

# ODYSSEY ORACLE

## ESCAPING THE CAVE OF SHYNESS



My shyness would be an example of me being trapped in a cave. All my life I have been shy. It is my personality! When I first meet a person, I show shyness, but as I get to know that person I am no longer shy. The biggest thing I am shy about is talking in front of others. I have tried so many times to step out of my comfort zone, but I always seem to fall back. When I have to speak in front of others, my voice will become shaky, my heart will start to beat faster, and I may begin to sweat. My shyness has a huge effect on me, and someday I hope to overcome this. **(Amber McCarley)**

### In this Oracle . . .

Escaping the Cave of Shyness	1
Odyssey Snapshots	2
Loving the Lexicon	3
The Words of Music	4
Musings About Music	5
Belting Out the Blues	10
Channeling Frederick Douglass	11
Identifying Prejudice	15
Shocked by Kate Chopin	24
Responding to Romare Bearden	26



# ODYSSEY SNAPSHOTS



I am a mother of three. I have been doing whatever I can to make it for my family. Thank the Lord because I have been through so much, but I think it was to open my eyes to see that I am here for a reason and I need to do something with my life. (**Toshiana Northington**)

I received my first scholarship at the Centro Hispano Scholarship Award Banquet at Monona Terrace. Odyssey has impacted me in such a way that I feel greatly empowered to accomplish much greater things, despite whatever obstacle might come my way . . . and this is just the start. Thank you so much for believing in me! I see that I am here for a reason and I need to do something with my life. (**Vanessa Lopes Maia**)

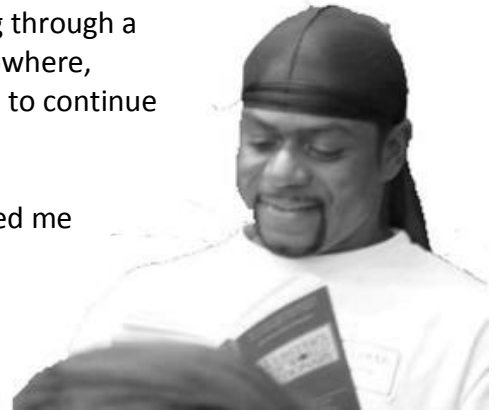


When we received issue 2 of the Odyssey Oracle, I was surprised that we all had our writing published for all to see (even on the world wide web), but I was also happy that I got the chance to share my writing with my classmates and vice versa. Not all classes get this same opportunity. If you want to know a classmate's take on an assignment, they would have to volunteer the information to you, and even then they might feel hesitant to do so. But with our work being published in the Oracle, it allows us to get different points of views on our assignments. It helps me open my mind to new ways of thinking and doing things. Sometimes I feel restricted by my own mind. I get stuck in my habits of writing, speaking, and interpreting stories. Reading other classmates' writing has expanded my mind and allowed me to consider new possibilities and think beyond my normal mental capabilities. (**Nyagooa Hoth**)

# LOVING THE LEXICON

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

Webster's sat me down one night and gave me an idea that landed me second place in an essay contest answering the question "Why Vote?" I have never known Webster's to be anything but perfect. Webster's has given me 230,000 reasons to be in love with it. I love my Webster's. (**Tosumba Welch '12**)



## VOCABULARY SOUP



absolved incendiary auguries misapprehend mondegreen  
 equinox ecstatic marionette extirpated piety hyperhidrosis  
 verbosity rectitude usurpations despotism magnanimity  
 consanguinity acquiesce perplexed oft assent formidable  
 compliance sufferance solace spurned remonstrant endeavored  
 insidious trepidation tenure allegory hyperbole bliss gambol  
 intertwine jalopy avert prostrated despotism manacles  
 stanza barren felicitate dismay pensive accustomed  
 contemplate procure liberty odyssey supplicated  
 prudence abdicated redress accommodation jurisdiction relinquish  
 indulge inalienable sycophant

# THE WORDS OF MUSIC

MADISON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA REVIEW BY LAPRICE BLACK



I finally made it to my seat, overflowing with anticipation and wondering what I am going to see. I looked around and saw there were a lot of elderly people greeting one another and smiling at each other. Some said, "Hello, and enjoy the show." I turned to Myisha, my daughter, and she had an astonished look on her face. She smiled and said, "Thanks, Mom."

Being in the midst of new greatness, I got chills and my imagination began to run wild. Then the Madison Symphony Orchestra began to warm up. The sound was like something was going to happen—spooky, classical, and amazing.

The timing was just right. The audience quieted down, the lights dimmed, and then the conductor appeared on the stage. I thought, it's about to go down. The violins made the first sound of putting you at ease as though many butterflies were flying all around you. Then the sound just stopped, ordered by the command of the conductor.

Then the music started up again. The beautiful sound of this music captured my ears, my heart, and my imagination so stunningly that my eye began to fill up with tears. I heard the word of the horn saying "AUTHORITY," the violins giving the mood of "SERENITY," and the timpani beating with great "PRESENCE."

The sound of the music had given me thoughts of words— I'm coming and now I am here. Then his little loved ones make an entrance and embrace him with grace . . . moments of love . . . worthiness of worship . . . and enjoyable sparks of gratitude.

The sound of the music changed again.

It took my emotions and transformed them into a screenplay right before eyes.

It was playful, jolly, and carefree.

It was now time for the bonus of the show: the French pianist Philippe Bianconi, a Silver Medalist in the Seventh Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

He stroked and tapped on the piano keys like I never heard before. Some sounds were very strong and intense, and some were so soft and delicate that it put me into a light soothing sleep for a short while. It surprised me that I was so taken by his alluring harmony.

Oh, how blessed I felt. I was able to accept the different and new with openness. My spirits were renewed and rewarded, and so were Myisha's.



*Tickets donated by Carroll Heideman. Program: Benjamin Britten's "Variations and Fugue," Claude Debussy's "The Sea," Johannes Brahms's "Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2."*



# MUSINGS ABOUT MUSIC

Music is comfort to me. When I'm sad, I listen to spiritual music to lift my spirit. If I'm in love, I listen to love music, R&B. When I feel like I'm on a hard grind taking care of my business and no one can stop me, I listen to my artist Future, a rapper. Music helps me

start my day and gets me motivated and ready to do whatever I have to do. It boosts my energy level like a new brewed coffee in the morning.

**(Toshiana Northington)**

To me, music is a gateway. Music is a ship that takes me to a different place and a different time. I listen to all types of music. My favorite to listen to is R&B and Salsa.

Music has helped me express myself all my life. I love music that makes me feel powerful, such as singers like Kelly Clarkson, Katy Perry, Aretha Franklin, and Billie Holiday.

In my culture, music is used to tell stories. We have Bomba y Plena. It's our native music. Our women dress in long flowing skirts, and as they move their hips, the Conga and Bongo players observe. So the movements tell the percussionists what's next.

Gospel and contemporary Christian music has inspired me and uplifted me in my struggles. "Mandisa's Stronger" is my all-time favorite. Some other all-time favorites are Mariah Carey's "Hero," Casting Crowns's "Courageous," Aretha Franklin's "Respect," and many others. **(Charlienne Cotto)**



Music is my Advil. It heals all the problems and helps me express my feelings. I love rap music because sometimes it is negative, and that's the way people feel sometimes. It's better to listen to a song than to act out how you're feeling. I also love all types of music because it releases your thoughts and soothes your brain, soul, and body.

**(Christopher Bester)**

How can I explain what music is to me? That to me is like saying, "Tell me how important breathing is to you?" Music is life to me. I believe a music note or a lyric is life to the soul of a human being. I have found all through history we have used music to show our emotions and our intentions to others.

I have been in love with all kinds of music, from "Jail House Rock" to Creed's "Arms Wide Open." I listen and feel the music I hear. There have been songs that have saved my life and others that gave me strength to endure pain.

I am music and it is me. **(Nafisa Davis)**

I consider music to be one of my best friends. It has always been a part of my life. Music changes my mood, often for the better. Music revives many memories for me. Also music motivates; it encourages introspection and societal analysis. I believe that the seventies was the best decade for music. Live instruments were still used. I listen to everything from classic rock to hip-hop. Bob Marley, Burning Spear, and Peter Tosh are my favorite reggae artists. **(Robert James)**

I listen to many types of music all the time. When I am riding in my car, I play music. When I am cleaning up my house, I listen to music. I even listen to music when I am lying around in my bed. I love R&B music. One of my favorite artists goes by the name Mary J. Blige. When I was growing up, my



mom played her music pretty often, and now I tend to listen to it often. Although I am only 23 years old, I can relate to some of Mary J. Blige's music. Some of her music brings joy to me, and some gets me emotional. One of my all-time favorites by her is "Be without You." (**Amber McCarley**)

Music is like therapy to me. Sometimes I don't know who to talk to or how to feel, so I listen to music and it makes everything better. I listen to a lot of hip hop mostly but also R&B.

Music is amazing because you can enjoy it no matter what language it is in. Music helps me express myself when words don't seem to be enough. (**Kunga Chokten**)

I listen to all types of music, which includes rap, hip hop, R&B, and more. When I listen to the oldies, it makes me think of the good old days and watching my senior family members have a good time dancing and remembering good times. When I listen to the eighties, it makes me think of my school-aged years. Gospel music makes my heart leap up with joy because it makes me think of my grandma and being at church with her. The rap/hip hop makes me keep up with my kids and their generation. Music makes me laugh, cry, remember, and think. (**Alisha Taylor**)

I listen to every kind of music, from classical to country to jazz to hip hop. I basically have a song for almost any kind of mood I am in. For example, I use classical music to concentrate and do my homework. When studying with classical music vs. not studying with music, there is clear evidence of a difference in my concentration span. Country music I listen to when I am sad. For me, music just makes

me feel better or worse, depending on what I am listening to. By far, my favorite is classical. (**Zeynab Ahmed**)

Music helps me to get in rhythm. It eases my mind. It makes me happy, sad, sexy, hip, and imaginative. I love the sound of great music. It plays with the keys of my emotions. When I hear a song that I like, I play it over and over and over until I'm tired. I would love to swim to music. I love to skate to music, dance to music. It is a wonderful gift to learn to play instruments of music, and blessed be the ones that can sing the wonderful sound of music. (**LaPrice Black**)

Music means so much to me. My mother used to sing to me all the time as a child. She would say music speaks to your soul.

I listen to all types of music because I believe music has a message. It tells a story about a person's life, and they're kind enough to give you a piece of it.

Music affects me in many different ways. Some music helps when I'm down. Some music motivates me to clean and do chores. Some music helps me explain to a person how I may feel. Some music is just FUN to me.

When I heard René Robinson singing "Let My People Go," it reminded me of my adolescence standing in the dining room watching my great-grandmother cook for our family. She always told me stories of her growing up. Born in 1919, she had experienced a lot and gone through so much. She had lots to share. For some reason, that was the song she sang while cooking and doing chores. It just makes me realize how much I miss her. (**Jackieta Fairley**)

What music means to me is that it's a way to reach a place inside me where otherwise you can't. I don't really know how to explain it, but I listen to a little of everything—not so much country, but R&B is the main genre. It just reaches my mind in a way that I enjoy.

Music can affect me in different ways. I can be angry and calm down or be angry and get madder.

**(Jaquan Fleming)**

Music is soothing to me. I use music as a source of therapy. For example, I would listen to my Hall and Oates Radio station on Pandora, and it brings a feeling of life back to me as I reminisce on my teenage years. It just fills me with memories of some of the good times I had as a kid. I am a very open-minded person, so I listen to all variations of music, from country to jazz to blues, as well as old slave rhymes, just to name a few. **(Janet Shelton)**

The music playing [Robert Auerbach on piano] is really soft and gentle. It's some kind of music you could listen to while relaxing in your home lying on the couch just thinking. You could play this in the background very lightly in your living room while reading a book. It calms you down in a way and just puts you in a thinking mode. **(Kelli Green)**

Music is a language expressing sound, rhythm, vibrancy, and mostly unity. It ignites one's energy. Music allows my faith to be determined by none and undermined by no form of brutality.

Robert Auerbach's energy . . . of rhythm, funk, and blues is like a sand castle . . . breaking down to syllables, octaves, minors, and majors.

**(LaTrease Hibbler)**

I have liked to listen to all kinds of music ever since I was a little girl. I always had an open mind. Music for me is like therapy or a healing session sometimes when I'm going through something. Most music affects me in a good way. It motivates me to get through my hard times and keep pushing forward. I listen to blues, jazz, R&B, rap, and rock 'n roll.

Growing up around my dad, I heard him play the blues in the car all the time. I remember being around seven or eight and going around singing a blues song. My dad was so shocked that I was even interested in that kind of music, let alone able to remember it word for word. Singing the blues helped

me connect with my dad more.

The music in class is relaxing and laid back. If I wasn't writing, I would probably be daydreaming.

**(Mallory Carter)**

When I was young, I had the biggest influence of music from my mother. She would wake up every weekend and play whatever inspired her, whether songs from the sixties or rap from the nineties. . . . The emotions and words that are placed in some songs are undeniable. My favorite artist of all time is Luther Vandross. The sound of his voice on the saddest song can make me smile.

**(Simone Lawrence)**

Music is emotionally moving to me. Music helps me to remember and to forget. Music can be uplifting and can make you sad. When I hear music, I create pictures in my mind. . . . The music playing in class reminds me of a perfect day. **(Michael Martin)**

To me, music is so much more than just music. It's a universal language, something everyone can understand.

I love all kinds of music, as long as it massages my eardrums instead of rupturing them with deafening bass or awful pitchy "singing." Hip hop, rap, and R&B are my favorite types of music. Just growing up in a house that always had music playing, from Luther Vandross to Toni Braxton all the way up to 2Pac, music became a part of me. **(Shiquille Ward)**



. . . Music is a way to connect with others without words, to express what cannot otherwise be expressed. It reaches across space and time and touches the mind and soul.

I listen to a lot of different kinds of music, but my favorite music has a strong bass line and clear vocals. The feeling of the beat hits me like a heartbeat.

The imagery the music in class is conjuring is a summer day beside a slow river with people coming and going, a bustling crowd, while I relax and watch. (**Tracker Dunn**)

Music makes me feel happy most of the time. I like upbeat positive artists like Jill Scott, Erykah Badu, and India.Arie. Their songs speak to me as a woman in a thoughtful and poetic way.

When I am sad or depressed, I listen to Michael Crory or "Ain't no sunshine when she gone" or "Momma's hands" or some old school R&B by Al Green, Aretha Franklin, or Marvin Gaye.

When I want to get motivated to do housework or get up and go out somewhere and I really don't feel like it, I listen to old disco: Donna Summer, Chaka Kahn, or my favorite, Rick James. It gets me going. I listen to new music, too, for the beat, not the words. I like some Little Wayne and Drake collaborations. I listen to old rock songs, too, on occasion. (**Starr Miles**)

Music, what can I say? Music is one of my favorite things. It soothes me. My favorite type of music is soul music. I feel like whenever I listen to soul music, whether I am cleaning, driving, doing homework, or anything, I can feel the words and automatically place myself in the artist's shoes. I can always relate. Sometimes it's like they take the words right out of my mouth. Music soothes me



*"Roland Kirk" by James Morgan '12*

and always reminds me that nothing is too hard to overcome. I enjoy listening to gospel music as well because it keeps me in tune with my spiritual side. My two all-time favorite songs are "Take Me to the King" and "The Wrong Side of a Love Song." (**Isis Bernard**)

Music to me is my escape from the troubles that life has thrown at me. Music gives me a feeling of being a part of something. I feel that music is a way of my life. I love to sing so I feel where

the artists are coming from and where they are trying to get me to go.

The music I hear now sends me to serenity, a peaceful joy that is inside. Love would be my first thought while I hear it. It makes me feel as though I don't want to leave my peaceful dream. (**Derick McCray**)

When I listen to music, I usually think about the content. Sometimes if the songs are meaningful I enjoy listening to them again and again. . . . I do not like jazz or rock because I think they are too noisy. Instead, I like slow motion music. (**Milli Lau**)

The music is so calming. You can almost imagine a happy circumstance from the past. Soothing and upbeat, you can't think of a bad thought to go to this music. It starts the melody as a tiptoe, carefully working its way into your ears; then it goes in your mind, triggering a thought. The thought it has brought up from my mind is one of serenity. I'm in a flowing dress on a nice sunny beach, happy as can be. Now this has never happened, but that is where I want to be right now. (**Nyagoo Hoth**)

What does music mean to me? Music is my sincerest companion. Music gives me a shoulder to cry on when no one is near to listen. Music gives me the beat to move my feet. Its melody soothes,



inspires, and holds me to the moment I am in. When I walk down the street, music surrounds me. There's music in the trees as the wind blows through the leaves and the branches shift.

Music is in my breath, my heart, my soul. It goes deeper than anyone can go. I love world music, especially African music. The blues and reggae are the styles I enjoy most. Music helps me free myself from reality, to dance like no one is watching.  
**(Jamie Hanson)**

I have always been involved in dancing and music since I was a child. As a little girl, I took some dance lessons and danced to Brazilian songs and beats. After moving to the U.S., I became part of my high school choir and show choir. During this time, I had the opportunity to experience American tunes. Today I am a certified zumba instructor. . . .

Music has always been present in my life, whether it is to express my happiness or as a form of support and comfort throughout difficult and sad times. I really enjoy listening to songs that talk about God. It is very uplifting to me and helps me get the courage to keep going and not give up when times of struggle come. **(Vanessa Lopes Maia)**

In music I find my refuge. Whenever I get depressed and all things seem to be collapsing around me and, just like in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*, "the center cannot hold," I find my hold in music. I like listening to gospel music or spiritual hymns. I feel when I am listening to these, all my troubles vanish. Where I was stuck, it all of a sudden melts away. **(Lucia Chikowero)**

A world without music would be devastating to me. I clean to music, I create my quilts to music, and, yes, I even dance to music. There was a time when I thought I'd never get to dance to it again. I was paralyzed for a short while, and music got me moving again.

As a Navy brat, I was exposed to all kinds of music—

Latin, Western, the beautiful music of Spain, jazz, R&B, hip hop, classical. Each of these kinds of music has its own story.

Latin music came from my Hispanic friends. The music of Spain came from living in Spain for five years. Their music moved your soul and made you want to dance and be happy. Country music reminds me of Saturday mornings at my grandparents' house with my grandfather blasting the radio. R&B and jazz bring back memories of my dad's reel to reel, with the music playing forever with no repeats.

When you have a house full of teenagers, you have no choice but to get into their hip hop, R&B, and country music, even Latin.

When you have a daughter that was first chair violist in an orchestra, you have to stop and listen to her playing classical music. It made my heart sing. It was as if the strings were crying at times, and at other times the strings would make you want to dance.

While I'm on the subject of music, nothing made me happier than to see my grandmother on Sunday nights listening to her gospel music. She would have her hands in the air, waving them back and forth and saying Amen from time to time. I, as her little mocking bird, would fondly imitate her. Oh, to see her do that again!

Music has touched my life in many ways and has taken me many places in my mind.  
**(Jeannine Shoemaker)**

I listen to and love all types of music besides rock and heavy metal. It really depends on my mood that day. My first choice will be R&B Soul. I don't really know why, but I love that type of music. My grandmother always said, "The type of music you listen to tells you more about a person and their personality." I guess I am a loving person then.

**(Latrice White)**

# BELTING OUT THE BLUES



I wake up every morning  
And I hear my daughter's voice,  
Wake up every morning  
I hear my daughter's voice.  
Why do I hear it?  
Because I have no choice. (**Amber McCarley**)

With all the homework,  
School is driving me crazy.  
With all the homework,  
School is driving me crazy.  
Can't wait for winter break  
So I can feel lazy. (**Zeynab Ahmed**)

I want a new pair of shoes  
I want, I want a new pair of shoes.  
He said no shoes for you.  
He wants me blue. (**LaPrice Black**)

Trying to get to work  
Get off my lazy ass  
Come home take a nap  
Maybe take a bath  
Trying to work hard

Knock knock knock  
Who's at my door?  
Knock knock knock  
Who's at my door?  
I answer, but damn,  
It's not who I'm waiting for.  
*This is because my fiancé is in prison, and I'm  
waiting on him to come home next year July. He's  
been gone since October 2011.*  
(**Toshiana Northington**)

Get on the right path  
No sleep no bath  
I gotta go to class. (**Shiquille Ward**)

I got the blues cause Kita in class calling me a fool.  
She just don't know what I've been through.  
I don't know what to do.  
I got a lot going on  
With work, coaching, and school. (**Derick McCray**)

# CHANNELING FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Students were asked to imagine themselves as Frederick Douglass. It is 1852, seven years after he published his Narrative. He opens The Southern Quarterly Review and reads the following editorial:

***The negro, left to himself, does not dream of liberty. He cannot indeed grasp a conception which belongs so naturally to the white man. It is a cruel task to disturb him in the enjoyment of that life—slavery—to which God has destined him. He basks in the sunshine and is happy. Christian slavery, free from interference, is the brightest sunbeam which Omniscience has destined for his existence.***

Here are responses from “Frederick Douglass”:

Dear Editor:

In this editorial you stated that a Negro left to himself does not dream of liberty. As a former slave, I can say that this is all we dream of: liberty. Black men and women were free at one time in Africa, living amongst family and walking around free to do as we pleased, but evil white men came to our native land, kidnapped us, and made us slaves. Negroes went from freedom to slavery, from tradition to oppression, from happiness to depression. From my master I learned to love what he hated, embrace what he feared.  
(Derick McCray)

As a man who has since broken away from the rugged, ruthless stranglehold slavery has put on my people, I am free to now observe and denounce this life and show my people a new land, a land of freedom and opportunity. You say that no Negro himself will ever “grasp a conception which belongs so naturally to a white man.” To this I must press upon you, is a man not a man regardless of what hue his skin presents? Do I not feel pain, eat and drink as any man, black or white? (Shiquille Ward)

Slave owners are so “holy,” “honest,” and “kind-hearted.” I have seen my grandmother put in a shed and left to die of loneliness. I have seen masters commit adultery with slave women, have babies by them, and treat their children like dirt. All this happens in the pits of hell; now it is time for me to get to the gates of heaven. My joy was stolen, my sleep was stolen, my life was stolen, my freedom was stolen, my friends and family were stolen, my smile was stolen, my manhood was stolen, all by those thieves in the night, my masters. I can happily say I have stolen all those back and more. I am a free man now and have my liberty. (Mallory Carter)

I have seen a master whip a young slave woman numerous times throughout the day while she was tied down to prevent her fighting back against her oppressor. During these beatings, the master quoted biblical scripture. This is a slave who is able to grasp the concept of freedom by virtue of the master’s need to bind her to prevent her escape; and this slave is without a doubt not comfortable accepting bloody beatings as her destiny in life. I am the writer of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American*

*Slave*, published seven years ago, a copy of which is included. I implore you to read and understand my story and the plight of slave men, women, and children.

**(Janet Shelton)**

God created men equal. People use God as a weapon for wrong things, and that is an ungodly act. There were several of the Ten Commandments that were broken: you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, and you shall not steal. Every day there were killings, sexual assaults, adultery, and most of all stealing people from their homes and enslaving them. Slavery is a lack of respect to any human and to God's creations. **(Samuel Bester)**

Nowhere in the Bible does it state "thou shalt kill and bleed to death thy servant." It states that we should clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and love our brethren. Slaves are kept without knowledge because knowledge has the power of education and enlightenment. The whippings, the hunger, the cold, and the merciless deaths are indeed nowhere near being full of sunshine and happiness; it is a horrid plague that to this day haunts my people.

**(Charlienne Cotto)**

Even with the gracious grotesque gifts of slavery, the negro still dreamed of being emancipated. The white man sees the Negro without dreams of freedom; the negro dreams of freedom without the white man. You hateful white men, you capture Negroes with charming chains and shameless shackles to build this so-called land of the free. "Basking in the sun," say you? Baking in the sinful slavery fields, say I. The godly gatekeepers of hell are committing barbaric blood baths, ravishing rapes, and leather lasso lashings upon my fellow negro, yet you say we are happy. You must be mad! **(Alisha Taylor)**

Our women are raped, our children are taken at birth and sold to strangers who do not care, and we are beaten till near death, worked till the point of exhaustion, and killed in numbers for nothing more than taking a break. I may be a free slave, but I take it upon myself as prolocutor for my brothers and sisters that are enslaved by white slave-owners. Where is the justice? I will tell you there is no justice in the unjust world. You say slavery is good, but it is nothing more than pure villainy. You try putting on a façade, but it will break. Slavery itself is nothing more than a wicked means used by corrupted men.

**(Jaquan Fleming)**

How dare you to define slavery as a sort of happiness! You may eat until your hunger is content. You may sleep in comforts and the warmth of soft sheets next to a blazing fire. You never have to fear the chain that locks you day and night or the lash that breaks into your skin. Take notice of the catastrophic disparity that you

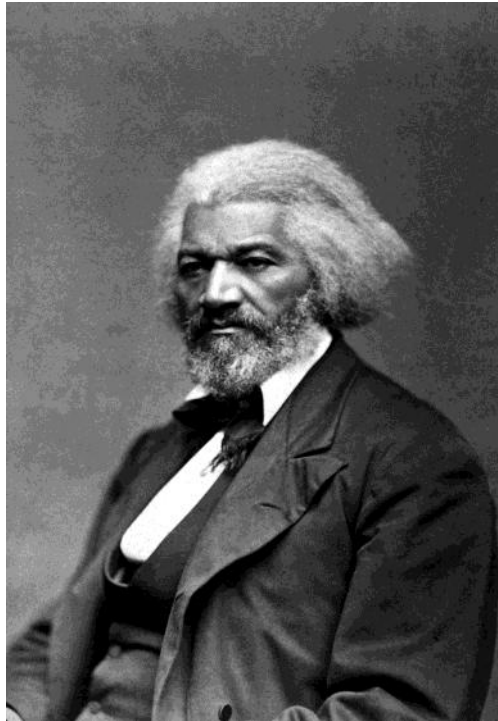


claim to be my “sunshine”!  
The Bible says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye all are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). If we are all one in the eyes of God and Christianity and the Christians follow the word of God, then halt the hypocrisy and let us all be treated equally! (**Vanessa Lopes Maia**)

I, Frederick Douglass, believe that being free is not only a command, but it is also a demand! I do not believe our freedom would be an interference; I believe you not allowing us to learn to read and write is an interference. We dream of liberty and of equal rights. I will miss being your slave because you helped us every day out there picking cotton. I will miss you so. (**Toshiana Northington**)

The slave owner is a cruel coward who uses pain to stop the growth of another race of man. They preach of the slave as not belonging in the white man’s world, when the truth is they fear we will rise in this land and become an equal. Are we not deserving of this chance? What is the white man’s reason for holding their fellow humans behind? I say give us food to feed our hunger, give us warmth to keep our bodies at peace, and give us books to open our minds. Then see if we cannot comprehend the same glory of liberty that keeps the white man so eager to keep it from us. (**Simone Lawrence**)

You say we enjoy slavery, but we dream of it being abolished every day. You say we are not meant for anything more, yet I have learned to



read. How is that? No man wants to be beaten and controlled. (**Kunga Chokten**)

You say “Omniscience has destined” slavery for my existence, but God tells me in the good book to love your neighbor as yourself, to treat your brother with love and kindness. I find it appalling that you find yourself qualified to speak on behalf of me, the slave, without knowing my pain and anguish. I must fight harder for freedom and equality for my people so that we may shine and be enlightened to

who we are truly meant to be in God’s destiny. (**Nafisa Davis**)

Mr. Editor, who in his right mind does not dream of liberty when in bondage? If Patrick Henry asked for liberty or death, what makes you think we of the Negro race do not demand the same? What child does not want to know his birth date, parentage, and siblings, just like white children? Who in their right mind desires a life of misery, unpaid labor, and violent masters? We toil, we mourn, we sweat, and we bleed, yet we own nothing. You came to Africa and kidnapped us from our home. We owned land, we had livestock, and we had an identity there that you robbed us of, only to tell us today that God destined us to be slaves and own nothing? Slavery, no matter how you dress it up in Christian garb, remains the worst injustice under the sun. (**Lucia Chikowero**)

The African man is indeed a man, not an animal to be sold, weighed, poked, prodded, chained, and used up as labor in your houses and fields.



The African man is a man. He thinks, reasons, feels, and desires, just as any white man does. His dreams are of Africa, his homeland, and freedom. The white man dreams of his crops from his fields and his profits. The African man reaches for his ancestors and looks to the future of his offspring. **(Starr Miles)**

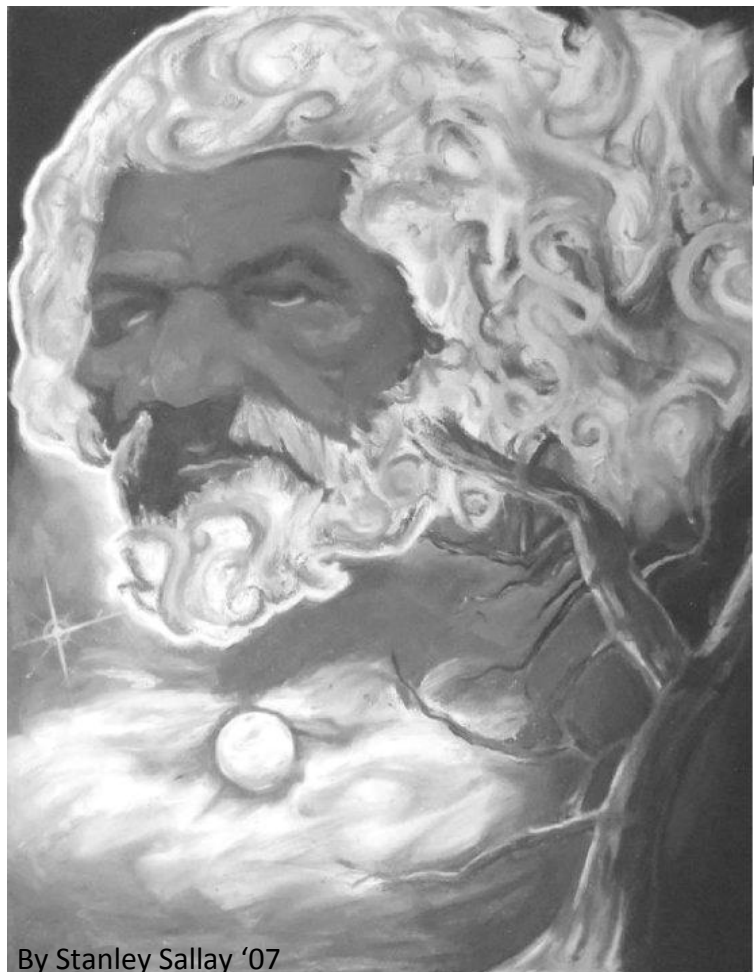
The egotism of the righteous oppressor allows him to convince himself, despite all evidence, that only he can dream. The charitable withholder would conceive of a notion where an Almighty God would neglect to share a subconscious with the “children of Ham.” The oppressor’s opacity is obvious to all who can reason. The collusive colonialist sings slavery slogans while casting upon himself the title of Patriotic Potentate! It then becomes our duty to educate our brethren. Just as we follow the “North Star” to freedom, so did the “Wise Men” follow the stars to baby Jesus; our chain is unbroken. Separation does not unbind us from the rhythm of the drum. We know our ancestors and relatives bid us soon come. **(Robert James)**

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Slaves are not happy; we would rather die than live in bondage. Educating the slaves to read and write shall let them rise from debasing depths and escape the piteous present. Slave owners are whoremongers, men-stealers, liars, and perjured persons. **(LaTrease Hibbler)**

I have endured and I have also unwillingly witnessed some of the most atrocious acts and have experienced some of the most insidious crimes committed towards my brethren in captivity. I am and I shall forever be tormented by the violent vivid images of slavery. God gave me Freedom

when he sacrificed his only son. The Holy Bible reads, “For Freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1). The destiny for a man cannot be predetermined, and a man cannot predetermine the destiny for man. “Christian slavery” is the Devil’s work in progress. The Devil’s work demoralizes, defiles, and degrades all my fellow Negro brothers. Furthermore, the day shall inevitably present itself when all of my Negro brothers and sisters become immersed in the rapture of Freedom’s warm embrace: but even then, I shall never put down the broken mirror that reflects slavery’s wretched face. **(Michael Martin)**

*Respectfully yours,  
Frederick Douglass*



# IDENTIFYING PREJUDICE

**prejudice:** *an adverse judgment or opinion formed beforehand or without knowledge or examination of the facts; a preconceived preference or bias; irrational suspicion or hatred of a particular group, race, or religion; unfair pre-judgment.*



Growing up in a Catholic school, I was not really allowed to practice my religion (Islam). The one thing that differentiates Muslim women from the rest of the world is the headscarf (hijab). I never wore it all through middle

and high school for two main reasons: one, I was attending a Catholic school; two, I felt different.

I started wearing the hijab when I got to the U.S. Here I had the right to practice my religion under the Constitution. However, that wouldn't stop Fox News from bashing my religion every chance they got. I used to see people get stereotyped, hated on, but I never thought it would happen to me.

One spring morning, I was walking from the bus stop to my school when I came across a group of young men. As I was passing near them, one person said, "Terrorist!" and they all started laughing. I have never in my life faced a situation like that. I took it as a learning experience. That same day I went to look for an organization that deals with multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusivity. I tried not to take it personally. (**Zeynab Ahmed**)



I have been in many prejudicial situations, especially because I am a single mom. Many people judge unwed mothers. I've almost always been judged by men as easy: easily duped and easily dumped. All guys thought that because I am a single mom, I

was super lonely and in need of a man.

However, I learned that what people think or decide that I am has nothing to do with who I really am and where I am destined to be.

(**Charlienne Cotto**)



Living in Iowa and being an immigrant [from Brazil] brought me to experience prejudice as an everyday aspect. I would have to say that Iowa is predominantly white and has a very small percentage of immigrants. Taking a trip to the grocery store or driving to take my children to school, I felt watched and pointed out. I stood out in the crowd because of my personal appearance.

There was one time after buying a new car I was stopped by a police officer. I requested the reason why I was stopped, and the officer explained that he had not seen the temporary license plate that was given to me. In Iowa, it is very common for the police to stop people with Hispanic features for no reason. As time went by, many other people I knew and friends that were Hispanics had found themselves in difficult situations and being stopped by the police while driving.

To be quite honest, I have created within me a sense of fear when driving. I feel like the police are there after me, after my family, and after the ones that do not look like them. I find it ironic that instead of seeing the police as to serve and protect the community, I feel threatened by them. (**Vanessa Lopes Maia**)



people of other races were weird. I also thought they were much smarter than what I was. I didn't think we would make good friends and that they would think I was stupid or something.

Not until I moved to Wisconsin did I hang with people of a different race than me. I found that going outside of your race and being around those people, talking to those people, you learn more and begin to be more comfortable with them. There isn't anything wrong with African Americans hanging with Caucasians, Mexicans, or any other race and vice versa. If anything, you'll only be learning something new from them. Getting to know that person can be the beginning of a powerful relationship. (**Amber McCarley**)



When I walked into my medical class for the first time, a lot of people looked at my arms and gave me a weird stare. But as class went on a classmate said, "I thought you were going to be a mean person because I saw all your tattoos and was kind of frightened of you. I realized you are

a really nice and caring and helpful person." (**Toshiana Northington**)



I would have to say that I am guilty of being prejudiced in a way of appearance and race. During my middle school years, I didn't think it was okay to hang with people of another race. I followed my aunt's footsteps throughout school. She was just three years older than me,

and I saw that she hung out with only African Americans and that was it. I don't think I ever asked her why she only hung with African Americans, but I did the same. The few people I hung out with were her friends' younger sisters, and we hung out for years together inside and outside of school. I remember around middle school age thinking that



Going to school in Madison, I was fairly used to sometimes being the only African American in my class. In my tenth grade year of high school, I took a class called African American Experience. In this class we talked about African history, slavery, the Civil War, Civil Rights, etc. Once we

started to talk about the harder things to deal with or learn about, like slavery and the Civil Rights Movement, it seemed like my teacher was extra interested in my opinion. I was the only black kid in my class at the time. For example, she would say, "Blacks and whites were separated by Jim Crow laws. How do you feel about that, Isis?"

(**Isis Bernard**)

It was a regular day at work, and I get customers who take a ridiculous amount of time to count out their money and pay for their groceries. This one particular woman was taking too long. I was getting impatient, not to mention I had a long line and they were getting restless also. She kept looking into her hand funny at the money like she was confused. She counted the same money several times that she was going to hand me. All this time, I'm just thinking what the hell is she doing? Is she slow or something?



After what felt like forever, she finally gave me the money. I came to find out she had been suffering from a concussion she had earlier and wasn't fully done with the aftermath of it. I felt bad after I found that out. It made me take a step back to notice that I shouldn't be prejudiced or practice prejudicial acts. **(Kelli Green)**



It had been nearly a year, farming and canning, with little pay and the promise of reimbursement for my hard work. Long days on the farm and late nights in the kitchen meant shared meals and memories made together. . . . I told them, "Hey, don't you know?

No one is free when others are oppressed." She responded with, "You only use that word because you know how to spell it, not because you know what it means." Born to a white mother and black father, she relates to friends, "Black girl rule number one: never trust a crying white girl." I felt as if she believed that I had not experienced oppression because of the color of my skin. That couldn't be farther from the truth. Oppression is a human experience, not to be confined by race, gender, class, or religion. **(Jamie Hanson)**

When I was in fourth grade, we had a sub for our class when my teacher brought a newborn into the world. She had left me a note in my desk basically telling me to behave. So I agreed to it and told myself I'd do my best. We figured out who our sub was for class, and we were all unhappy because it was the grumpy old computer teacher.

It was my first class of the day with the sub. She gave us an assignment to do. I raised my hand, and she called on me. I said, "Hey, this is too easy for me. Is there anything that you can give me that's not easy?" She said, "No, you do what I tell



you to do, young man." So I just listened to her the rest of the day and didn't ask another question.

At the end of the day, we had free time. We were playing the game called Zip, and we were loud. I only played once. She saw when I jumped in the game. She yelled at the top of her lungs and said, "Stop!" We all stopped. My friend Brian (he was a little white kid) kept it going. When she turned around, she said, "Chris, stay after class." So that's when I got upset. My friend Brian spoke up and said, "Hey, I don't think that is fair because I made the noise and Chris stopped when you told him to. It was me who did it. Sorry."

Her response to Brian was, "No, it was Chris, and he is staying after. I don't care what you say." She kept me eight minutes after class, knowing I take the bus home, and just took her anger out on me. She walked over to me, and I stood up to her. She was at my chest. I looked down and told her she was not a good listener. She started to poke at my chest with her pointer finger and said I was a disrespectful, rude, and obnoxious child who needed help. That's why she kept me after class. **(Christopher Bester)**

My experience came by way of taking my ill son to the doctor's office. I'm not really sure why I received such hostility from the clinic staff. Was it because of my being a young mother? Was it because I was African American? Or was it due to the fact that I was on Medical Aid?

My husband and I took my son Michael to the clinic daily and at times twice a day from the time we brought him home from the hospital after his birth. They would shake their heads and accuse us of not knowing what we were saying. They wouldn't perform the proper tests needed to diagnose why Michael wasn't eating or why he had breathing problems. We would explain it



over and over again. Michael couldn't eat and breathe at the same time. He would let the milk run out of his mouth in order to breathe. He had a very loud-pitched stridor that resembled the sound a seal makes. After being told that we were just helicopter

parents and he was just constipated, I decided to confer with the nurse of the school my older son attended. What a blessing that was to come!

She recommended another doctor that was willing to see him even though he didn't accept our insurance. We went to see him. Within minutes, he said, "It sounds like he has E.N.T. issues." He then got us in with an otolaryngologist right away. It was discovered that he had a rare birth defect that should've been corrected in the first four days of life. The doctor then did the surgery, but since it was months after birth, it was harder to correct, would have to be done more than once, and may have life-altering effects.

If the first clinic we were going to would've only looked past whatever was preventing them from taking our concerns seriously, my son might be without a lot of his current health and learning disabilities. **(Alisha Taylor)**



Before I came to the United States, I thought America was a place with less discrimination because this is a most diverse country and has a long history of fighting for human rights and liberty. However, after

I came here, what I observed and what I experienced were completely opposite to my belief. Although my experience does not mean anything when compared with what African-Americans have encountered, I still

want to share my experiences of being discriminated against because I am a foreigner and cannot speak English fluently.

I still remember one day in college when I brought my first English class's writing assignment to the Writing Center. After editing, I asked the tutor whether there were any resources that could help me to improve English. She suggested that I go to the disability center and tell them that I was learning disabled and needed to get a document to prove that. Then I could request my instructor to give me more time to do my assignments and examinations. At that time I had a very short moment of thought that maybe I was learning disabled. However, I am not. I understand the differences between being learning disabled and having a language barrier. . . .

I think stereotypes influence every group in the United States. I remember when my niece was six years old, my elder sister took me to her school and asked her to show me her classroom. However, she rejected my coming to the classroom just because I am Chinese and she was afraid that her classmates would laugh at her. We tried to explain to her that she is half-Chinese and half-American since her mother is Chinese. She denied this and said she was American because she was born in the United States. Furthermore, she often tried her best to disturb her mother while we were talking since she could not understand Chinese and was afraid we were talking about her. Her feelings showed

偏见



me her fear about being Chinese as well as American. Being Chinese, she is afraid of being discriminated against by her classmates. Being American, she feels uncomfortable and unsafe when other people are not speaking in English. How powerful stereotypes are in this country! . . .

My experiences have shaped my opinion. I understand the feelings and effects of being discriminated against. In the future, I will try my best to avoid prejudice towards other people. **(Milli Lau)**



I applied in person for a position that was open for a hairstylist at a hair restoration salon, and I was told that the position had been filled. I really didn't believe him, so I had one of my Caucasian friends call and ask if the hairstyling position was still available. He answered, "Yes, and would you like to come in for an interview?" I was floored. **(LaPrice Black)**

I walk outside when I observe two police officers standing in front of my car. I assume they are doing a follow-up report because my car was vandalized a few days prior. The officers, one male and one female, immediately stop what they are doing when they see me walking towards them. Simultaneously, they tell me not to move and to remove my hands from my pockets. The officers approach me slowly.

I'm frozen in obvious fear, as both of them hold one hand on their firearm and another pointing and directing me not to move as they inch closer to me. As they approach me, the female officer asks me for my personal information. She also asks me, "Is this your



car? This is a nice car," she says condescendingly, while staring me up and down. The big male officer asks me, "What are you doing out here, and where do you stay?"

The female officer walks to her squad car after I give her my full name, date of birth, address, and social security number. I ask the aggressive looking male officer, "What is this all about, and why have you detained me?" I receive no response at first. The officer standing less than an arm's length away from me with his hand on his holstered gun says, "We received a report." When the officer returns from her vehicle, she says, "A report of drug sales--that's why we're here." Then she asks me to repeat the information I gave to her earlier. She is just distracting me. And before I can get a single word out in response, the big burly male officer forcibly twists my arms behind my back to handcuff me. He then informs me while searching me that he has a report of a drug sale that took place here.

After his initial search, the female officer searches me and then asks me, "Where are the drugs?" The male officer says to me convincingly, "You wouldn't have a nice car like that if you weren't selling dope."

As the cuffs clamp down tightly on my wrist, I ask again and again, "What the hell is going on?" Meanwhile, I'm being crammed in the back of her squad car with few details of my potential arrest. While sitting back there I notice more squad cars arriving to the scene. There are now more police officers, and a police dog is going into my house. The police search my house with their K-9 unit and are unable to find anything in the house. I'm later informed by the female officer that I have a

full extraditable warrant from Detroit (meaning I was going to be sent back to Michigan).

"There must be a mistake!" I exclaim. She tells her dispatcher over the police radio that she thinks it's me. The dispatch operator asked her, "Does all his information match up?" She reluctantly says, "No, but I think it's him!" The officer asks me, "You're from Detroit right? Is this your birthdate and birth year?" I furiously ask her, "Am I going to jail because you have a 'hunch'?" She says, "Let me do my job." Then she gets out of the car and tries to convince my wife that I left and went to back to my hometown of Detroit, Michigan. My wife denies that I could have recently committed a crime in Michigan, then come back home without her ever knowing. I can hear the female officer saying to my wife, "There's a dangerous criminal warrant from Detroit, and I think it's him!"

I tell the officer as she sits back in the car that I have not been to Michigan in over five years, so there must be a mistake. She replies, "Where are the drugs? I know you have

them?" She says, "Don't make it harder for yourself," as we leave my house heading downtown to the county jail. "You'll get more jail time if drugs are found on you at the jail." I try to understand that I'm going to jail because of drugs that they haven't found and because of a warrant she thinks I have.

The ride going downtown seems like an eternity. I plead with the officer to take another look at her information as I profess, "It's not me!" In my transit to jail, I ask God to intervene in my unusual situation. I pray for truth, patience, guidance, and wisdom. I then ask the officer while we're on our way downtown, "When you find out that you have the wrong person, are you going to bring me home?" She says, "No, that's not my responsibility. It's the jail's." She repeats, "Where's the drugs?" While in the back of that car, I constantly think about the opportunities that are forcibly being taken away from me. I know this predicament is a misunderstanding. Now, because of an officer's hunch, I'm going to jail and being taken from my family and my dreams. I think this hunch of hers is going to ruin my life.



When we arrive at the county jail, I feel emptiness in my stomach. The female officer asks me again like a broken record to give up the dope. She's grinning as she mutters, "I know you got it." I observe a deputy on the phone with someone as I'm being pulled from the squad car. The deputy on the phone

tells me that I can go home. He says the Detroit Police Department made a mistake. "There's a misunderstanding," the deputy says, "and we have the wrong person." The deputy tells me that my detailed information did not match the warrant they have. The female officer uncuffs me and says, "Today's your lucky day. I'll take you home."

I have an overwhelming feeling of anger from being racially profiled (again) as she drives me back home. I thank GOD for a swift response in my crisis. I think about all kinds of things as I travel fewer than five miles back to my home. I think about how much I had already missed my children and the love of my life, my beautiful wife. I had thought my life was over.

After arriving at my house, the officer apologizes for any inconvenience that they may have caused me or my family. I reply, "I knew it wasn't me." **(Michael Martin)**



. . . "Why you hit my son with a damn rock?"

"I ain't hit yo son!"

"Yes, you little ass did. I see you every day over here by this big ass rock pile just a lookin for trouble. See, we knew long before ya'll moved ya'll project asses to our neighborhood there was gon be trouble. Square Biz, you can take a nigga out the projects but you can't take the projects out the nigga."

"Say that when my momma come back!"

"Got something for you momma, lil nigga, and yo daddy, but I know he ain't home!"  
**(Robert James)**



In summer my family was invited to a wedding of one of my husband's former classmates. It was in the middle of Illinois in a small place called Sheridan. Sheridan has a population of around 300 people, from what the sign

said, so obviously almost all the people there knew each other. My best guess was they were not used to diversity in their area.

Before the wedding started, we decided to go into one of the small stores there. . . . The only store assistant literally froze at the sight of a tall black man walking confidently but at ease. One could tell that she was totally uncomfortable with this tall black man who had come into her store despite it being mid-morning. . . .

We tried to strike up a conversation with her, trying to understand this new place we were in. "Yes" and "no" is all we got. After we were done paying for our stuff, there was not even a "thank you." We walked out feeling awkward and regretting why we even went in there. **(Lucia Chikowero)**



. . . My life partner was a low-income African American female with county insurance and carrying cancer in her body. Her situation was just as deserving as those who were private payers. She passed away exactly 19 months from

the day of a call saying she would need to be placed on a waiting list for chemo because of her insurance plan. Who knows where we could be right now if they were not prejudiced toward her situation? **(Janet Shelton)**



One moment that stays in my mind was when I was on the bus and there was a group of black kids in the back of the bus using profanity and being loud. I was sitting in the middle of the bus. The bus driver told them to calm down, but they seemed to get louder. He stopped the bus and called the cops. The cops came and kicked all the black kids off the bus, including me, when it had nothing to do with me. . . . I felt it was wrong. **(Jaquan Fleming)**



When I lived in Waterloo, Wisconsin, I experienced a time when my youngest son and I went to Piggly Wiggly to buy some food. When we entered the store, my son reached for a cart and was pushing it to me when an older white man came in with a cart. My son went to say hi to him, and he said, "Get out of my way, nigger!" and hit him with the cart.

I stopped and then gasped. Others were looking on as my son cried, and others began to look at me. I never said anything but looked at the man while I tried to comfort my son.

Then next thing I knew, the police were there telling me to raise my hands and come outside. Somebody had thought I was going to cause a scene and called the police on me. It was horrible to be falsely accused.

**(Nafisa Davis)**



In 2009, I was in Chicago with my girlfriend at the time. She wanted to go to a nice restaurant, so we did. Because we were young and not white like everyone else eating, we

couldn't get a table. I said we'd wait for one, but the manager made it obvious there would not be one opening for us. **(Kunga Chokten)**



I have never experienced prejudice until I moved to Madison. It's so sad that you can go shopping and an employee will follow you around, walking right behind you like you're going to steal something. I don't know why they do that.

My daughter and I were shopping at Payless at West Towne Mall. An employee started following us around the store like we were going to steal a pair of shoes. I asked her why she was following us around the store, and she said that she was fixing some shoes, which was a lie. I asked to speak to a manager, but she was the manager. I told her she made us feel so uncomfortable by her actions. She had a look on her face like she felt stupid. We paid for our items, and then the woman said, "Sorry." I just rolled my eyes and started to shake my head at her. I was so pissed off! **(Latrice White)**



We had just arrived in sixth grade, me and my ten friends from grade school—some white, some Asian, and the rest darker than me. As the months went on, my white friends found new friends, and my Asian friends just stopped speaking altogether.

Girls in my group all were a different shade of black. . . . The principal stalked us every day. For some reason, he just saw us as a problem he needed to fix. . . . That first year he did his best to make us group of girls outcasts. . . . He

pushed us into failing ourselves. Chances are he did see us as a right now problem or a group of black girls making a mess of his hopeful image of a good school. The more he pulled us down, the more we lost in the long run. . . .

I was a good kid before middle school, and I walked out of that place with a chip on my shoulder. I will never know if it was his assumption of “black ignorance” or mine of “white prejudice.” All I know is the natural prejudice in both was a setback for me. It has also become my biggest mission to change.

**(Simone Lawrence)**



As a teen one day while riding the Madison Metro Mendota bus to the north side home from work on a muggy hot summer day, I saw the bus windows were open because the air blower on the bus was no longer blowing cold. As we

got closer to my home, there were only two riders left on the bus: myself and a white female who looked to be in her early sixties sitting in the back of the bus. The bus driver was my regular bus driver, and by sight we were familiar and we spoke on occasion. I was tired and hot, and I just wanted to go home to shower, eat dinner, and rest. The driver suddenly pulled the bus to a complete stop and announced a five minute wait right before the turn to my street. I sighed. Bored, I started to crack my chewing gum, hoping this would relieve my frustration while waiting on him to move and take me home.

The woman sitting in the back of the bus began mumbling and then talking loudly to herself. Then she yelled at me, “Quit cracking that gum, you dumb nigger!” I turned around and looked at her in disbelief. I rolled my eyes and swung my head back around quickly to begin chewing and cracking my gum again. She immediately continued with racial rants: “You hear me, you jigger boo? Why don’t you go back to Africa, you jungle bunny?” The bus driver sat silent and said nothing. . . .

I got up to get off the bus at the back doors trying to free myself from my hateful tormentor. I grabbed with both hands; the doors would not open. “Let me off!” I yelled to the indifferent bus driver. “Let me off the bus!” The woman began shrieking and laughing at me as I shook the doors to get free.

Finally the bus driver released the door locks, and I sprang off the bus holding back my tears, anger, and humiliation that grew from the pit of my stomach to the tip of my brain with each step I took away from the bus, away from them. I walked the nine blocks to my home in the hot sun until my face, swollen with tears, and my heart pounding with fear, anger, and pain reached the safety of my home. **(Starr Miles)**





# SHOCKED BY KATE CHOPIN

*She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long. She arose at length and opened the door. . . . It was Brently Mallard who entered. . . . When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of the joy that kills. “The Story of an Hour”*



This is definitely one of the best endings to a story that I have ever read. It turns out Brently Mallard was not involved with the railroad disaster at all. When Mr. Mallard arrives, Josephine screams and Louise dies! . . . Doctors concluded that

Louise Mallard died of joy; joy at the return of her husband. I believe Louise died of cardiac arrest by the shock of having her newfound freedom so cruelly and instantaneously revoked. **(Robert James)**



Mrs. Mallard has just been set free, like a caged bird allowed to fly. She has imagined a long life with a sense of dread. Now she is pleased, praying for a long life. Doctors conclude she has died from joy that afflicted her heart when she saw her

husband had not passed. Instead, her death was caused by the distress that she was not free from her husband; this caused her death. . . . The doctors had it wrong: they had not seen the look in her eye as she died. Had they seen, they would be certain that the cause of death was in fact a revolt against oppression, the contrary to the joy that kills.

**(Jamie Hanson)**



After the doctors arrive, they announce that Mrs. Mallard died of a heart attack because of happiness. Actually, Mrs. Mallard does not die of joy, as the doctors claim, but dies of losing joy. The message of her husband's death gave her a

glance into a future where she could hope for freedom. However, the shock and the disappointment of losing her new life by seeing her husband still alive kills her.

**(Milli Lau)**



She gives in to her sister's request to open the door and come out. She goes downstairs and sees her husband again and dies! Doctors say she died of a heart attack from the joy of her husband being alive. She really died of shock and

disappointment of seeing her husband again. She found and lost freedom! **(Alisha Taylor)**

“There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory.” This line from the story describes how powerful she felt coming out of her room, all set to start her “new” life. But a sudden twist of fate changed that. It turned out that Mr. Brently Mallard was not dead; he



was fine and did not even know about the accident. Mrs. Mallard's sister Josephine screamed, and Josephine's husband Richard quickly tried to block Mr. Brently Mallard from the view of Mrs.

Mallard. Perhaps Richard was not quick enough. The tables have now turned, and Mrs. Mallard dies from a heart attack!

The doctors say she died from heart disease, at the end when it says "of the joy that kills." I think the doctors meant that the joy of seeing her husband was too much for her heart to handle.

As a reader, I think she had a heart attack because of the sudden shock and realization that the "new" life of freedom that she set out to live had been taken away at the sight of seeing that her husband was still alive.  
(**Nyagosa Hoth**)

As a reader I firmly believe that Mrs. Mallard died of a heart disease that was triggered by the shock of seeing the husband walking in through the door carrying his grip sack and umbrella. Another trigger for the heart attack was the disappointment that her troubles were far from over. All that freedom she was

feeling and embracing in her room was just a dream. Her nightmare was still alive and walking the street. (**Lucia Chikowero**)

Mrs. Mallard feels very confident that her life will be long and happy without her husband.



She fully embraces her newfound independence and walks down the stairs with her sister Josephine. Without warning, Mrs. Mallard's freedom is abruptly taken when Mr. Brently Mallard walks through the door. The doctors concluded that

Mrs. Mallard died of heart failure because she was so excited that her husband was back home. Readers realize that the doctors were wrong about Mrs. Mallard's death. Readers can also conclude that Mrs. Mallard died because her husband immediately took her newly acquired independence away from her when he surprisingly walked through the door. (**Michael Martin**)

# RESPONDING TO ROMARE BEARDEN

## ROMARE BEARDEN SYMPOSIUM: A REVIEW BY STARR MILLS



Today was a joyful experience for me. I attended the “Romare Bearden: A Black Odyssey” symposium and discussion. I enjoyed the art work and discussion with artists. I enjoyed the poetry from other artists and readings from my fellow Odyssey classmates. Robert and Michael were especially emotional, moving, and relatable. The audience shared their opinion by their moans and “hmmms” in agreement during their readings and confirmed it with their burst of applause.

During our break I had an opportunity to meet several Odyssey alumni and listen to them speak on where they were before Odyssey, their journey, and what they are seeking now as goals. The room was filled with artists, art historians, and artistic intellectuals discussing their work and Romare Bearden's work. His art is modernistic, urbanistic, and northern rural, with many nationalities represented. The symposium was a wonderful experience.

Of the many quotes on the wall at the Romare Bearden Exhibit, this one stood out: “How much responsibility do we bear for our lives?” How much responsibility do I bear for my own life? How much of our lives do we or can we control or choose to let others control for us? I am happy that we had this great experience of exploring the artistic world and view of Romare Bearden.

## FINDING BEARDEN AND HOMER IN CHICAGO: BY ROBERT JAMES

No modern struggle would be as important as our Quest for Self-Definition. To define a race, it becomes necessary to examine the past. By choosing Homer's Odyssey, Bearden forces black people to ask, “Where are the black heroes of yore?” The question is the prerequisite for the connection of culture removed by chattel slavery. Bearden understood that art was a highway to cultures. He introduces African, Mexican, Asian, and European influences. In this way, art becomes education!

Odysseus represents stratagem, resistance, and character to overcome sorrow. He was unable to save his crew, a dilemma faced by black men often unable to save their own family and friends. Known as a man of many trials, Odysseus has many traits of poor black males. Odysseus's name means “trouble” in Greek, both giving and receiving trouble. Like Marvin Gaye's “trouble man,” this theme resonates with all inner-city and heretofore poor men. Odysseus' heroic trait is cunning intelligence manifested as deceptive speech and use of disguise. Now blacks call this “the gift of gab.” It takes “cunning intelligence” to survive urban areas like New York, L.A., and Chicago.

My own Odyssey confirms Bearden's art. I've had to understand that I am pieces of my mom, dad, grandmom, godmom, the Chicago housing projects where I grew up, the time I spent behind bars,





and even my family's expectations. As my Odyssey (life) unfolds, my collage changes. Just like art, when you look deeper you find something new or another way to understand what has already been there.

I see connections between Bearden's representations of the monsters in the Odyssey and modern day life. The Cyclops could represent the one-sided view of justice, racial profiling, and the way prison destroys men. Medusa can suggest that poverty immobilizes, just as Medusa petrifies whoever she looks upon. The Sirens are hood women headed by grandmothers who tell ghetto tales and raise their daughters to date hustlers. These women condone and support crime; they are the drug mules and the hideouts. They are the divas and material girls. Circe suggests drug dealing causes one to lose morals, thus turning them into pigs. The Lotus Eaters represent people preferring to use cocaine and heroin. Scylla represents gun violence and the power associated with guns, like Scylla able to take a life in an instant. Scylla had six heads; original handguns were six-shooters. Charybdis represents vice, sucking victims in slowly. Vice can make you totally lose your way. The underworld is prison because sometimes there you find seers like Malcolm X and new ways to get home. Odysseus's adventures happen on oceans, a perfect place to symbolize life's unpredictability in the ghetto.

Just as Bearden was fearless in recreating traditional respected art works, so must I be fearless when facing the stereotypes and societal beliefs of who I am as a black man. Like Odysseus, there can be no doubting, only striving to complete one's evolution. All that matters is reaching HOME, which symbolizes that place of peace within your mind and spirit.

### FROM COLLAGES TO QUILTS: BY JEANNINE SHOEMAKER



Romare Bearden's work appealed to me because his collages brought to mind my love of quilting. Like Bearden, I too have a great interest in African and African American art and society. I've been seriously quilting for the past ten or more years. Bearden wrote, and I quote, "You sing on the canvas. You improvise--You find the rhythm and catch it good, and structure as you go on along--then the song you sing is you." He put into

words how I feel when I'm working on my quilts. I love how the fabric feels in my hands, searching for the right colors to represent a mood, a feeling, or a movement. I love the anticipation of a nearly completed piece. It's as if each quilt has its own soul, and it's a part of me.







*“What struck me about the Odyssey is that all of us, from the time we begin to think, are on an Odyssey. . . . And I think this is what makes the story so lasting, so classic, and applicable to everyone.”*

*~ Romare Bearden*

