

# Odyssey Oracle

Created for and by the students of the UW-Madison Odyssey Project

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## The Awakening

*Derrick Washington Calls Out to the Community*

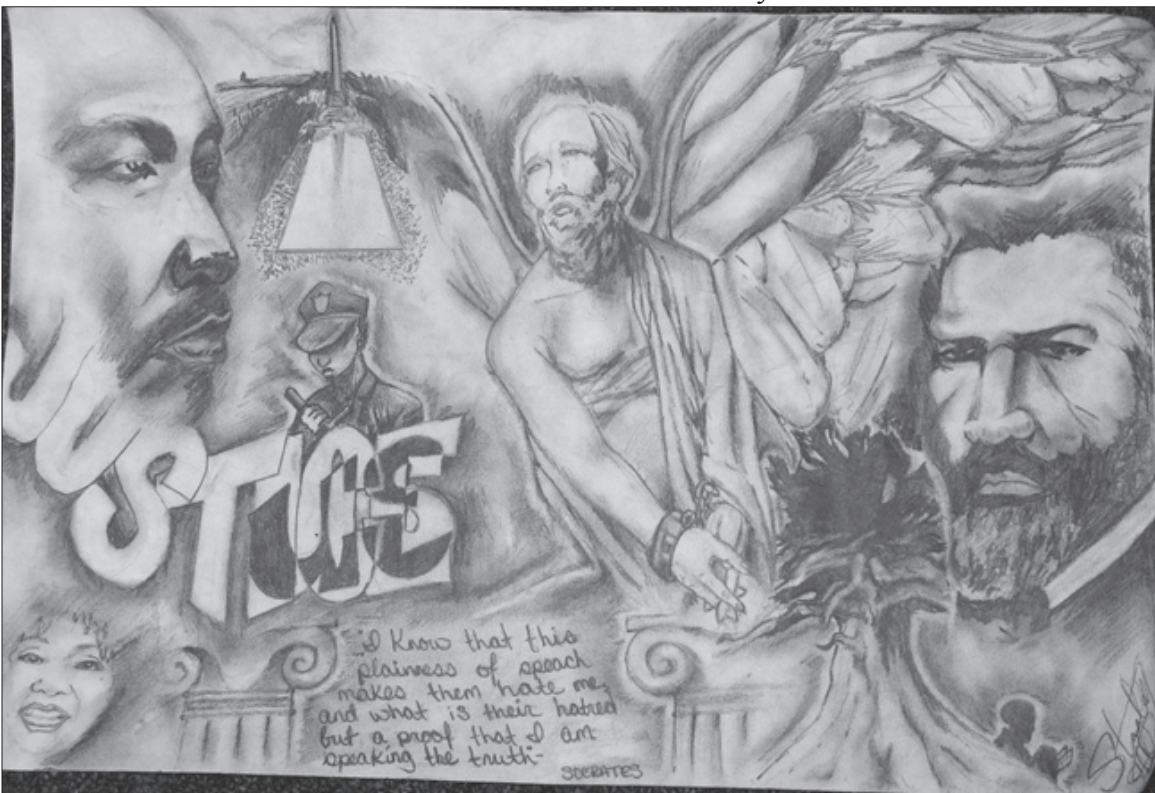
To those of us who are committed to constant terrorism of our own people, I today say to you we are at war. For those of us who insist on peer pressuring our people into neglecting their intellectual endeavors, I say to you we are at war. To those of you who continue to pillage and plunder our neighborhoods and strip them of their luster, I say to you we are at war. For those of you who can

not be convinced by diplomacy or swayed by our intent to spread love and self awareness, I say to you we are at war.

We will not fight you conventionally with violence as to perpetuate our circle of anger and separation. We will not sit by in fear while you divide our community and in fear while you convert our young into seeing the world as you do. We will elevate our existence to

match that of other great cultures in the world.

Believe me, brothers, when I say that I know why we behave the way we do. The question is, do you? We are secretly being programmed by our radio and television shows, which for the most part pump hate, lust, selfishness, greed and division. Our teachers are out-numbered, over worked, underpaid, and ill equipped.



Stanley Sallay

## Get out and vote—if you can

*Last week we asked you to write on the question “Is voting worth the effort?” Most of you voted “yes,” although many included reservations. Others wrote about the inequities that still exist in our system, especially as it applies to excluding felons. Here are a few of the highlights.*

When I was living in Chicago, I'd love going to my neighborhood polling place and watching the elders who remember when they could not vote or go to the polls. Many of them were crippled and only left their homes for doctor appointments and getting dressed up to go to vote. Watching this always made me proud, made me appreciate the right to vote....I am obligated to vote because of the blood shed by those who came before me.

**E. Oroki Rice**

What African Americans suffered to be allowed to vote was horrible. I will always vote, to stand up and be counted, whether it does any good or not. ... To not vote might mean I would be the problem and

not the solution.

**Juanita Wilson**

Maybe that's why they don't let so called criminals vote, because the government would be staring down the barrel of a weapon more destructive than the weapons of mass destruction, the voice of the deprived and poor.

**Curtis L. Williams**

Despite the billions of dollars spent on races to entice voters, the real power lies in the simple act of voting. Voting is the great equalizer. Regardless if you are rich or poor, when you vote, your will or voice is equal. Policymakers respond to those who vote and especially to those who can organize others to vote.

**Brian Benford**

Being a mother of two who are in school, I'm starting to realize the importance of voting for school issues that could affect how my children learn.

**Sonia Spencer**

If you decide to go to a movie instead of vote, and the politician you like the least wins, would your vote have changed that? The answer is always 'no!' For that reason I may never vote again.

**Dwayne Bland II**

I am happy I put my vote in, I am proud to have placed my ballot, and I feel regardless of the outcome, my vote counted.

**Roslyn Phillips**

Is voting worth the effort depends on whether one is engaged in a free, full, and fair election process or in sham elections. ... All workers should continue to receive their wages when they take off to vote. There should be all kinds of shuttle services functioning to get folks to the polls.

**Tillman Morris**

[T]here are so many disenfranchised people who cannot vote, due to having a felony or something else. These people are victims of the very system that they pay taxes to. I feel that it is unfair that they are left out of the process.

**Tiffani Puccio**

When I think that in recent history blacks and women did not have the right to vote, it reminds me what a privilege voting really is....[W]e need to educate and motivate ourselves and others to keep this honor alive.

**Anne Meyer**

They used to tell us in fifth grade that our opinion matters. Well, now that we're out of grammar school, does Uncle Sam really trust our honest feelings and opinions? After the election for president, I heard from a lot of people that the votes really didn't matter. So at my age (19), what am I supposed to believe? Do I believe in the justice system, which continues to let us down, ... or do I believe Ms. Spicer, my fifth grade grammar teacher?

**Melissa Plasky**

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# Artist Spotlight: *Romare Bearden* (1912-1988)

What would you do if you were a light-skinned black college student and were offered a chance to play baseball for the major leagues if you were willing to pass as white? For Romare Bearden, the answer was no. Instead, he turned his energy toward the Civil Rights Movement and became famous as one of the most important and innovative African-American artists of the twentieth century.

Romare Bearden was born in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1912, but his family moved a few years later to New York's Harlem to escape the Jim Crow laws of the South. Romare's mother was an activist and editor of the *Chicago Defender*; his father had a day job in sanitation but loved playing piano and telling tales on evenings and weekends.

Although Romare Bearden started his college work at New York University studying mathematics, he loved art and painted on the side. He would enlarge black and white photos of the great art works from the past and practice copying them, adding his own colors. He also earned money creating political cartoons for the *Baltimore African-American*.

After serving in the army during World War II, Bearden used the G.I. Bill to

travel to Paris. He returned to America determined to create a uniquely African-American form of artistic expression. A songwriter himself, Bearden met Duke Ellington and other musicians and became interested in translating the excitement of jazz into visual art. Many of his most famous art works, like "Out Chorus," "Showtime," and "Blue Devil," are on musical subjects (see *Oracle* of November 8, pp. 1, 13, and 16).

Bearden found his most powerful artistic style to be the **collage**, a jigsaw puzzle-like composition pasting together various materials (paper, wood, newspaper, cloth). [**Collage** comes from the French word *collé*, meaning "to stick."] Bearden's brightly-colored collages use a quilt-like combination of painted images, magazine clippings, and bits of paper and fabric.

Bearden completed an entire series of collages based on the story of Homer's *Odyssey*, including one called "Roots Odyssey" (see image in *Oracle* of September 20, p. 6). Another collage called "The Lamp" (1984) commemorates the thirtieth anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling ending segregation in education.

The year before Bearden's death in 1988, he was honored with the National Medal of Art. Bearden encouraged young African-American artists and

worked tirelessly throughout his life to use art as a means of social protest.

Sources:

Myron Schwartzman. *Romare Bearden: His Life and Art*. N.Y.: Abrams, 1990.

"Romare Bearden." [www.beardenfoundation.org](http://www.beardenfoundation.org)



BROWN v BOARD of EDUCATION  
30 Years Later: "The Politics of Excellence"



Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Decision of The Supreme Court of  
The United States Ending Officially-Imposed Segregation in Public Education

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# Profiles of Our Peers: Part One

## Cameron Daniels by Derrick Washington

Cameron is a young man with honorable goals for the future. It's hard to find such a responsible and focused individual of his age. He seems to pull off school work and more with ease. Cam goes to MATC full-time, taking classes like economics, literature, and anthropology, all the while working at a fast-paced job like UPS to make ends meet.

Work and school are not all of his life. He's also a big football fan, so we clicked right away. You know he's a cool guy if his favorite movie is *Pulp Fiction*; you can't get much cooler than that.

Cameron moved from Milwaukee when he was only one and has been living in Madison ever since, which might contribute to some of his mature tastes. Maybe it's his upbringing. His mom seems to be a strong and loving mother who won't take failure as a way of life. She's an alumna of the Odyssey program, and I hear she's still going strong.

When Cam grows up, he

wants to be a journalist. He wants honesty and integrity to be his legacy to the world.

"I don't want to be known as a hypocrite," he says. "I want my writings to be respected for being what they are."

## The Scoop on Derrick Washington by Cameron Daniels

For many of us, our jobs are something that we have to do, but they aren't something we truly want to do. Most of us don't get the opportunity to pursue a career in something that is dear to us and something we are passionate about. This is not the case with Derrick Washington.

Derrick has been cutting hair since he was 12 years old. Luckily, he is able to make a living doing something that he has taken pride in and cherished since grade school. Derrick began barbering in his hometown of Chicago, and he has always felt that the barbershop was more than a place to get a haircut. Through cutting hair, Derrick bridged connections he never thought possible. It was these daily interactions among people that made Derrick conscious of his surroundings and ultimately caused him to leave the city he'd called home his whole life as he began to take notice of his community and the condition it was in.

By the age of 22, Derrick had witnessed so many of the hardships that plague most inner-city environments that they had become an eyesore to him. He felt he needed an alternative to the suffering and oppression that were

so prevalent in his neighborhood. He decided to move to Madison, where he resides to this day. Since receiving his Cosmetology License at MATC in 2003, he has worked at three different barbershops and plans on cutting hair as long as he is physically capable. He intends to keep his relationships strong and continue to change the world around him to better himself and others. Among all things, Derrick aspires to be a diplomat and is confident that the Odyssey Program will get him one step closer to that.

Ten years from now, Derrick sees himself as an outreach specialist at his company (Genesis International) fulfilling all the duties of a diplomat and actually going into communities to "get his hands dirty," as he put it. Even though he has not yet been outside the U.S., Derrick favors Egypt, Rome, and Australia as places he'd like to visit first. Derrick is taking all the right steps to achieve his goals; there is no doubt in my mind that he can see all the places in the world he wishes and many, many more.



## Curtis Williams by Mary Wells

Curtis Williams is a young man who loves to travel. His favorite places he has journeyed through are Santa Monica and Los Angeles, California.

He moved to Madison with his family at the age of 14 from Philadelphia. He graduated in 1991 from my alma mater, Madison West High School, joined the Army, and for the next four years was stationed in Texas and Kentucky. He was a weapons specialist and a tank operator.

He likes to play chess, football and basketball. Some of his favorite foods are steak, liver, onions, and gravy. He isn't as shy as he

appears to be, and he doesn't like to be in large crowds of people.

An interesting fact about Curtis is that there are quite a few members of his family who are left-handed, including his sister, Angela, and his mother. Angela is a current Odyssey student, and his mom is a graduate of Odyssey.

While Curtis continues his educational goals here in the ever-changing climate of Madison, his future travels are never far from his thoughts—to warm destinations like Florida and Jamaica.



## Mary Wells by Curtis Williams

Mary Wells is, has been, and always will be a Madisonian. Raised on the Southside of Madison, Mary attended Madison West High School. She didn't graduate but later got her G.E.D., which has done wonders for her life, as she now works in the securities division of a mutual funds group. She also has a job at the Monona Terrace as part of their highly-trained wait staff, but that's not all.

This wonder woman has three handsome boys, two of whom are musicians who play guitar. The oldest, who's twenty-seven, has high hopes of becoming a rap star.

Mary enjoys whitewater rafting, which she encourages her eight-year-old granddaughter to try. Road trips are a pleasure to Mary; she enjoys driving, watching the trees and animals, and being on the open road. Mary's travels have taken her to St. Petersburg, Florida. She does enjoy baking, but she tells her family she can't cook so she won't have to cook for the holidays.

As you can see, Mary is a family-oriented, hard working Madisonian, and I hope you've enjoyed a peek into her world.



## Angela McAlister by Lorena Lovejoy

Born and raised in Beloit, Wisconsin, Angela "Angie" McAlister was the oldest of 10 children. Having eight sisters and one brother, Angie was a role model. Her mother passed away when Angie was 12. While growing up with her father, step-mom, sisters and brother, Angie decided what she wanted to do with her life.

Moving to Madison in 1978, Angie thought Madison would be a great place to raise her family. She is the mother of three children, one girl and two boys, and a grandma to two grandsons.

For fun, Angie likes to read books and go to the movies. She would prefer to see a movie at a cinema, but sometimes she'll settle on

renting.

Angie counsels people on drugs and alcohol. She is a program assistant and has a degree in child development.

A friend of Angie's who graduated from the Odyssey Project influenced her to apply.

"I am a four-year breast cancer survivor," she says proudly. And a survivor she definitely is.

## Lorena Lovejoy: I want a better life for my son! by Angela McAlister

Upon meeting Lorena, you might think she is no more than 19 years old, but actually she is a single mom of a very active six-year-old and will turn twenty-seven in January.

Lorena is quiet in class, but you can hear the passion and conviction in her voice when she talks about what she wants for her son. "I want a better life for my son, Jaylen," Lorena says. "I want him to have nice things." And Lorena is working toward that goal.

Lorena has been in Madison all of her life, having been born and raised here. She is the middle child of eight. Her favorite color is purple, and she finds enjoyment in playing cards and hanging out



with friends. "Most people are surprised when they find out I am bi-racial," she notes. "Most people think I am Hispanic."

She attended LaFollette High School and graduated in 1998. She says that school didn't mean much to her at that time in her life; she would rather hang out with her friends. She enjoyed expensive clothes and shoes, and then she had a child. "Having a child changed my perspective on life," she says. "I had to be responsible for someone else."

Lorena aspires to be a paralegal, and when she heard about the Odyssey Project from a friend, she decided to enroll. She feels that Odyssey will be the stepping stone for her to reach her career goal, which will help make a better life for her and her son.





## **Life has its detours: A classmate's profile of Anne Meyer**

### **by Tillman J. Morris**

Anne Meyer carries herself with a quiet, easy grace, and her style belies some of the trouble that she has experienced in life. She was born in Duluth, Minnesota in March, 1964 and grew up in Madison. She is the youngest of eight, adopted by white parents of German heritage into a family with four sisters and three brothers, all bi-racial. Her bi-racial identity differs from her brothers and sisters, who are of Asian-European descent, whereas she identifies herself as a woman of color of African and Norwegian descent.

Anne didn't experience any racial tension within her family, but having a keen perception, she detected at an early age that she was having some problems with racial identity. Whenever her family went out into public, she began to pick up pieces of

the racial contradictions. For instance, responses and reactions her brothers and sisters were receiving from other people seemed positive compared to the negative responses she perceived she got. She began to internalize that her siblings were being affirmed and she was not. These early experiences informed her of the racial hierarchy in society. As a result of this observation about racial insensitivity, she developed a kind of quiet tolerance.

Anne felt the need to connect with her biological parents, so one day she got up enough nerve to seek them out. She succeeded in reaching her biological mother but was unable to make contact with her father. She didn't meet her mother personally, but she and her mother did talk to each other on the phone and have corresponded. Her mother says they took her away to a school for girls; she was very young and confused and put her daughter up for adoption.

At one time Anne thought she had a learning disability because a lot of other children were quick on the uptake. She used to think that smart students didn't need to ask questions; even though she had many questions, she wouldn't raise them because she had too much pride and didn't want to be shamed. This led to a detour in her life. She went to Memorial High School but did not graduate. After she worked an assortment of jobs, she got her GED. At present she is a pharmacy tech, with 15 years seniority.

Seeking to infuse her life with meaning and purpose, she married at a young age. She found romance, but it soon turned sour because her

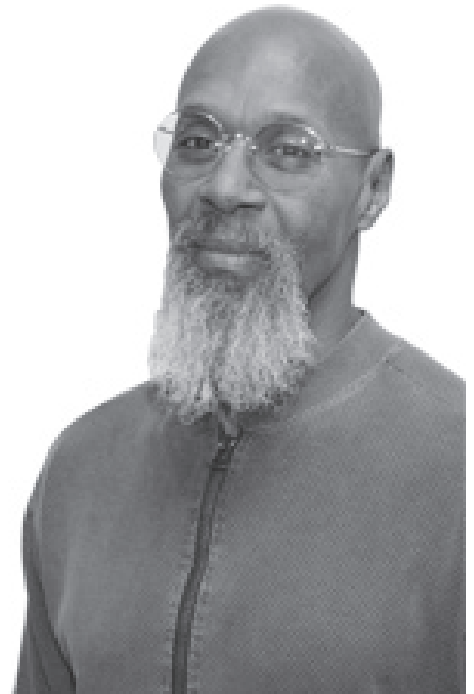
husband turned out to be an abusive man, she says. This situation kept her off center and questioning her confidence. Eventually she was able to sever this relationship.

Today Anne is the mother of two grown sons. Her interests include clay shooting and ballroom dancing. She likes to read biographies. Her goal is to finish Odyssey and to work toward a degree in some sort of social service job caring for the well-being of people. One of her obstacles in life was the learning process because once she fell behind she didn't know how to catch up. When she saw a brochure about the Odyssey program, her pathway back into the academic world was laid out before her.

## **Tillman's Odyssey: One Man's Struggle for Identity through Knowledge**

### **by Anne Meyer**

Whether it was testing the limits of the law or reading Socrates, Tillman Morris' insatiable quest for



knowledge has taken him from the rocky roads of his youth to the high road of his present.

Tillman Morris, Jr. was born the oldest of four children in St. Louis, Missouri. His father died when he was seven years old, thus beginning Tillman's Odyssey. In the aftermath of his father's death, he and his family were uprooted from his close-knit neighborhood to go and live with his mother's aunt and her husband. He developed his closest bonds with his aunt and paternal grandmother.

Within a few years of his moving in with his great aunt, she had a debilitating stroke that left her incapable of maintaining the order and discipline in the household. During that same period, Tillman's mother began a downward spiral into alcoholism. This was one of the many turning points in Tillman's life.

At that time, when he was approximately ten years old, he began to spend more time with his neighborhood buddies, a group that he fondly refers to as "The Little Mischievous Rascals." He also developed an admiration for a cousin who assumed a "gangster" (criminal) existence. In an effort to find his own identity, Tillman headed down a path that led him to reform school and eventually prison.

After his release from prison, Tillman moved to Milwaukee, before coming to Madison eight years ago. Two years ago, in an effort to get his life back on track and pursue his education, Tillman completed his GED. He now volunteers with a local organization that provides support and helps to develop leadership skills and public responsibility among formerly

incarcerated individuals.

As Tillman forges ahead on his new path, his primary goal is to continue his pursuit of learning: learning about himself, learning about others, learning about life.

## Angel Lightfoot by Emily Auerbach

Despite a difficult childhood and a recent tragedy, Angel Lightfoot feels happy to "still be here, still experiencing life and everything in it to the fullest."

Angel was born 26 years ago at Chicago's Mercy Hospital. Since the age of three, she has regarded her stepfather as the father figure in her life. Her family moved from Chicago to Aurora to Peoria and finally to Madison, always searching for better jobs and better lives. "My whole childhood was hard," Angel admits, particularly having to attend eight different schools before transferring to Madison's Memorial High in the second semester of her junior year.

People who hear that Angel's last name is "Lightfoot" may wonder if she is Native American. Her biological father is half Cherokee. Unfortunately,

Angel was told that she could not inherit any tribal money because she would have to be "one eighth more Cherokee" to do so.

Tragedy struck the Lightfoot-Carruthers family just a few weeks ago when her youngest brother, 19-year-old Frank Carruthers III, perished in a car accident on Northport Drive. Angel says she was always close to little Frank when they were growing up, and that his first word was not Mama or Daddy but Angel. "It felt like he was my son," Angel remembers. She taught him to drive and was proud lately of how he was turning his life around, holding onto his job and staying out of trouble.

At the funeral, Angel was surprised when her five-year-old son, Malcom, came forward





and asked to speak. Taking the microphone, he spoke directly to his uncle, saying, "I love you, Lil Frank. God bless you. I will miss you a lot." Malcom spoke in a perfect tone, poised and confident, and it moved Angel to tears.

Angel beams when talking about Malcom. "He's very informative, very alert, and not afraid to tell the truth, even if it means telling me that he got into trouble." Malcom's kindergarten teacher told Angel that her gifted son already knows most of what they'll be learning this year. Angel has big dreams for Malcom: "I'd like him to attend a School of the Arts. He deserves his own sitcom someday."

Angel's dreams for herself have changed since the recent tragedy. Before that time, she focused on wanting a home and a career in business administration. Now she feels more aware of the deeper side of life and contemplates becoming a social worker so she can help those in trouble. Angel wants to turn her family's tragedy around and use it to help other people to survive grief and loss.

Head held high, Angel says with quiet determination, "What doesn't kill me will make me stronger. That used to seem like a saying, but now I'm living it."

### **Yasmin Horton "dreams, dreams," and she has in mind to reinvent herself by Molinda Henry**

Born on the south side of Chicago in 1956, Yasmin came to Madison on a mission to escape the mean streets of Chicago. Yasmin says, "I

was deep in them."

Yasmin has one child: James, her twenty-eight-year-old son. She lovingly describes James as a perfect Odyssey Project prospect. Yasmin has high aspirations for her son. She credits him with being one of the important factors in her quest to escape the drug-infested cesspool of her birth.

This very driven, dreadlock-sporting black woman had a self-described "mind-blowing" experience at the 2005-2006 Odyssey Program Graduation Ceremony. Yasmin was well acquainted with Annette Bland, a graduate. The very night of the ceremony, Yasmin's own application for admission into the Odyssey Project was being considered. Yasmin said, "I was sitting on pins and needles." This gave Yasmin a whole different outlook on the graduation ceremony.

She knew if she could just get into the Odyssey Program, her life would change from that moment on.

When Yasmin finally heard that she had been accepted in the Odyssey Program, she was so happy because she had succeeded in overcoming the first hurdle towards meeting her

goal: "to be somebody."

Yasmin has other challenges in her life. She was diagnosed in October of 2005 with diabetes. We've all heard the words about how devastating diabetes can be, but not everyone is aware of the death sentence this disease is for some individuals. Yasmin lost her mother to the same disease, and so she knows the trials and tribulations associated with the illness.

I was immediately taken with Yasmin because she presses on, through the soul-sucking street life and a medical challenge. She has escaped Chicago and is coping with the diabetes. She is a beacon of fortitude and perseverance. I have no doubt that whatever goals or aspirations Yasmin sets her sights on, she will inevitably prevail.



## Frederick Douglass on Fire

Odyssey students took on the voice of Frederick Douglass to challenge an actual 1852 editorial in the *Southern Quarterly Review* that labeled slavery enjoyable for slaves and part of God's plan.

Why does America deprive us of every privilege and then turn around and taunt us with inferiority? Why do they stand on our necks and then ask why we don't stand erect? Why do they tie our feet and then ask why we don't run? Why do they make laws forbidding us from an education and then ask why we are not intelligent and moral? With every opportunity, they break our body, soul, and spirit. (**Anne Meyer**)

Why am I, a Negro, destined to succumb to the overzealous jaws of tyranny? The salivary glands of supremacy burn with determination to consume all that it does not understand, but it will starve to death from abolition. (**Stanley Sallay**)

I feel that I am as equal as the next man, so why should I not be free too? I am a man just as you are, so what makes you different? The color of your skin is different, but when we bleed it is all the same

color: red. (**Katy Farrens**)

I have witnessed a slave killed by knocking his brains out with a hatchet, a slave shot with a musket in the face, a young girl being beaten to death, and two slaves so mangled that their heads, necks, and shoulders were cut to pieces and sores were festering in the wounds. (**Juanita Wilson**)

Who in their right, natural-born mind would want to be in shackles for the remainder of their life? Of course we want to taste the same freedom!—the same freedom that God put here for all men!—the same freedom that was forever gone when we crossed the Atlantic!—the same freedom that our children's children will wrongfully be robbed of!

(**Cameron Daniels**)

There must be freedom from slavery and freedom for all! (**Diane Dennis**)

The practice of slavery will permanently scar one's

heart and mortally wound one's soul.

(**Molinda Henry**)

It must be rewardingly blissful to stay engulfed in an aura of darkness and bask in the glow of profound arrogant ignorance regarding the degrading dehumanizing institution of slavery.

(**Angela McAlister**)

How can a man of your color know how a man of my color feels about slavery? How can you understand what it is like to be bought and sold like objects in a store, to be stepped on like a human floor mat, to call another man master who is not even God himself, and to not know your family or even bond with your mother? . . . You are now my slave for reading what this black man wrote. (**Kathleen Brown**)

In the time of the Israelites in slavery, God gave them Moses to lead them out of Egypt to the promised land. In our time, God gave

wisdom to strong people to disagree with the masters, but the masters were too wicked to understand the vision, just like the Pharaoh of Egypt. . . . God is looking at his people getting punished for no reason by hypocrites calling themselves Christians.  
(**Lily Komino**)

Mr. Editor, I will leave you with this: God tells of how he brings people out of bondage from wicked ones. With this, he states the Ten Commandments, including “thou shall not kill,” meaning that no person has the right of killing another human being.  
(**Lakeitha Sanyang**)

How on earth can you say you are most pious when it is you that is inflicting the same whippings unto your slaves that Jesus endured himself? . . . O treacherous words you speak of slaves!  
(**Tiffani Puccio**)

Contrary to your statements about Negro people, we all hunger and thirst for the same freedoms you get pleasure from daily. This hunger and thirst taught me to read when it was against the law. . . . I pray this hunger and thirst remain in

the Negro people for years to come, until there are no more hunger pains.  
(**Mary Wells**)

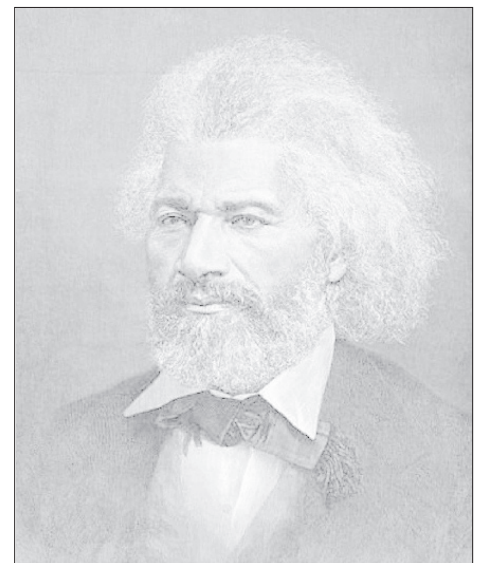
The darkness of your words needs to be lifted by the light of truth. . . . Now that I have tasted the sweet waters of freedom I can draw comparisons to the bitter, polluted well of slavery. (**Brian Benford**)

I myself have endured the pleasures given to the Negro—to be taken from someone I would probably never care to know in my life as a young child and given the gift of a hardworking job at such a young age. . . . I never thought in my life that I would have the joy of seeing hundreds suffer as they were stripped, beaten, and raped.  
(**Curtis Williams**)

**Annette Bland**  
(**Odyssey ‘06**) as  
**Frederick Douglass,**  
**Fall 2005**

After reading *The Southern Quarterly Review*, I feel compelled to confront the callous, cold composure of one who will never understand the conditions of a life of a slave. . . .

Let your mother be sold, let your brother be sold, let your sister be sold, and let any person you love be sold. Watch them stand side by side with cattle to be branded and deemed property by a piece of paper. Hear the screams and cries of slave mothers as they beg and plead to the master not to sell off their children who are often the master’s, blood of his blood, bone of his bones, through the brutal means of rape. Look at the beautiful free-flowing trees that bear precious flowers and sweet ripe fruit and imagine seeing a limp, lifeless body of a slave hanging from a tree with a noose tightly around his neck. . . . One day the white man will stand before a just God and shall give an account to the real master, God, for all his wrongdoing.  
(**Annette Bland**)





# Finding Plato's Cave Today

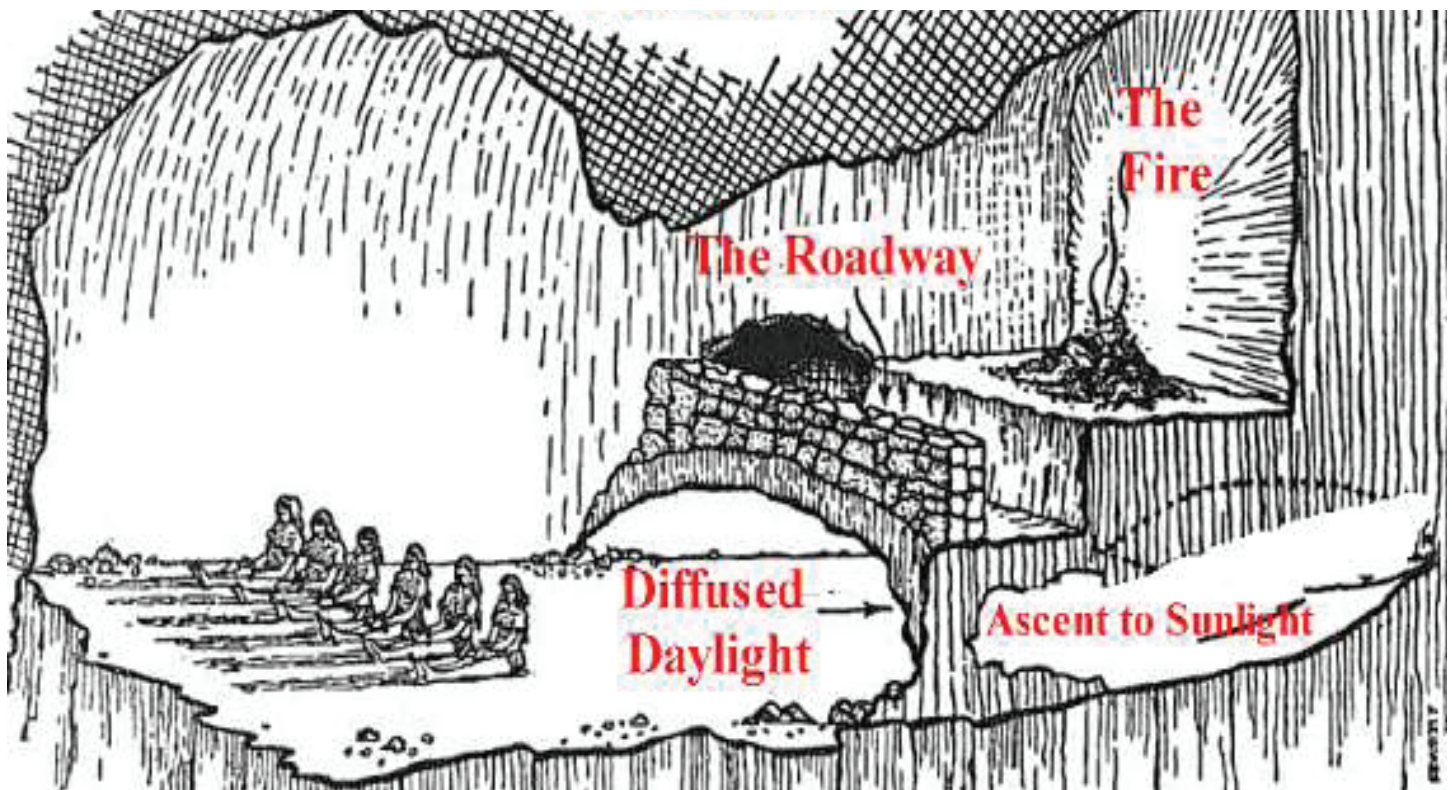
I would easily compare the Allegory of the Cave to a life of drug addiction because of the similarities. Living a life of drug recovery, I know better why some addicts won't even try to fight for the opportunity to free themselves of their chains. Sometimes the idea of missing a whole world and the joys of being out in the sunlight is a sad one because they've spent so much time in the dark. I guess you could describe this best by calling that feeling guilt or shame, and of course fear. Drug addiction is part of the problem, but the root of it is comparable to remembering the sun as if it were only a dream. The shame of getting ourselves mixed up down here in the dark sometimes is much more arresting than the fetters themselves. **(Corey Reece)**

Uneducated people are ignorant not by choice but by force. Like the people in the cave, they only know what is taught to them. The only way to know better is to experience it. I am kind of in a situation where I'm in a cave. I'm in a weird relationship with someone I know is no good for me. I have been dealing with this person for almost four years, so I really don't know any different way. But instead of looking outside the situation and moving on, I choose to deal with the B.S. But like the cave, there is light at the end. I just need the strength and the courage to go to the light. **(Lorena Lovejoy)**

I was in a domestic abuse situation when I was 18-20 years of age. I would make

everyone think that it was my fault that I always had a different bruise on my body. I would never go anywhere, and one day my mom looked at me and said, "This is enough." I began talking to people and slowly but surely I came up out of the cave and began to love my daughter and most of all myself. Now I can talk to my friends that are going through the same thing I went through. **(Angela Williams)**

During a period in my twenties, I experienced extreme depression. I was cut off from my ability to reach my full potential. Living in that cave was hell. As I look back on that time, I am reminded of the old Blues line, "I've been down so long that down looks up to me." **(Brian Benford)**



I was in a cave during my teenage years. The only thing I saw in my future was an illegal life, and I had no positive dreams or goals for the future. It is true that if you only know one way of life (cave), then to you that way of life is supreme. **(Dwayne Bland)**

I am a self-taught person, and the cave as a mental prison is very real to me. So I can identify with the Allegory of the Cave as one who himself has broken the mental fetters and who has struggled upward toward the light. On a personal note I could say having a life sentence was like being in a deep dark cave. Through my own efforts at litigation, I managed to extricate myself from that situation. In short, knowledge is the key. What's more, since being out I have returned to visit others still held captive.

**(Tillman Morris)**

Some people label those of Iranian or West Indian or even Muslim descent as terrorists because of the tragedy of 911. They are stuck in that 'cave' of ignorance, and ignorance creates fear of the unknown. . . . People wrapped in their own narrow worldview will never see beyond that view unless they are willing to be educated. Imagine how the world would be if we all stayed down in our own caves. **(Angela McAlister)**

. . . I've tried to live my life without my prescribed medication [for bipolar disorder] and have found myself in some serious trouble (jailed twice in two years). I have discovered that there is a bottomless pit inside the cave. Each time I've returned to it I sink to darker depths. I cannot afford another visit there. I don't think I'd have the strength to climb out again. . . . Today I live my life outside the cave with gratitude. I thank those who had the courage to face their own fears to step back in and pull me out. Today I accept that there is so much I don't know. I am finding out that the more I learn, the more there is to learn. . . . I am teachable. With that freedom I bask in days of sunshine. I choose light. I choose life.

**(Oroki Rice)**

When I was pregnant, it was a joy and a blessing. From day one to the fourth month, everything seemed to be OK. In the fifth month, I had an ultrasound appointment just to see how the baby was doing. One medical staff person was checking my belly, then went to call another one, who then called two doctors. At that point, I was so scared and asked them what the matter was. My doctor told me that they suspected

the baby had a rare disease which causes external and internal deformation and can kill the baby at less than a year old. They wanted to have more tests for me to determine whether I wanted to keep the baby. I decided that I wanted to keep the baby.

This was huge for me: being a newcomer in a foreign country for less than six months, with a complicated pregnancy, a baby not expected to live, and no family around. I was not only seeing dimly but walking as if dead. . . .

My baby came. When the doctor told me, "Tomorrow is his first surgery," I felt as if I had no filling but was empty inside. My son went through more than ten surgeries. I felt as if in an illusion whenever I entered hospitals searching for a different medical specialty. I was in denial of my son's condition and kept on blaming myself.

The hospital was my cave, and my son's condition was my other cave too. I was released from the cave when I had to face people who had a similar condition to my son. This gave me knowledge and acceptance of differences in the creation of our body.

**(Lily Komino)**



# ODYSSEY ALUMS SHINE AT AWARD CEREMONY

## *The Wisconsin Alumni Association honors Odyssey Project Director*

When the Wisconsin Alumni Association honored Odyssey Project Director Emily Auerbach on November 3, 2006, with a \$10,000 Cabinet 99 Award for being "a woman displaying leadership, tenacity, risk-taking and courage," she decided she would immediately donate the full amount to the Odyssey scholarship fund and use the occasion to feature the

talents of fourteen Odyssey graduates.

Graduates from all three years of the program were in attendance: Kegan Carter, Denise Maddox, Pamela Holmes, Joseph Hurst, Tineisha Scott, and Quintella Ward from the Class of 2003-2004; Sherreallyum Allen, Daphne Daniels, and Denise Hardnett from the Class of 2004-2005; and Marilyn Sims, Corey Saffold, Annette Bland, Socorro Lopez, and Maria Garcia from the Class of 2005-2006. After she thanked her parents and husband, Marshall

Cook, Diane Dennis, and many others, Emily Auerbach called the audience's attention to Kegan Carter's photo displays gracing the room and then shared the podium with five Odyssey graduates: Denise Maddox read an excerpt from her published article about the class, Corey Saffold shared his Wisconsin State Journal editorial, Annette Bland gave a dramatic reading of Langston Hughes's "Mother to Son," Sherreallyum Allen read her poem "The Gift" about her son's cerebral palsy, and Marilyn Sims performed her "Odyssey" song with the help of all the other Odyssey grads in attendance. Audience members openly wept and vowed to help support the Odyssey Project.

