen the first time and do as I'm told.

About Me By Drake Carter, son of Kegan Carter

I love listening to rap music. My favorite rappers are Lil Wayne, Mos Def, Talib Kwali and some others that I can't name off the top of my head. I love playing video games that involve sports, shooting, fighting, and adventure.

When it comes to making money, I am on the top of my game by making sure everything is in order. In school my favorite subjects are math, social studies, language arts, and gym. I also love to type. I am always begging for a cheap laptop because my sisters are always on the desktop computer.

I am basically a technology geek. One time I had to unplug everything from the computer because we were moving a desk and then when I had to set it up I didn't know what to do. To my surprise I found out how to put it all together correctly. One time

my mom asked me to pose with my mouth wide open, because she needed to take a picture for a class. This picture turned up as an award winning picture in a contest. My grandma still has all of them on her bookshelf.

I am short but I don't really care. I like having a good time with my family. My favorite city is Chicago because it is big and I was born there. I am very bright. I have a good sense of humor. I am fun to hang around. I can dance very well and when I grow up I want to design video games or become an engineer. I can type 25wpm at 95% accuracy. I can cook well. I cook chicken, spaghetti, and other easy things. I also play trombone at school.

My first job was for Madison Times. I took photographs of certain events happening in Madison. My mom taught me how to take great pictures. I



would like to go to photography classes.

My full name is Drake Nathaniel Carter. My grandma gave me the name Drake because she said it sounded professional. My mom gave me my middle name, Nathaniel, because one of her favorite singers from the old boy band, New Kids on the Block, was named Jordan Nathaniel Knight. She gave me the last name Carter because that's her last name.

Drake will be working with the children of Odyssey students in order to create the Oracle Jr.