

Odyssey Oracle

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Dear Odyssey Class of 2013:

Dear Odyssey Class of 20131

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Welcome to an Odyssey ride of knowledge and adventure. This class is a stepping stone to a journey to the top of a beautiful mountain of incredible accomplishments. You will learn about famous people and their journeys to the road of success. You will get to know Socrates, Shakespeare’s Macbeth, and Plato. You will read poetry by William Wordsworth, Maya Angelou, and Emily Dickinson. You will walk with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Henry David Thoreau, and Mahatma Gandhi. You will utilize your U.S. history book and English/grammar books to enhance your ability to complete assigned writing assignments. The road to success is not easy, but you have wonderful staff and tutors to guide you along the way. You may encounter bumps in the road, but don’t get discouraged. The prize at the end of the road is worth its weight in gold. Climb aboard this Odyssey train of knowledge and enjoy the ride! (**Marcia Brown**)



You’re about to take a ride, whether you’re ready or not. You can decide right now if you’re going to be a passenger or the driver. Afraid to take control, but still really excited, I called shotgun right away. I wanted to see everything coming at me and going on around me. I learned a lot from my fellow passengers: the knowledgeable





professors and friendly classmates. My favorite times were when we'd pick up a hitchhiker, like William Blake or Walt Whitman. I'd spend hours listening to their stories and learning about their lives. . . . Now that we're almost to the end, I'm finally ready to grab the wheel and clutch it tight with both hands. I

have to say, this has been one road trip I will never forget; I only wish I would've been ready to drive sooner. Now the question is: are you ready for a ride?

(Katie Pruitt)



The year was a fast-paced class. I hope you enjoy the ride. We started our journey by traveling to different lands and traveling through time. We tried to understand people and their lives, seeing it through their eyes. You will make new and interesting

friends. You will laugh, cry, wonder, and question life in general. It will be an eye opener, and you will learn. So get set, pack your books, and have a wonderful experience.

(Samantha East)



This may very well be the most important step that you're taking towards higher education. Life does not always present people like us with the chance at college. Many of us are coming out of bad circumstances or are still experiencing them as we speak.

Whatever your struggles or whatever unhealthy chains bind you to the past, this is the time to break them and begin your Odyssey these next two semesters. The work will be challenging, the conversations will be intellectually engaging, and the food will be plenty. Odyssey is now your home even long after you have graduated. You are now surrounded by likeminded students with caring staff and instructors who represent the best of UW-Madison, who are all here for YOU. I have never been talented with letter

writing, and I am usually blunt and precise in regard to subject matter like this. All I can truly say is . . . don't quit! **(Brandon McCarey)**



First and foremost I would like to say congratulations on your acceptance into the Odyssey Program. Some of you may feel nervous or doubt your ability to succeed in this class. Don't worry: your professors will make sure you feel comfortable on this

cruise. You all have your reasons for why you have joined the Odyssey journey. Maybe you want to be a better student, family member, or learner; whatever your reasons, your professor has already seen your potential. As you get to know your classmates and understand yourself a little better, make sure to stay positive, open minded, and encouraging to those around you. Never settle for less than your best. Your professors will not accept anything less from you because that is unfair to your families, your coworkers, your loved ones, and yourself. Remove your doubts and fears; replace them with an eagerness to learn. Remember your goals for why you joined the Odyssey; bring them with you every Wednesday evening. Trust your professors and classmates, and you will be a success. Good luck, Odyssey 2013!

(Run Barlow)



Odyssey is a wonderful journey that you can take because it helps you un-disguise yourselves from the disguise you have been wearing in life. It helps you find your way out of the cave you have been hiding in. It helps you find your voice. And the staff and the volunteers are wonderful. You

will look forward to Wednesday nights like my 29 classmates and I did. Take this opportunity and use it to your best ability because you will get a lot of satisfaction out of it, like I did. Congratulations to the Class of 2013. Embrace this journey because I guarantee it will change your whole life. **(Nkechi Johnson)**



I hope you are sitting down! What I'm about to tell you is that you've won the jackpot. Now the amount you've won is determined by you. Congrats! You've been chosen to be a member of the exclusive UW Odyssey Project, run since 2003 by Emily Auerbach and other esteemed professors.

Now during your 30 weeks of class you will undergo a major makeover in your thought process and in the way you approach things in your life. It's important for you to be focused and ready to work. During your wonderful journey you will study and learn about many important people, such as Langston Hughes, Martin Luther King, Walt Whitman, Socrates, and many, many more spectacular people. It's important to be your warm and loving self.

Now, the room you will meet in is sacred, so if you get that loving feeling in your soul, yes, you are in the right place. Emily and the other professors will make you feel right at home. Listen, but please smile and laugh, be encouraging and authentic. 2013, I've set the dinner table; now it's time for you to eat. Enjoy your feast! **(Terry Hart)**



First I want to congratulate every one of you for becoming an Odyssey student. I was once like you, just finding out I was accepted. The first day I thought this class was the same, just like all other regular classes I had in school . . . but every single day I came to Odyssey class changed

me—in a good way. I figured out my weaknesses and strong points, and the class became my family. I promise you that this Odyssey class, the teachers, and you yourself will help you find yourself.

(Linda Thao)

Brace yourself, for this is going to be one of the most exciting times in your life; it will be an awesome experience of growth and development. The professors will challenge you academically in every area of your thoughts and ideas, and your mind will be stretched beyond recognition. You



will thank them for this. Last but not least, watch out for that igniting love flowing out from the professors. It's unbelievable. I can't even explain it; you just have to see it for yourself. The only way I can explain it is through the words of Jesus in John 13:34-35. Now go read it

for yourself—I dare you. **(Eugene Smalls)**



You are now a part of something much bigger than yourselves; something that requires you to find and discover yourself in order to be successful. During this journey, you will doubt yourself, find strength you didn't know you had, and delve into parts of your

mind, heart, and soul that you may have wanted to forget or didn't know were there. Find comfort in the fact that 29 others are experiencing the journey with you. Collectively you will cry, laugh, get angry, be proud, and hopefully surprise yourselves along the way. Odyssey moments will start to stack up in your memory, like books on a shelf. During your time away from class, you will put some away and grab others when you are out in the world searching for answers.

In addition to the 29 others on this Odyssey, you will meet other friends. My personal favorites are Socrates and his student Plato. Whenever I find myself confused or unsure, I go to them and find age-old answers to questions that are not all that new, just new to me. You may prefer to go to Thoreau or Dr. King for your answers, or you may discover as I did that most of the answers lie inside of yourself, in your humanity. They have been in your heart all along.

Don't be afraid as you will have guides on this journey to help illuminate the darkness that may have been overwhelming. Emily will light the way and provide warmth and encouragement. Coach will translate words that may seem like secret codes at first glance. Soon you will be able to decode them on your own everywhere you go! Diane and René will make sure you have all the provisions you need to get there. Kegan will document your

journey via the Oracle. Read it from cover to cover as it contains important insight. The professors and special guests will serve as emissaries, bringing forth valuable treasures. The debates and discussions that will ensue during these visits will sustain and provide you with knowledge that you can later share with family and friends.

The only thing required of you is to be present—don't miss a class! Speaking for my classmates, I challenge you to top our attendance record! We learned early on that we got the most out of the class when all 30 of us were there. Speaking for myself, I will carry a piece of each one of my classmates with me for the rest of my life. Speaking to you, I look forward to having you join me as an alumnus of Odyssey. Good luck and enjoy your journey. I look forward to cheering you on! (**Hedi Rudd**)



My journey started only because someone else saw something in me that I didn't. For the last eight months I've grown to know exactly what they saw. So as you start your journey, keep this in mind: come to class with warmth, guidance, and an open mind. The warmth will come as soon as you walk into the well-lit room and see the friendly smiles and the smells of a good, wholesome meal (not just the first day either—you can expect this every Wednesday!). The guidance of Emily, Coach, René, Diane, Kegan, and the whole Odyssey staff will surely be there to support you. Lastly, always keep an open mind. Try not to over-think what's presented to you (I'm still working on this one). You'll be fine. So have fun and get the most out of your journey! (**Arnell Royal**)

Welcome to the beginning of an inspirational journey. You have no idea how lucky you are to be a part of a program that not only tests your knowledge but also your strength and ability to succeed. You have been chosen because Emily obviously sees something special in you. Throughout the next few months, you and the rest of the world will discover what that actually is. Be strong and motivated. There will be times where



you feel like giving up or that your best isn't enough, but know that the professors are there to help you, as well as your classmates. Utilize these resources, and the tough times won't seem so tough. Good luck with your experience, and enjoy your time in Odyssey. (**Tai'Kiah Phillips**)



To a friend, to a brother,
No matter religion, no matter
color
The Odyssey Program is like
no other
Searching to afford school,
search no further
Because the Odyssey Program

offers free
Education to husbands, wives,
sons, daughters,
And even great grandfathers and mothers,
One big happy family.
On that note if I were you, I would be like me
and take advantage of the opportunity
to not only learn for free, but also
become a part of a loving family.
We love, we care, we laugh,
And we even cry together
Like birds of a feather
We always fly together.

After experiencing Odyssey you'll find
There is a place to come once a week,
To enhance and get a peace of mind
I literally mean that every Wednesday
You will leave all your troubles behind
And as for the remainder of the week
With the educated strength you obtain and
Ultimately retain you'll be able to refrain
From becoming weak.

Strong and educated in the end you'll stand.
Knowing that your Odyssey family is with you
Physically, mentally, and spiritually
Hand in hand.
(**Juba Moten**)



I am a very loquacious person, but today I choose a conversation that is short but sweet. I would like to challenge you to be you. If you haven't discovered your true identity, the words you will learn on this odyssey will be a light to those things about you that were once hidden. Don't be afraid to let

your light shine; you are a star. You are as bright as the sun in July. Odyssey students of 2013, I have never seen a star hidden in darkness. Shine, shine. **(Kenya Moses)**



I am Beatriz and I'm from Peru in South America. I had been struggling with English as a Second Language. When I started in the Odyssey Project class, I found a classroom with multicultural students of different ages with a lot of energy for learning

and very kind professors eager to help us. Odyssey and my classmates offered support and encouraged me to find my way in the new world. All of them became like my family in the USA.

While I studied the history of many wise and admirable people, like Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Socrates, and Langston Hughes, I learned from them to know who I am and how much value I have as a human being. I learned that God created me with my own gifts and inspiration, and this is the same for other people.

I feel very strong and capable to do better things in my life. This is a miracle for me. Odyssey class saved my life and made a newborn Beatriz in the United States. If you take this class very seriously, doing your homework, attending class all the time, and being persistent in what you are doing, you will be successful. Good luck in your journey. **(Beatriz Mairena-Kellman)**

Be prepared to be amazed, excited, and a little bit scared for what you are about to experience. Your life is about to change in ways that the Odyssey Project's brochure doesn't even begin to describe. That your life will be changed is a guarantee. Your opinion of yourself and your



talents will also change, and places that you thought were stuck will become unstuck. Whatever occurs with you individually, however, will be positive and will move your life forward if you let it. How you look at yourself as a student and a learner will never be the same.

You should expect the challenging homework and interesting classes to assist you in your growth. I recommend that you commit to the tasks set before you and don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask questions or get help. Count your blessings and prepare to move forward. You deserve it. **(Billie Kelsey)**



Coming into this class you may be naïve and have a lot of problems holding you down. As you get further into the class, you'll realize you have a family. Everyone is singing their own blues. Then brighter days will come, and you'll realize that your vocabulary is improving and expanding and

that you know so much about Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Lincoln, history, etc. You'll be glad you took this step, your first step to success. **(Shaquida Johnson)**



Know the staff will be there for you in any way possible. The work is hard but it's worth it. Your classmates as well as staff will become family, and that will bring you a long way. The Odyssey Project is truly a journey, a journey you'll be glad you came aboard.

You'll take classes you've probably never had, so your brain will be stretched. You'll learn new, big, long words. Be prepared to come out of your comfort zone, which is a good thing. If you're shy, you won't be anymore. The Odyssey Project is a journey you'll never forget. **(Marilyn Johnson)**

I congratulate you on taking the first step. The journey on which you are about to embark is a vast and enriching experience that will touch your very



soul. Open your mind and heart and allow yourself to receive the full blessings that the Odyssey Project has in store for you.

I note that you are nervous; I know that you are excited. Allow yourself to embrace these feelings so that you may overcome them and apply yourself to the fullest.

The family you are entering is a dedicated one. Yes, Odyssey is a family. You will grow to love, respect, and admire your fellow classmates, advisors, and professors. You will depend on one another and assist each other in times of need or strife, whether it is class related or personal. Embrace yourself. Embrace campus. Embrace your future and the amazing opportunity you have before you.

I congratulate you on taking this first and crucial step in transforming your mind, outlook, opportunities, and future. Time passes quickly while participating in the Odyssey Project. Remember, whether your homework is complete or not, being in class is most important. You can make up assignments; however, we cannot relive the moments missed that are shared together in each class. Take your time and do the very best that you are able to do. Before you know it, you will be graduating; your family standing proudly watching you receive your graduation certificate. You will learn that you will never be alone once you embark on this journey. Once Odyssey, always Odyssey. I look forward to meeting you and wish you the very best in all you choose to do.

(Keith Johnson)



You have been given an awesome opportunity to be a bit closer to who you were meant to be. Each class, each book, each professor, and each paper will bring you over a hill that will seem insurmountable at times.

At times your past will scream lies to your ears. You may hear, "What are you doing? This is too hard! Give up! You're not good enough." These thoughts have come to me and other alumni as well. Please remember these are lies. You are not alone, and you have support if you

ask. Odyssey is a chance to learn that you can learn, that you can make new and better choices, all in an environment that is full of love and no judgments. You are required to try, to ask questions, and to ask for help; then success will be yours. **(Yetta Harris)**



This program is what your life's missing. Everything you know now will change for the better. This program will give you the jumpstart to greatness that your life is needing. Odyssey is the key to every door that has closed on you.

You will become a better reader, writer, and student. Every person that walks through this door of opportunity has become successful. Not only will this show you new walks of life but also teach you how to use more than one way to get there. This program teaches you patience and structure. Welcome to a world full of promises of becoming educated about how to grow mentally and physically in school. You will become mentors and scholars full of wisdom. Odyssey has shown me how to love reading, writing, and college. This will be the best decision you will ever make in your life. **(Jesse Hamilton)**



I am a very happy student from the Class of 2012, and you can be happy, too. How? Show up for class, come early or be on time, do all your homework, stay focused, and accept all the challenges. Do not let your dreams die. Let this be the time in your life that you make a conscious decision for good.

Tell yourself I'm going to make a change in my life so I can make a difference in someone else's life. Remove fear and success will draw near. . . . Work hard with the champions of this Odyssey team. Give it all you've got to be a part of the Class of 2013. I wish you well on your odyssey. You can do this! **(Yolanda Cunningham)**

Applying to the Odyssey Project is the best decision you will make, and you will always cherish it in your lifetime. Congratulations for being chosen to be part of this life-changing experience. For you



see, Odyssey is a transforming power jet that stimulates your mind to think big. The Odyssey Project is not only interested in you getting a degree but also interested in your welfare and seeing you excel in your endeavors. The wonderful professors devote their time every

Wednesday night to enrich you with amazing writing and thinking skills on this journey. With Coach bringing a magic world of vocabulary, you will be transformed into a wealth of knowledge. It is not going to be easy, but don't lose heart. Tutors are always there to help. Take everything seriously, for it is an honor to be part of this marvelous journey which provides you with physical and mental food. Best of all, it assists you in gaining self-confidence. Welcome aboard!

(Tatenda Bvindi)



Congrats on taking that next step to change your life. You are here and your time is now, so take full advantage of the opportunity that you're given. Please waste no time—not yours, Emily's, or the teaching and support staff's. They will work hard to help you in any way, but you also have to be driven and willing to help yourself. So if

you're in this just thinking you're going to goof off and get a free ride, you have another think coming, and this ain't for you. This will be one of the greatest years and experiences of your lifetime—if not the greatest. Feel honored because it's not every day people get chances like this.

(Bradley Barner)



Congratulations! Welcome to our Odyssey family. Consider yourself blessed. You have been accepted on an express train that takes you on a ride to the world of knowledge. You will visit Socrates, the famous philosopher, Frederick Douglass, the slave

that escaped to freedom. You'll learn about art and music and poetry, with some important facts

about history. And when you're done, you'll think differently. Your vocabulary will grow, and you'll want to show everyone you know. There are big words that will cause your mind to swell, and some that will make you say what the hell! Emily, Coach, Jean, and Gene, with Craig Werner teaching history, wow, what a team.

Emily saw something in you, she's giving you a test, so work hard and give her your best. Your passion for learning is the key, and when you're done you'll earn six credits from Odyssey. And you can use these credits toward your future degree. So please work hard from the very start because you are a part of Odyssey. You'll write and read and your confidence will soar, then you'll be transformed and want even more. I've always thirsted for a good book, and after the reading in Odyssey I'm truly hooked on Emily Dickinson and Langston Hughes; I now realize only half my mind got used. For the last eight months Odyssey professors have quenched my thirst for more, I can take a test and get a perfect score. You were chosen because you're hungry for knowledge, and if you work hard you'll feel strong and empowered. Odyssey professors will feed you with knowledge, and before you know it you'll be off to college. They are dedicated and will expect the same dedication from you, and when you're done you'll have a better education. You can expect to laugh and cry with tears of joy, and play with big words like a toy.

WOW! I can't believe all the knowledge I've been missing, and now my brain won't stop itching. I feel so good, I'm the smartest girl in my 'hood. Don't give up: if you're feeling life's stresses, just take the time and talk to the professors. You'll make friends and gain insight into the world of knowledge, and you'll dream at night. With Diane, Rene, and Sherri in sight, all three Odyssey alumni, they will help you stay in the fight. So please don't give up because education is the answer, and when you graduate you'll feel you can fly high like Santa's Prancer. The sky's the limit, so stay strong. You can do this!

(Phyllis Anderson)

Cinderella Opera at the Overture Center

Review by Michele Withers

I've never believed in fairy tales. Well, that was until tonight....

Garnett Bruce's reproduction of Gioachino Rossini's "Cinderella – Angelina" (La Cenerentola in Italian) offers a take on the beloved fairy tale. The fairy tale opera is set to a 20th- century movie set, complete with peacock headdresses, men in tuxedos, and even look-alike Marx Brothers. In her opening lines, Cinderella, called Angelina in this version of the rags-to-riches tale, strikes a note. "I was born to sorrow and tears," she reminds us in the final scene, which offers reconciliation with her stepfamily but avoids happy affirmations.

This isn't the Cinderella story we all know so well. In Rossini's variation, instead of the usual stepmother, Cinderella has a self-serving stepfather. Matching bracelets replace the glass slipper and there is no fairy godmother, magical creatures, or carriage reverting to a pumpkin at midnight. Instead, much of the opera is about the director, Ramiro; his chauffeur, Dandini; his producer, Alidoro, who serves as a kind of matchmaker; and a chorus of all men.

This is a strong cast from top to bottom. Daniella Mack, the mezzo soprano, is exceptional and unforgettable in the lead role of Angelina. She has every reason to be bitter but is all love and goodness. She gives a character known in this fairy tale to be weak and frail a powerful voice to stand up for what she believes and wants!

Mack's performance is phenomenal, and the production is elevated by a remarkable supporting cast. Tenor Gregory Schmidt is a strong "director"

Ramiro and dresses up like a chauffeur to test the character of the Magnifico sisters. With a rich tone and soaring high notes, he's so alluring to hear and very convincing as a director looking for the unheard: truth in Hollywood.

Baritone Steven Condry's Don Magnifico is a powerful father and clown. Condry is a great singing actor, commanding every trick wherever he goes; he manages to be

strong and lyrical without concealing Magnifico's abusiveness. Daniel Belchor's Dandini is magical: whether he's the fake director or himself at the end, he commands attention. Alan Dunder's Alidoro is magical and mystical. During the storm it seems as if it emerges from him. At other times he has this knowing presence, much like a merlin. Amy Mahoney and Jamie Van Eyck as the stepsisters were not so wicked but more foolishly cruel.

The Madison Symphony Orchestra conducted by John DeMain made Rossini's playful score rousing, roaring, and rambunctious yet eloquently enchanting. This was my first opera.... but definitely not my last.



Jeanice Evette Franklin

by Tai’Kiah Phillips

Growing up, I never had the benefits that some people my age had. My parents didn’t spoil me how others got spoiled, not because they didn’t want to, but because we weren’t financially able to. My father has been in my life off and on since I was three years old. My mother, Jeanice Franklin, has had to support my younger sister and me all on her own, at least until she medically could not work and I got my first job. When my mother stopped working, I got to spend so much more time with her. I learned that she is one of the most opinionate, compassionate, and influential people to anyone around her.

When my mother is speaking to someone, she feels it necessary to speak her mind. She doesn’t do this to hurt people’s feelings at all, but just to voice her opinion and give advice. When I was younger and brought home an assignment that I thought I did well on, she would let me know that she thought of it, good or bad and then make me try harder to better. She always did that in a nice way. Now that I’m older, my mom voices her opinion on different matters, and doesn’t sugarcoat anything. I often talk to her about what’s going on around me, and she tells me what I should and shouldn’t do, but still gives me the freedom to make those choices on my own. I look up to my mother because I’ve seen the things she had to go through raising my sister and me, so her opinions often influence most of my decisions.

Jeanice may be outspoken and opinionated, but she does it because she is so compassionate towards others around her. She doesn’t do anything that she knows would intentionally hurt someone; her conscience won’t allow it. My mother has had numerous of friends who had financial problems and needed somewhere to stay. She couldn’t find it

in her heart to turn them around, so she let them in...EVERY TIME. When I was in high school, I had gotten my heart broken for the first time. My mother comforted me and held me when I cried. She told me that I was beautiful and that I would get past everything that was happening to me. She made me feel better, without the expense of down-talking the person who hurt me. She was just what I needed to get by. Now when she tells me things, I often listen more and take into account what she is saying because I know she cares. She is majority of my influence in life.

Her influence isn’t just on me. My mother also influences others. People always ask her for advice and opinions because they respect what she has to say and they know that she’s not the type of person to tell them things that would make them question themselves or their decisions... Although she doesn’t force her opinions or suggestions on people, they respect her enough to consider what she says. They know the type of person my mom is, so most of the time her opinions and suggestions often influence the decisions of others. Luckily for everyone, her character doesn’t allow her to provide negative influences.

My mom knows just what to say, when to say it, and has positive reasons why she says things. Everyone loves the fact that she is so opinionated, compassionate, and influential. Her character is one that is very rare. Not everyone can have a person in their life that almost always has good intentions and means well. I’m lucky to have one of those rare people be my own mother: Jeanice Evette Franklin.



Sherri Bester '08: Finding Her Way Through a World of Children

Sherri Bester's love for children is evident through her chosen profession as well as her personal reasons for interrupting her academic career. A former owner of Rainbow Promises daycare center, Sherri decided to renew her pursuit of education with her family's encouragement. She is a wife and mother of six, active in her children's schools, the community, and church, and becoming more vocal in politics. She works with the child care center for the UW-Odyssey Project, and she is a cook and summer school teacher for the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) program at the Nehemiah Community Development Corporation. Sherri loves to be involved with the molding of children's minds.

Sherri first attended the UW-Madison through the Summer Opportunity Program after graduating from John Marshall High School in Milwaukee, WI. "There were many students of different races. That changed when the fall semester started. There were hardly any African American students on campus. Walking into Odyssey on that first day somewhat reminded me of when I first came to the SOP." Her experience at UW-Madison initially was not favorable due to the "racial drama" she experienced. Sherri attended college for four years before leaving due to illness and pregnancy. Though she intended to go back to school after the birth of her first child, she decided to take a break to be a stay-at-home mother instead of putting her child into daycare. Sherri planned to return to school all along. After her youngest child started school, she returned, studying Child Care and Development in the School of Human Ecology. She credits her children with giving her the encouragement to pursue her dreams. "They saw all the reading I was doing

for my childcare business, and they knew I liked to study. They told me that I needed to go back and finish." Professor Rossi, head professor of Community Non-Profit Leadership and fellow church member, also

encouraged Sherri to reapply to UW-Madison. Sherri decided to apply to both the Odyssey Project, which she heard about through her close friend Denise Maddox, a graduate of the 2004 Odyssey class, and for re-admittance to the UW-Madison simultaneously. Sherri was accepted into both, and during her second semester at Odyssey, she also attended classes on the UW-Madison campus.

Sherri describes her first day as an Odyssey student in 2007 as "such a different atmosphere from the experience I'd had at the UW-Madison. Odyssey is much more diverse, creative, open, and adapting to my educational needs." She expresses some regret about taking her "more enjoyable classes" to fulfill her major first instead of core classes, but overall she feels that her experience at UW-Madison has been wonderful. "This semester

really reminds me of when I first attended in 1980. I'm in a psychology class and an animal science class, and the class sizes and lecture halls are huge... The School of Human Ecology and creative writing classes somewhat reminded me of Odyssey because of the open discussion and creative learning experience. If not for the Odyssey Project,



I would probably still be doing childcare... lost in a world of children,” Sherri tearfully explains. “I’d still be fulfilling my dreams by working with children, but not breaking through the walls of higher education, which lifts you to a higher realm. I would be lost.”

Sherri’s husband, James, and her six children, Emmanuel, Samuel, James, Christopher, Mariama, Keziah, have all been very supportive during her journey towards higher education. Her journey has impacted her family greatly: her husband returned to UW-Madison and earned his degree; Emmanuel, Mariama, and Keziah are all honor roll students. James, Samuel, and Christopher have differing learning abilities, but that has not deterred them. James has won many scholarships, both athletic and academic; despite being dyslexic, he has a 3.5 GPA. Christopher is considering transferring to UW-Whitewater. Samuel was a graduate of the Odyssey class of 2009 and is currently going to MATC. “They were inspired by my special education needs. They saw that the McBurney Center, TRIO, and Odyssey gave me that boost to ask for help. Professor Emily in particular encouraged me to get tested. I never acknowledged those needs. Getting tested helped me learn to deal with my test anxiety. They saw the resources that opened up to help me, and that helped them to learn not to be ashamed of their special education needs. Odyssey helped me not feel ashamed of my needs.”

Sherri’s academic success is reflected

through the awards she has earned. She is a three-time Osher Scholarship recipient. She also won the Outstanding Returning Adult Student award through the School of Human Ecology. She was awarded a fellowship through Family Voices, where she is a family liaison. Most recently, Sherri was awarded the 2012 Marion McCammond Award for her community activism.

Sherri describes her Odyssey experience as a “very wonderful experience,” yet she remembers the initial struggle with adapting. “It was somewhat of a challenge because I was already writing poetry, working in the schools and the Boys and Girls Club, and doing a lot of educational things, but I was doing these things from the standpoint and mindset of a child. Coming into the adult world of Odyssey, I was somewhat intimidated.” After awhile, she embraced the experience. “I felt very relaxed, very happy. I was happy to spend more of my time with adults because I spend so much time with children.” She describes graduation as her “most profound moment. At one point, I didn’t know if I could do it.”

“Reach to the highest heights of your dreams,” Sherri advises incoming Odyssey students. “There will be pain, there will be pleasure, there will be a roller coaster ride of ups and downs. You should reach to your Odyssey family members that inspire you. You will get a lot of encouragement from them and from Professor Emily. Don’t give up on your dreams. Stop, breathe, and start over again.”



Poetic Expressions

Feelings By Terry Hart

Whenever I'm sad and feeling blue,
I think of all the good things I've done and used to do.

When I'm happy I think of the sun
Beaming brightly on everyone.

Oh! Of course we've all had bad days full of doubts and despair.
Whenever I feel as such, I think of life, liberty, the sky, and mostly fresh air.

To relocate sad feelings, this I challenge you,
To appreciate life, and always do the best you can do.



Odyssey by Tai'Kiah Phillips

Odyssey.
The release of myself.
The boost to my self esteem
The little piece of hope I have for a better education.

Odyssey.
Here, I found myself.
Here, my esteem gained more confidence.
Here, I received a better education.

Odyssey.
The continuous molding of myself.
The constant increase of self-fulfillment.
The start to an excellent future in education.

Content By Keith Johnson

...though hard it has been,
and probably shall remain to be...

...I love the gifts I've been given,
and would not choose any other life for me.

Stuck By Keith Johnson

Dark... Dank... Drank...
Poison... Passion... and Pain...

Light... Lovely... Life...
Struggles... Stress... and Strife...



Art into Poetry



Old Market Woman

Life has aged me
Sorrows have caged me
So many tales untold:
I've given so much
Yet with despair I'm touched
My face tells the weariness of my soul.
(Yolanda Cunningham)

Mona Lisa

by Leonardo da Vinci

we do not know
a thousand-year-old smile of ages before
she teaches the young girls how to smile
preserved with colors and canvas
still we do not know
why she smiles
(Samantha East)



The Parking Garage by George Segal

I'm sitting on this crate in front of the parking garage door
My elbows on my knees and my eyes toward the floor
I'm contemplating whether to head home to the wife
Or hang out with the fellas till broad daylight
I'm sitting on this crate in front of the parking garage door
Thinking what do I have to go home for?
I better call the wife to let her know I'll be home late
I'll hang out with the fellas till a quarter after eight
The red neon sign is flashing the word "Park"
I think I better get home before it gets dark
(Marcia Brown)

The Burial of Count Orgaz by El Greco

This picture demonstrates the death
of Count Orgaz
with people looking down
but when you look up you see
angels all around
If you know the story of Stephen
His words would make you cry
Because his words were the same as Jesus's
Father forgive them for what they do.
(Marilyn Johnson)

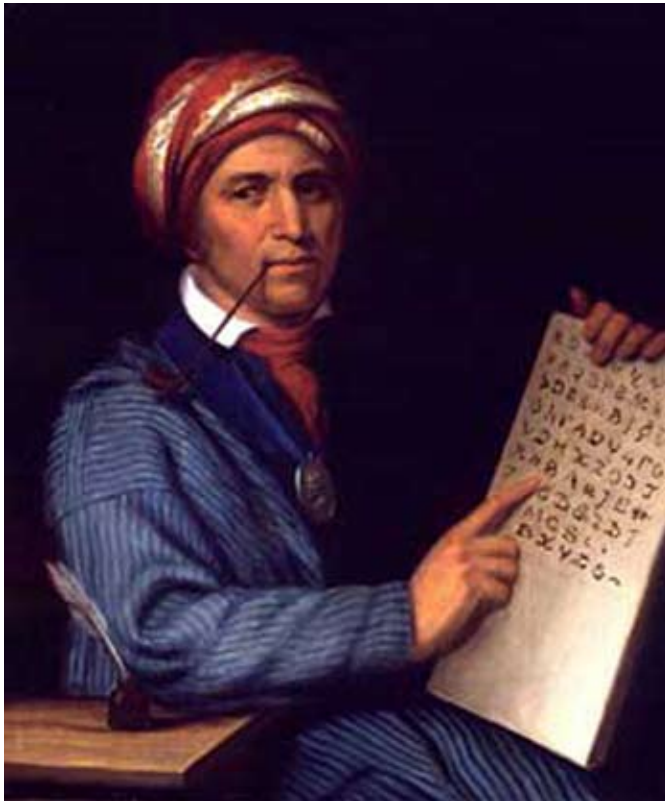
***Portrait of Sequoyah
with European Dress by Henry Inman***

In the top of the mountains
almost touching the sky
there was a town to be found
that's Cherokee Indian ground

*We were living very happy
With our own writing system and customs
Until the Americans had a plan
To take our land.*

Forced from their land without care
their sorrow so hard to bear.
No matter how hard they strive
many lost their lives

In these old mountains so high
Indian spirits float free in the sky
American Indian names remain honored yet
The Cherokees will never forget.
(Beatriz Mairena-Kellman)





Rembrandt Self Portrait 1669

Here I am left alone
without my family
without house or home
I often feel like
I'd rather be gone
for the pain in my heart
is like the impact of a baritone
heavy the bass with every beat
reminds that I am left alone
Oh what I would give to again
have a house and home.

(Juba Moten)

The Means to an End . . . A Shadow Drama in Five Acts

By Kara Elizabeth Walker

It's here.
It's alive.
It has a pulse.
It's worse than garbage.
Why are you here?
You're not wanted.
Get! Just get
away from here!
Just get!

(Linda Thao)



St. Francis Receiving the Stigmata by Giotto di Bondone

As I kneel before thee
not worthy of your presence
my heart is filled with emotions
when I see the glory of your essence.

I lift my hands to worship
as humbly as I can
to be found favored
as you deliver the stigmata
to both my feet and hands.

Not knowing what I've done
to receive such an honor on this day
I stare in awesome amazement
to behold Christ His only son.

(Lorraine Garrett)



Children Dancing on the Strand
by George William (A.E.) Russell

The sun rises
Sweeping away the night
And so are the children
Awake from their slumber
Their little hearts beating
As fast as their feet can run
In excitement of a new day
To dance on the strand

They skip and laugh
In the puff of hot air
With giggles and wiggles
As the sand tickles their toes
Never to stop for worries
As they hurry for a cool splash
In a harmonious dance
That keeps them physically
And mentally fit
To dance upon the strand
(Tatenda Bvindi)



Madonna Enthroned by Giotto

Who are you, O Madonna,
that one should exalt you?
Last I heard only the LORD thy God
shall be exalted.
Whoever heard of a woman sitting
on the throne?
Are you God that the angels should
bow their knees and pray to thee?
(Eugene Smalls)



Monk by the Sea
by Caspar David Friedrich

Though my experiences make me physically
weak, inside I am at peace.
The world does what it wants, but my
thoughts are my own.
Surrounded by so many,
and yet feeling so alone
And yet I'm all right with that
Peace of mind in the midst of a storm
Time to think, reflect, mourn, cry, and clear
my mind.
(Tai'Kiah Phillips)

Indian Hunter Boy by Randolph Rogers**Young Warrior**

Observe my beauty, observe my grace
 My words spoken so softly
 I am a young brave with an innocent face
 Alone over here in a warrior stance
 You can feel my emotions rising
 As I grasp tightly my lance.

I am a young warrior with sad, hard eyes
 A young brave wishing to yell warrior cries
 Life has already been so hard on me
 To make me see things the way I see
 All can see the pride in the way I stand
 How serious I am and what I demand.

I am a man but yet a child
 Soft spoken and loving
 Yet harsh and very wild
 So young to have dealt out pain
 I've only seen eleven years
 And have already felt death's stain.

I am a young warrior.
(Michele Withers)

***Adam and Eve*****by Alex Grey**

Mortal Genesis
 Sinfully red, and
 embraced devilishly by the basilisk.
 Sweetened imperfection,
 They taste damnation
 . . . delicious . . .
 We now eat dust.

(Brandon McCarey)

***The Spirit of the Dead Watching by Manao Tupapau:***

Each night I lie down
 Exhausted from my attempts
 Attempts to preempt death
 To leave my life intact even after it has found me
 The day washes over me
 I play back each decision in my mind
 The Law of Karma

Did I put out my best?
 Did I hurt anyone?
 Was I honest?
 My ability to sleep well depends on the answers
 My dreams find the ones I was afraid to admit to
 When I awake I smile
 I have another day to get it right
(Hedi Rudd)



Creation of Adam by Michelangelo

Free and bare
 Uncovered greatest
 Life wrapped in flesh
 God's divine favor
 Man's image after
 God's similitude
 A divine revelation
 Of man's connection
 With his creator,
 Alpha and Omega
(Kenya Moses)

Interpreting Art signed by Exekias

Achilles, legend from the Trojan War,
 posed to kill the queen for sure.
 His arm is raised and ready to strike
 but her beauty makes his heart fight.
 He falls in love and with this he hesitates,
 and for a short while they become mates.
 Her beauty captures him for a while,
 He kills her later only to feel torn.
 Because of this, his heart will mourn.
 He's a strong warrior, the man of the hour,
 but love, oh love, has greater power.
 Penthesilea, the strong-willed virgin,
 speaks to him and tries to understand his burden.
 The way he kills shows his skills,
 so she becomes mute after she calls him a brute.
 His arms are strong and gentle with his touch;
 She makes him understand and shows him how much.
 Love is strong, love has power.
 She taught Achilles this and became
 the woman of the hour with the power.
 He kills her in the end,
 only to realize he killed a trusted, beautiful friend.
(Phyllis Anderson)



Persuasive Paragraphs

In my personal opinion, men and women on parole should have the right to vote simply because they too have a voice, views, and opinions. I happened to be on parole when Obama first ran for President. Because I couldn't vote, I felt sort of invisible, as if I didn't matter to the government. What a way to feel: free from bars but not free from bars of restrictions. So to break free from these bars I volunteered my time at a location on South Park Street and made phone calls and knocked door to door on behalf of Obama. That way I could feel as though I was part of the historical movement. To have such a law in place is senseless when my one "no vote" turned into persuasion of many votes. Let's just stop the nonsense and allow all of our citizens to vote. **(Juba Moten)**

Now is the time to tax the rich at a higher percentage rate than what is used today. Why do the wealthy get to stay wealthy while the poor continue to decline to the level of poverty? There are two classes of people in this world today, the rich and the poor . . . the haves and the have-nots.

The wealthy receive tax credits which help them to keep more of their money for themselves. The poor are forced to depend upon public and government assistance, food stamps, and other programs to survive in a world filled with greedy people. Wealthy people are greedy, figuring out more ways to qualify for tax cuts, not wanting to give their fair share of taxes to state and federal municipalities. Instead of the poor working two or three jobs at minimum wage to survive, the wealthy should be taxed at a higher percentage of their earned income. **(Marcia Brown)**

Anyone who has ever lost a loved one can understand the pain and grief a funeral can put families through. As you mourn the loss of a loved one, you also have to deal with expensive funeral arrangements. Not only do I find it outrageous that we pay so much for the sorrows of others, I find it unconstitutional. I believe if you are given a birth certificate in this country or pay taxes, this should give you the right to a tombstone, burial site, and casket. Why should families go into debt burying a

loved one? . . . Imagine in your death you leave your family with thousands of dollars' worth of debt. Does your family have a spare 1,000, 5,000, or 10,000 dollars? In your death you become one of your family's biggest financial burdens. How can you sleep in peace as the ones left behind are killing themselves over making payments so you can rest in peace? Peace? Whose peace? All I'm saying is give us the bare minimum: a tombstone, casket, and burial site; the rest is decoration. **(Run Barlow)**

It's sad but true that kids with autism spectrum disorder are three times more likely to be bullied than non-affected siblings. In particular, kids with Asperger's syndrome are bullied. Asperger's syndrome is characterized by a high I.Q.,



obsessive and narrow interests, and a very hard time socializing with others. Kids with autism have social deficits and don't understand that they are being bullied. The bullies choose their victims wisely. They choose kids who are unpopular and less likely to defend themselves. Bullies will exclude, ignore, name call, kick, laugh at, hit, and take and throw things. This results in grim outcomes for the autistic child, leading to loneliness, depression, anxiety, and other negative results. We need to stop the bullying of autistic children before they succumb to substance abuse and delinquency. Let's educate our youth and stop the bullying of children with autism. **(Samantha East)**

Voting is a very serious act. Voting can change our communities and the world around us. Some people don't vote because they feel they can't change the world. I beg to differ. Voting can be life changing and impactful. We watched as Scott Walker became governor, and how he made immediate changes to our unions. We saw how Obama brought Americans together, even if just for a day. Voting holds power and promise of either a better or worse tomorrow. I remind you of its importance. **(Kenya Moses)**

Growing up I never thought about what I put in my mouth; I was simply thankful to have food. There were days when fried bread with catsup was the only thing on the menu. For the most part, my mother was able to provide food, but frequently it was fried or dripping in gravy or butter. I don't blame her as it was food cooked from the heart, with love and a desire to nourish us. Now that I am

older, I have learned more about food and the role that it plays in our overall health. I find that eating less meat and processed foods and more raw fruits and vegetables can affect not only our physical health but our mental outlook as well. Trying to change how people eat can be as difficult as taking a security blanket away from a child; tantamount to abuse in the minds of some. Add to the conversation the idea of physical fitness and you will lose your audience very quickly. . . . I found that buying fresh food can actually be cheaper than canned or frozen food. I also found that with a little effort, I am able to quickly pull together a healthy meal that tastes much better than anything my microwave or a fast-food restaurant could provide. . . . What I have found is that more often than not, making the proper change to your diet and adding exercise can help a person to no longer need medications. Many people, including myself, would be afraid of such talk as we believe that doctors know what is best for our health. I would argue that while that may have been true at one time, in today's world money talks and the pharmaceutical industry relies on us to feel that way in order to make a profit. There is no profit in people learning the truth about how to control their health by simply making a healthy lifestyle change. **(Hedi Rudd)**

Is it not hypocritical for the United States to champion nuclear non-proliferation when our government possesses armed nuclear warheads? .

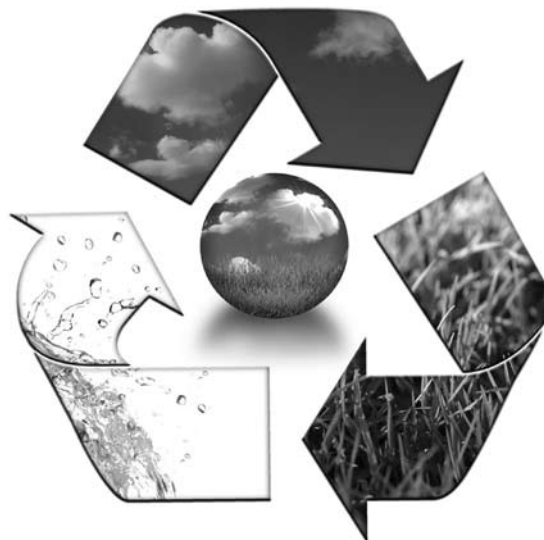
. . . On April 19th, six days after the failed North Korean missile test, "India entered into Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) Club after

successful testing Agni-V. The three-stage, 17-metre tall Agni-V, weighing 50 tons, is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead of 1.1 ton. It is the most formidable missile in Indian arsenals" (*Paktribune Pakistani News Service 4/23/12*). Interestingly enough, the Indian missile tests both figuratively and literally flew under the radar from most of the world. According to *The Washington Post* of April 19, 2012, "many defense experts have said the Agni-V missile marks a significant



improvement in India's nuclear-deterrent capability and was clearly aimed at bolstering its defense against neighboring China." While the United States continues to push Iran (with a current nuclear missile count of zero) and North Korea to abolish their nuclear programs, America and its allies are stocking WMDs at an alarming rate: United States 8,500, Russia 10,000, India 810, Israel 300, just to name a few. It's amazing that America's friends and the ones we share a symbiotic relationship with get a free pass to own WMDs, while everyone else is pressured into a prototype of non-proliferation that most of the world doesn't follow. (**Brandon McCarey**)

It is amazing that a diverse group of people work full time jobs yet they cannot afford to live in respectable houses and provide their families a decent future. Many are struggling to accomplish the dream of owning a house they can afford. For us to have a favorable environment here in Madison, we need to create affordable housing options for low-income families. Human beings need proper shelter and food to be well physically and mentally. Who wants to be stuck in poverty, live in shacks, and endure the hardship that homelessness brings? Think of the most affected victims in this situation—kids—and imagine how much impact this can have on the community at large. I believe that kids can perform well in school only if they have food to eat and the security of decent homes. If they are denied these privileges, the community will be grooming a generation with all kinds of insanity. Is it not easier to prevent the causes than to cure the diseases? We need to break the chains by building more affordable housing options for low-income families so that they can also live their dreams. (**Tatenda Bvindi**)



Why is there still racism in the world we live in today when there is a black President helping whites, blacks, and every other race in the United States? Why aren't my people respected just like every other race? Does skin color really determine who people are? Stop closing doors to a whole group of people just because you think they're not as good as you. Become open to every race and class of people, not only blacks but any race that has been discriminated against. Stop the hate and start to love. (**Jesse Hamilton**)

No child should be so heavy that their mother can't pick them up. No child should be so big that the father and the child wear the same shirt size. America has bad eating habits, especially the younger generation. It is ridiculous how overeating has become the number one leading cause of failure among many youth today. For many children, obesity has become an addictive disease. Who is to blame? I would say we all are. Our personal affairs in life have caused a shift and a change in priorities. We substitute food for love, attention, and education. We all need to wake up to this concern. We as a nation stand guilty of neglect of our future generation, the children. (**Yolanda Cunningham**)

What can you think to do to help the environment? How many people pick up after themselves? There are so many people that nature is dying. We need to remember how free it felt when we didn't run into any garbage and could swim through fresh water instead of drowning in oil. What we need to do is to clean up this mess so that we can live in a better world. (**Linda Thao**)

Rape is a predominantly male problem, and I want to know what men are going to do to stop it. As a single mom of a son, I have had various conversations

with him as to why rape continues to occur and why there isn't a mass male movement to stop it. Do dads teach their children anything about this ugly, unfair reality that is mostly perpetrated on women and children by men? Stopping rape is men's work. It isn't enough to send children to karate classes and women to self-defense classes. Men need to organize, educate, and prevent this problem. Rape damages people emotionally and physically. Victims of rape have their lives changed forever. Most adult entertainers and sex workers have been raped. Every single woman in Taycheeda Prison was raped at some point in her life, whether as a child or a woman. If men want to consider themselves civilized and caring about their mothers, daughters, sisters, wives, and other females in their lives, not to mention caring about the betterment of the community, they need to start having regular, intentional conversations with each other about this problem. Women's real fears of rape are not their problem, and they can't fix it. **(Billie Kelsey)**

Dear Senator, each year high schools throughout the United States graduated roughly 65,000 students who entered the U.S. as children and grew up here without legal status. These graduates, including honor students, star athletes, and aspiring professionals, have few opportunities because they face barriers to higher education, are unable to work legally, and often live in fear of detection by immigration authorities. . . . There are a lot of high school students who quit and engage in criminal activities because of fear. We need to help this next generation. Through education we will have good people, a progressive country, and better lives. The Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM ACT) is the remedy to give human rights to these young, aspiring students who have demonstrated a commitment to their country. The DREAM Act would give educational opportunities to immigrant youth who think they do not have hope in this country. The DREAM Act would help our nation progress because the next generation will be able to improve our country from their education. I strongly urge you to pass the DREAM Act into law.

(Beatriz Mairena-Kellman)

I want to talk about health care in America because I think that's a large part of our economy and it's something that brings us down. It's not fair that certain people get good health care and barely do anything to get or earn it, while other people that work hard every day to survive still don't qualify for good health care. I think it's ridiculous that we have to struggle to stay healthy. Shouldn't everybody deserve to be and stay healthy as long as possible? Just think of you and your family: you want them around as long as possible. Nobody deserves to struggle with their health. We call America the land of the free, but I don't think we back our words up. When I think of health I think of money because that's what it takes to pursue health care. . . . **(Bradley Barner)**

We are living in a world that is selfish and uncaring, allowing human rights violations to go unchecked as thousands of innocent civilians are being subjected to violence, displacement, and starvation, as demonstrated by the recent conflict in Syria. . . . In order to alleviate the ever-increasing stress and escalation of war and poverty worldwide, we need to exercise compassion and restraint. When human beings are able to realize that we are all one, sharing one world, its resources, and its wealth, then we will be able to overcome the petty differences that we fight and kill one another for so callously each day. . . . I pray that we learn to accept one another for who we are. . . . I believe that as a whole humanity senses the impending doom or cataclysmic judgment which will cause an end to the world. . . . I sincerely hope that I am wrong and that my son and all the sons and daughters of the world have an opportunity to behold this beautiful earth, this gift of life, and the blessings we have all been given by God. **(Keith Johnson)**

I believe that women should make their own decisions when it comes to abortion. Each person is different. One woman's situation may not be the same as another's. Religious women may decide to keep their child, but a woman who has been raped may not want to have a remembrance of that painful memory. How would you feel if you had no money, no place to stay, no moral support, and could barely take care of yourself, and yet you find out you have

to take care of someone else? . . . Making someone have a child she is unprepared for is horrible in itself. The pregnant woman must decide what's best for her . . . and her unborn child. (**Tai'Kiah Phillips**)

For almost 40 years abortion has been legal in the United States. The majority of Americans believe it is a woman's right to decide to end a pregnancy. I think abortion is a horrible and incredibly sad way to end a baby's life. Abortion kills a baby. If you don't want it, it's still a baby. If you are too young to have it, it's still a baby. If you hate the dad, it's still a baby. If it's not in your plans to be a mother, it's still a baby. If it has a genetic disorder, it's still a baby. Whether the baby is removed intact or in pieces, he or she was still a human who could have been loved if even for a minute or for an entire lifetime. Their lives were taken through no fault of their own. Abortion breaks my heart . . . (**Yetta Harris**)

Obama is doing the best he can, so please do not give up on him yet. How can he fix what got corrupted throughout the years? I feel they put Obama in office so they can blame the black man for what is going on instead of blaming themselves and the criminal behind the master plan, Bush. Vote for Obama and again give him a chance, or vote some women in, like Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama. (**Nkechi Johnson**)

"You is kind, you is smart, you is important." These are the famous words said to Mae Mobley in the movie "The Help." In these powerful, life-changing words, you can witness a child's destiny being formed right before your very eyes. It also is true when you

use words such as loser, brat, stupid, failure, etc. We should never cause anyone to think that they are less than who they are by the words we speak to them. Who gives us the right to alter anybody's life and ability to learn just because we have our own insecurities that we don't know how to deal with? The Bible states that there is life and death in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21). Please let us stop crippling, destroying, and killing our children by the stupid, ignorant words we are choosing to use when talking to them. (**Lorraine Garrett**)

I agree you need to create more affordable housing options in Madison for low-income families, but what about after our children are grown? What about us? Parents like me with no Section 8 are not considered for low-income housing. We barely earn minimum wages yet you are asking three times the rent. You acknowledge families with children. You acknowledge those ages 62 and up. What about 55 and up? What about me? (**Marilyn Johnson**)

I believe that Madison Metro should increase bus service. In a city as small as Madison, it shouldn't take longer than 45 minutes to get from one place to another, but because of the infrequency and schedule patterns of some bus routes, it can take twice as long or longer. At the very least, buses should run at their peak-hour frequency no matter the time of day or day of the week. The majority of people that rely on the bus for transportation also

use the Metro frequently during the weekend, early morning, and late night hours. To have certain routes, such as the 17 and 19, cut out completely on the weekends doubles the amount of time for a grocery store trip, especially when combined with



the longer waits for bus transfers due to reduced frequency.

(Katie Pruitt)

One way we can save money for our school board is to invest in local farmers for produce and poultry [for use in school lunches.] By doing this, we can save money, which can then be invested in supplies, computers, and innovative technology for our kids. . . . The food would be much healthier, and kids would understand hard work and healthy food.

(Terry Hart)

I would like to first say that whoever made up the death penalty must have been a criminal within himself. For me, GOD is the judge. Acts 10:42 says, "Also he ordered us to preach to the people and to give a thorough witness that this is the one decreed by GOD to be Judge of the living and the dead." His rule and His word is law. The person who committed a horrific crime will have his Judgment Day before the Almighty. Do not put yourselves in the position to also be judged before God because He may not be so lenient upon your soul. I propose that all laws connected to the death penalty upon any human from this day forward be done away with! Killing in the eyes of God is a sin according to God's commandments (Exodus 20:13 "Thou shalt not kill"). Killing another will not and never will bring back the life that those persons have taken. It's as if the justice system is committing the same crime! I do agree with keeping these criminals contained so they won't hurt again. . . . Leave the work of judgment for GOD. He is the professional at handling this subject: sin. **(Arnella Royal)**

I am against the death penalty because when you take a life you're taking something you can't replace. The Bible says it is God who creates life and God who takes away life (God gives it and God takes it away). So when we take a life, we are ultimately saying we can play God when we want to. What happens is if you execute someone and then later find out that person was innocent, all you can say is, "Oops, I made a mistake," but you can't bring that life back. So to avoid that, let's bring an end to the death penalty. **(Eugene Smalls)**

The death penalty is an immoral, inhumane, cruel act of violence. With government authority, it is legal murder. Capital punishment violates the eighth amendment (no excessive fines or cruel or unusual punishments to be imposed). Potassium chloride is a very painful medication that produces severe cramping. The death penalty is often performed with a total lack of compassion. It does not deter violent criminals from acts of violence. It does not ensure public safety. Life without parole, or just knowing one will spend the rest of one's life behind bars, is a much harder pill to swallow. I believe this to be a better form of deterrence. The biggest problem with the death penalty is the occurrence of frequent mistakes. This is a complete miscarriage of justice for the innocent. Imagine the overwhelming terror and despair an innocent person feels. Many inmates placed on death row spend decades waiting to be put to death. . . . The average cost of execution [legal proceedings, time on death row] is \$137 million yearly, much greater than the \$11.4 million a year cost of imprisonment for 40 years to life (www.deathpenaltyinfo.org). . . . Execution is permanent; there is no turning back. Life is a God given gift; death is also an act of God. The government should not pretend to have the powers of God. **(Phyllis Anderson)**

Hysteria over "pit bulls" is not just a local situation. Cities across our state are considering bans against this breed. While we own the idea that dog is man's best friend, we allow politics and fear to regulate guidelines for pet ownership. Breed-specific legislation targets all of a specific breed, the innocent as well as the guilty, and fails to recognize the role of the owner in providing proper care. . . . In my opinion there are no bad dogs, just poorly informed or irresponsible dog owners. . . . Why punish dog owners of a particular breed that care for their dogs as companions and members of their families? Why should they be denied their choice of dog simply because of irresponsible owners of the same breed of dog? . . . Comprehensive dog bite legislation combined with consumer education and legally mandating and enforcing responsible pet ownership practices will be a better solution than breed-specific legislation. **(Michele Withers)**

My Trip to Mexico

By Elvira Rodriguez

My trips to Mexico are always going to be unforgettable because my kids, Andres and Heidi, and I spend quality time with Grandma. She has been the key to who I am today. Because of her, I learned to love God. If you have this feeling, you have everything, no matter what religion you are from. "Love is respect," Grandma says.

This is the reason I save as much money as I can to visit her. On my first day, we cried, talked, and laughed for many hours. Then we talked about our plans, such as what we were going to do, where we were going to go, and when we were going to rest. The next day we went to the farm. The third day Grandma had a fiesta, a big event that was followed by two days of clean up. After her event we went to the town's fair, and then there was another fiesta.

The next week we went to the Veracruz beaches

and had a wonderful time. My kids were really happy, with happy faces. Veracruz's unknown beaches are the most beautiful. We went to two different ones and also a river on our way back.

Everything was good except for the heavy walk and hot weather. Our feet were bleeding the next day. We took a break for two days.

In our last days we went to visit my family on my dad's side. I had the opportunity to see all my uncles and cousins.

What else could I want, I asked myself. My kids and my grandma were happy. All I can say is thank you, God, for letting me have her and my kids.



“Rainy River” Responses



After reading “On the Rainy River” by Tim O’Brien, I found myself conflicted about whether or not to call a man who ultimately decides to participate in war a coward. This story brings up unique ideas about what is courage and what is being a coward. Tim struggled with this duality as he attempted to dodge the draft during the Vietnam conflict. Having moral objections to war, Tim felt it necessary to flee into Canada via the river. I applaud him for having the courage to escape the draft and for a while stand firm on his pacifist beliefs. However, he succumbs to his fears of being caught and ends up enlisting to be courageous in war. The line between fear and courage was blurred in this story. **(Brandon McCarey)**



I feel that the speaker in “On the Rainy River” should not have been forced to enlist in the Vietnam War. He was a smart kid who received a scholarship to attend Harvard University. He graduated from Macalester College Summa Cum Laude. This young man was on his way to becoming a successful human being. I don’t think that his place in this world should be among the ranks of soldiers fighting a senseless war. I don’t think that he was a coward. Every young man should be afraid to fight in any war. This young man was afraid to die, and I don’t blame him for not wanting to die on foreign soil.

I like the way that he imagined what people might think of him if he were to shirk his duty to fight in the Vietnam War. When he was on the boat with Elroy Berdahl just twenty yards from the Canadian border, he imagined his mother, father, brother, sister, high school buddies, the Mayor of his hometown, and townsfolk urging him to either go to the Canadian border or return to Minnesota. This young man could not imagine a life without his family and close friends. If he were to become a draft dodger and be exiled in Canada, he would

surely regret this decision. I think that he made the right choice by returning to Minnesota to wait out his time to report for duty in the United States Army. After analyzing “On the Rainy River,” I have come to the conclusion that you have to weigh the good and bad in each situation before you make your final decision on a complicated manner such as whether to fight or not to fight in an unjust war. **(Marcia Brown)**



His reason for going to Vietnam rather than Canada, ironically, was fear. “All those eyes on me,” he writes, “and I couldn’t risk the embarrassment. . . . I was a coward. I went to the war.” O’Brien does consider himself a coward, but because he WENT to war. I don’t feel it’s my place to judge him as it was a decision he, as well as many other young men at that time, had to make and face forever. There in my opinion were no “pros” to this whole situation. I have a cousin who fought in Vietnam who is still listed as MIA today. I think of him as a hero for fighting for his country, but had he been here today he might feel differently. **(Michele Withers)**



It is astounding to me the things we keep to ourselves out of fear of embarrassment, shame, or even guilt. I myself was a victim of this fear until I sought counsel in 1997. That is when I learned that as a child I was a victim, and that the events of the horrific era in my life were not my fault. I have been healing ever since. Therefore, I can relate to Tim O’Brien’s fear of releasing his story. I pray that ultimately he has begun to heal about writing about it, finally. . . . Both O’Brien and Muhammad Ali questioned why they were supposed to go and kill the Vietnamese people for our government, which gave little to no information on the reason for the war. . . . I respect both O’Brien’s and Ali’s decisions. **(Juba Moten)**



When Tim O'Brien received a draft letter in the mail, I'm sure some uneasiness crawled up his spine. Fear of being away from your family and death are good reasons for not wanting to go to the Vietnam War. I personally feel

Tim has nothing to be ashamed of, nor would I call him a coward. As a citizen of your country, it is your responsibility to defend it when called upon not only because it is the law but because you accept that responsibility when you accept being a citizen of your country. However, as we learned in "Civil Disobedience," it is your responsibility to fight a law if it conflicts with a higher moral law. Muhammad Ali also refused to fight in Vietnam despite being called a coward and facing imprisonment. He took his case in front of the Supreme Court, where they found his reasons to be justified. The three biggest options I see for Tim O'Brien were to take his case in front of a judge, not fight in the war and accept jail time, or accept a spot in the United States military. Had he just fled to Canada, I might have called him a coward. I think he made the right decision. **(Run Barlow)**



I don't believe he was a coward. Just because you may have a fear of something does not give you the title of coward. . . . He thought that people were losing their lives for no reason and that if you're going to fight in a war then you should know and believe in what

you're fighting for. **(Lorraine Garrett)**



Tim expressed fear and confusion like any teenager faced with such a huge decision: whether to honor the draft or go A.W.O.L. . . . In my opinion, Tim was a coward based on the principles he stated about the war seeming wrong. . . . Cowardice was not standing by all he understood and fleeing to

Canada.

(Abraham Thomas)



I don't think he was a coward... but I don't think he did the right thing. He should have done what made him happy and not what everyone else thinks.

(Shaquida Johnson)



I honestly do not think Tim was a coward. He may feel that way about himself and be disappointed that he didn't follow his gut feeling, but he still was brave enough to go to war. I guess he felt that he didn't do what he wanted (run away to Canada) because he thought everyone would make fun

of him. He also didn't want to disappoint his family and friends or bring shame to them. I think either way he made the right choice because he finally decided for himself. **(Tai'Kiah Phillips)**



I do not believe that he is a coward. I believe that he was morally conflicted about why our country was forcing young men and women to violate their very own principles and beliefs to fight against an enemy that was no enemy to them for no legitimate reason whatsoever. I do not know

what I would do in such a situation. I admire his strength, compassion, and honesty. I believe his integrity is sound. And I believe it is his right to refuse to do something against one's very core beliefs. I respect the writer for his decision just the same as if he had chosen to do the opposite. I do understand his sense of being a coward, as he did not fight for his own beliefs and morals; rather, he submitted to the will and expectations of others, not knowing if he would live or die as a result. I believe he is a true American in spirit, in passion, and in ultimate sacrifice and dedication to one's country, family, and self. **(Keith Johnson)**

I think anyone who had their mind set on doing well, going off to college, and making plans and



then one day found out they were getting drafted would do exactly what he did: go a bit off the rocker and get to thinking of a way out of or around it. War's not a game, and you should have a choice on whether you want to go or not. I can't say which road I would have taken, but I think he was a very brave guy to overcome all his

thoughts and feelings and go to war.

(Bradley Barner)



I agree with O'Brien calling himself a coward. After receiving draft orders, he becomes consumed with the thought of going to fight in a war he does not believe in. However, he is worried and afraid of what others will think of him.

His fear of leaving family and friends is driving him crazy. O'Brien allowed his convictions to be swayed. His concern with everyone's opinion caused him to relinquish his strong beliefs. He should have stood firm and not cared about what people would say.

(Phyllis Anderson)



Tim O'Brien, 21 years old, decided to not fight in the Vietnam War. He was too weak to stand up for his decision. He was scared about what his family, friends, and his community would think about him. He changed his mind and went to the Vietnam War, even though he

didn't want to fight in a war that he didn't believe in. **(Beatriz Mairena-Kellman)**



It seems to me that Tim O'Brien was brave and a coward with every decision he made. When he chose to leave his family, friends, and community to go to Canada to avoid the war, he was being a coward, yet he was making a very brave choice. When he decided to return home to face the draft,

after much soul searching, he did so for cowardly reasons, yet he was very brave to make the decision to return home and face the war. There was fear and pain with all of his choices, and he finally decided on the one that was right for him: going to war. I think that war is bad, usually unnecessary, and I have no opinion on his personal choice.

(Billie Kelsey)



I believe the author of the story was not a coward. He had fears as all of us do because all mankind fears the unknown. If the author had truly been a coward, he would have run to Canada, never looked back, and never stopped running.

I believe he just needed a place to think and time to weigh his options, look deep into his heart, and figure out what was in him.

(Eugene Smalls)



Of course he would hate the war because there isn't anyone in the world who would want to die or to fight for something they don't even know. He was a brave man who kept going no matter how frightened he was during the war.

(Linda Thao)



He considered himself to be "too smart, too compassionate, too everything." His upbringing was way above serving in a war. He has credentials that put him in a much higher league than dealing with dirty tents, mosquitoes, and the sight of blood. I do not feel he is a coward for considering not to fight

a war that truly isn't his. **(Arnell Royal)**



Tim O'Brien was definitely not a coward. I feel he made the wrong decision about going to war. Tim was between a hard place and a rock. His feet were taking him where he was supposed to go, but his mind didn't follow. The

cowards are those he made mention of: you in your pinstriped suits sending others to fight your ignorant war. The soldiers are the ones left with the horrible memories of the untold stories. Those in government won't even take care of the heroes. Coward would be an understatement for these characters (in government).

(Yolanda Cunningham)



I think Tim made the right choice for his own country but not for himself. I believe his life is his life, not the government's.

(Jesse Hamilton)



This story is not about a coward but about a young, selfish, afraid, and really human young man.

Fear was a factor that caused him to question whether or not to go; he didn't want to die. Selfishness was also a factor; he didn't want his life to be put on hold. He had

an important life and had plans for himself. Fear caused him to run for a time, fear that I believe was justified. But love of his family, their honor, his honor, and love of his country caused him to come back. **(Yetta Harris)**



Tim O'Brien was not a coward. He was just afraid and did not believe in the war. He didn't make the right choice. He should have stood up for his convictions and protested the killing.

(Samantha East)



O'Brien could not run away from his life and reality but had to face it. I cannot call O'Brien a coward because he did the bravest thing, committing his life to fighting for his country, even though he betrayed his own convictions that war was wrong. **(Tatenda Bvindi)**



He had his chance to go to Canada and run from his problems, or stay and face the things he had going on in his life. Personally, I think he made the correct decision. He decided that to go to the war was his calling.

(Terry Hart)



Either way I look at it, he would be considered a coward. If he skirted his responsibilities and fled to Canada, he could be considered a coward for running away but also brave for losing his family and refusing to kill for a cause he didn't believe in. If he fought in the war, he could be considered a

coward for not standing up for his beliefs but also brave for serving his country when he was called upon. What matters most is how he felt about his decision. Since he called himself a coward, then I consider him to be one. The right choice is the one that you can live with at the end of the day.

(Katie Pruitt)



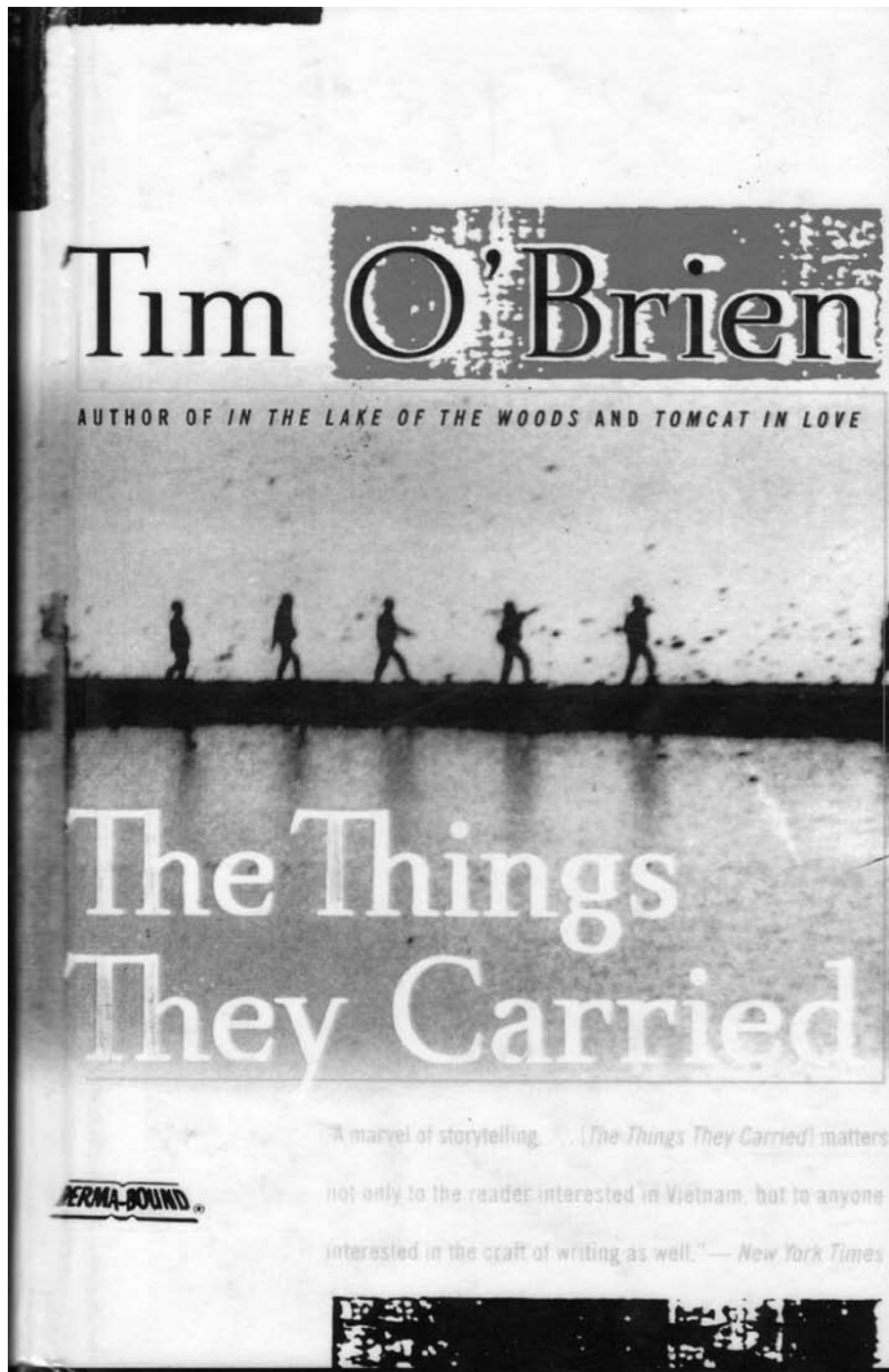
Yes, he was a coward for not standing up for his beliefs. If he believed it was wrong to go to war, then he should have fought like Muhammad Ali did.

(Nkechi Johnson)



As I read Tim O'Brien's, "On the Rainy River," I was drawn into his world, into the emotions that he experienced as he contemplated becoming a soldier in the Vietnam War. I felt his inner turmoil as he led an internal battle regarding his beliefs in war in general and the

Vietnam War specifically. This was not a story of a silver spoon-fed young man who felt above the obligation, yet he does feel that he is being asked to go beneath himself. I felt that he was touched by his humanity during this time and became aware



that not only his life was in danger but also the lives of other innocent people. He considers fleeing to Canada, makes a half-hearted attempt, and in doing so finds greater courage. Taken along on his journey as he attempts to flee, I found part of me cheering him on and part of me knowing that he would not be able to do it, yet hoping he would. . . . As a woman I am thankful to not have to make that decision and can only imagine how difficult it must be for men. I may not personally have chosen to go to war, but I have no less respect for those

who do. . . . I think he made the best decision for himself. As to whether he was a coward, I would say yes for the same reason that he said he was. But at the end of the day, he went to war and shared his story, which may help someone else make a different decision. Years later, we look back at the Vietnam War and whether we should have fought it in the first place. **(Hedi Rudd)**



The speaker was not a coward in my opinion because he chose to deal with his fear. The speaker's decision to flee and take time for

himself to deal personally with the matter was honorable! This speaker considered his family and town. How the war would be spoken about in his town when it came to his family's contribution was important to him. He wanted to leave a good name for his family's active role in the war. The writer was brave. I believe he made a wise decision to go to war even when he didn't believe in the purpose of the war.

(Kenya Moses)



He was young, 21 years of age, and not ready. Even though I know we're supposed to fight for our country, he has a right to his thoughts and how he was feeling. He ran away because he didn't want to go to war. . . . He thought he was a coward because he went to war and didn't stand for what he believed in. Yes. **(Marilyn Johnson)**

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Brandon McCarey for winning an “Above and Beyond” Award from MATC’s United Common Ground (UCG) group for his work in fostering multicultural awareness.



On Tuesday, April 24, there was an awards ceremony honoring Josephine Lorya-Ozulamoi, Anthony Ward, Billie Kelsey and Sherri Bester. Josephine Lorya-Ozulamoi, who will graduate from UW Madison in May, was named a Finalist for the UW Outstanding Returning Adult Student Award.



She was honored at a ceremony along with Sherri Bester, Anthony Ward, and Billie Kelsey, who all have won Osher Returning Adult Student Scholarships for next year.

Sherri was also awarded the 2012 Marion McCammond Award, given to an



outstanding student of color who has made contributions to the University community, greater Madison community or the student’s hometown.

Of particular importance will be the innovative features of a student’s service activities and the student’s initiative in reaching out to community needs.”



Congratulations to the Odyssey Class of 2012!



“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”
- T.S. Eliot