

Odyssey Oracle

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

Volume 3, No. 6 October 25, 2006

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Letters to
Yolanda King
from the
Odyssey Class
of 2006-2007

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Letters To Yolanda King from the Odyssey Class of 2006-2007

Dear Yolanda King:

It is with great honor and privilege that I respond to your lecture delivered last Wednesday at Edgewood College, Madison, Wisconsin. It was the first time I'd heard you speak. I must say I was very impressed. Both your message

and delivery were touching. I believe it came from your heart. A good friend of mine, who has since passed on, used to say, "What comes from the heart, reaches the heart." *Well, I tell you, you reached my heart.*

I am a member of the University of Wisconsin, Odyssey Project, *a course in the humanities for adults facing economic barriers to higher education.* We are a diverse group of determined students who've been meeting weekly since September 6th this year. We'll graduate the course May 2007. It is my intention to make use of The Odyssey Project as a stepping stone to completing the bachelor's degree I began in 1971.

Yes, I grew up in your era. Like you I am of African ancestry. Unlike your parents, my parents handled the racism of our youth by trying to shield my sister and me from the trials and tribulations our people were experiencing. Although I grew up in what is now considered the *ghetto*, I did not realize the effect of what your father says was America's



Oroki Rice

defaulting on her promissory note to her citizens of color. As a child I had no idea how racism, sexism, and bigotry impacted my day to day existence. Yet as much as my parents tried to protect me, I could not help but be affected. We lived in Chicago's Garfield Park community during the time your father rented an apartment in nearby North Lawndale to make the point of exposing northern racism. In spite of my parents' silence, which was based on good intentions, I could sense the turbulence in our community. Later, I had a friend whose family was much more politically astute than ours. In 1966, the year I turned thirteen, my friend's mother gathered a group of kids from our neighborhood and took us to Soldier's Field. I remember a man riding around in a black car, waving as the crowd cheered him on. I did not know what the

occasion was or who this man was, but the air was electric with hope. I know now that man was your father, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was the "Freedom Sunday" rally, where he launched a drive to make Chicago an "open city" for housing.

I was always a nosy child. I'd listen to the whisperings of grownups who had to deal with the prejudices, discrimination, and segregation face to face on a day to day basis. I got a taste of this for myself when entering high school in 1967. I was part of The Permissive Transfer Plan, Chicago's answer to public school integration. I traveled ninety minutes each way via public transportation to Lake View High. There I found that these white kids had new textbooks. They'd been studying algebra and geometry, biology and chemistry in labs while in elementary school. I'd never even seen a new textbook or for that matter a new library book in my entire life. I had a lot of catching up to do and did the best I could with what I had to work with. It was made clear to me on a regular basis by the Lake View teachers and administrators that I was only a *visitor* in their school. There was a lot of pressure for me to succeed or be sent back to my *ghetto* school for any minor infraction. It was during those days that I developed my own consciousness about the realities of the imbalance of power, justice, and equality in America. I realized that my dreams had been limited from the start. When I was a little girl I'd had the inkling of being a ballerina. I'd never told anybody my wishes because I just *knew* that there could never really be a

colored ballerina.

Eventually, my dreams took on a new point of reference. I listened to the voices of Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (At this time being a woman was absolutely secondary to being Black.) I hadn't yet heard of Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Audre Lourde. I'd read *I Know Why a Caged Bird Sings*, but Sister Maya was only a woman, a woman who'd written a book about being raped as a child. We did not talk about such things in my community. Thank God for Aretha, who gave us a message of R-E-S-P-E-C-T in her music!

I went on to raise a family and did my best to be sure my children knew and were proud of their history. My three daughters were taught to dream big. I have not always been the best role model but have been honest with them about my mistakes. I pray as I watch them make their own mistakes rather than repeat mine. I now have six granddaughters who know the significance of honoring and respecting their African past along with their feminine powers. My granddaughters have big dreams, and I proudly watch them achieve goals they've set for themselves. I see progress.

The central theme that resonated for me in your address is that each of us has a responsibility to be part of the solution. We cannot afford to be part of the complaint committee. Time is running out. We're all in this together. If I am to achieve my dreams and witness my daughters and granddaughters achieve their dreams, then I must do the work that God has asked me to do. As

odyssey oracle

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Volume 3, No. 6 October 25, 2006

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a confirmation of your message, a friend from Chicago called the next night to remind me to stay true to my calling. Her words to me were *God will let you lose your mind rather than allow you to live your life without fulfilling your mission.* Strong words, but I have lived this reality. She reminded me that I'd been an inspiration, helping her to begin her path of dream-achievement. She promised me that she'd stick with me no matter what. I'm one of those people who have never been confused about what is my assignment here on earth. I know I'm to teach, encourage, and play a part in the healing of broken-hearted women and children. I've been an overcomer and am delighted to support others doing the same. My work brings me joy. It keeps me grateful. Thank God, I don't have to make this odyssey alone. I have you and countless other

dreamers to walk with me. Y'all uplift me when I'm weary, when I can't see my way through difficult situations. I thank God for dreams. I am full, sometimes bursting with dreams.

Thank you for your efforts, your achievements, your dreams, Sister Yolanda! (**E. Oroki Rice**)

On 11 October at Edgewood College, Madison, WI, my classmates and I attended your presentation of "Achieving the Dream." The Odyssey Project is the initiative of a group of progressive professors from the University of Wisconsin. Their objective is to recruit people who ordinarily would not have gone to college



Yolanda King signing autographs

and prepare them for college entry, beginning with the humanities.

Odyssey is composed of men and women from different ethnic backgrounds and varying ages. This was a field trip outing for us, and part of our assignment this period was to write a letter to you concerning our impressions of your presentation. There were a number of things that resonated with me, but first I would like to comment about your approach to the way you organized your entire program.

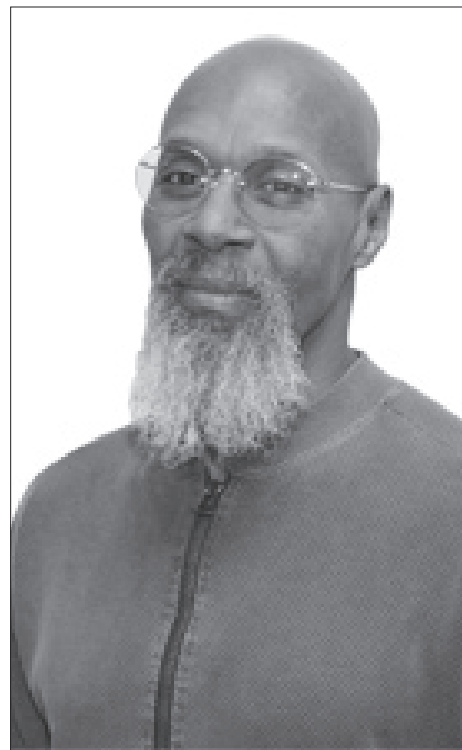
First of all, your performance made me understand more clearly that politics is both an art and science. The way you wove dramatic scenes with political commentary was artful. To me your approach is a good way of reaching a mass audience because you covered a lot of ground and offered a little something for every ear to ponder. I appreciate your technique, and it seems to be all in the mixing. That is, a critical mixture of art and politics, form and content. In short, it's what is said and how it is said.

One of the points you made was about Jewish culture and the importance that they place on transmitting history by telling their stories over and over. This stood out for me because I think some of the alienation and fragmentation that exists in the black community today is partially a result of our Diaspora experience. The ritual that you described was a good example of how a persecuted and/or oppressed people can preserve their identity, maintain cohesion and carry on the traditions of struggle until their humanity is recognized.

Another point you made that I agree with was the nonsensical fact that black folks

have to continue to renew the Voter Registration Act. To me, that places us in a category that you could call "probationary citizens." When the so-called founding fathers formulated the U.S. constitution, one of the sticking points was how were they going to deal "us" (black folks). As history unfolded, we came to be counted as 3/5 human. This compromise was carried on for years, and today it is manifested in this new form. Unless we get this act renewed, we don't have the right to vote. This is basically undemocratic and can be traced straight back to chattel slavery. I thought your presentation was fresh because you mentioned a number of contradictions like this one.

I also want to say something about your point that there are only six degrees that separate us. That was a good way of exposing the contradictions in ethnocentrism. As you said, you graphically showed that people are more alike than they are un-alike. I liked the marching orders that



Tillman Morris

you gave to the students, the way you named every little department inside the university where they could effectively challenge the inequalities of the institution. That was a practical plan for student engagement in the struggle for worldwide humanization. In the words of Franz Fanon, "Each generation out of relative obscurity must discover its historical mission in life and either fulfill it or betray it." You helped present some of the core problems of our generation.

Before I close, I would like to re-emphasize my appreciation for the cultural forms of presentation. I think culture is one of the strongest weapons in our arsenal against oppression, injustice, and inequalities. Thank you very much for coming to visit us. Carry on in the spirit. (**Tillman Morris**)

For those of us who were not able to be honored by your father's presence, it was truly an honor to be honored by your presence. Although I've only read and seen Dr. King on television, when you stepped onto that stage it felt as if I were there with Dr. King 40 years ago. I felt a strong sense of self and admiration for people of color. I was very touched by your lecture on October 11, 2006.

You asked the question, "where do we go from here?" I often think of that myself when I step into a store with my three children and people judge and assume I'm a single parent with three children (which I'm not—we are celebrating our 7th anniversary next month). I, like many parents of color, don't want my children to go through the same hardships that you and I went through and are still going through. I wonder if

their generation will be the ones to change our society. You were right about us not learning the simple art of living together. In some ways we are so accustomed to this lifestyle that making “simple” changes like learning to live with one another may seem challenging to some of us. So how can we as a nation change that?

I truly believe that the change starts in the home with the parents. Children especially mimic and learn everything they know from their parents. If we as parents start to teach our children from birth how to be accepting of others, the same way we teach them how to say “thank you,” “no thank you,” “please,” etc., we will start seeing a change. Instead of only buying that white or black doll, buy both so your child starts learning that there are no preferences. When you see your child staring at a black child or any other child of color, tell your child how much alike that little boy is to her and encourage her to say “hi” to him and shake hands.



Sonia Spencer

If we do this, it will become a way of life for our children. But unless we are showing examples of that to our children, we can’t expect them to do what isn’t taught to them or what they don’t see their parents doing.

We need to encourage our schools and learning centers to teach our children that we are more alike than unlike. We need to celebrate our differences and use power of choice to change differences. One thing that children like to do is create artwork. When I heard your comment on creating a mosaic by putting lots of different shapes and colors and sizes together, I immediately thought, what a wonderful idea. Why can’t we as adults come up with that?

We have come along way in the past 40 years, but we still have a lot to accomplish. Dr. King left behind a legacy that needs to be continued. I thank you and your life coach for helping you get to this point in your life where you are able to continue some of that legacy.

You made a profound impact on me last week. I as a human being and a woman of color will make strides and goals to be one of those people that “make things happen.” The first way is by educating myself with a college education and then taking what I learned from school to educate others and be an example to my children. There is a saying that I hold dear to my heart. It is “if you educate a woman, you educate her family; if you educate a girl, you educate the world.” We as women have a greater role in this world than men because we are the ones that bear children.

The other way is to start living with a sense of peace and

reach across the table to break differences. I will not be afraid of reaching out to people and extending a helping hand. I in turn will accept a helping hand. I don’t want to be someone that stands in the sidelines or someone that doesn’t know what is going on. I still have about 40 more years on this earth, and I want those years to be peaceful. Thank you. (**Sonia Spencer**)

Hope this note finds you well and at peace. I write this note after a few days of reflection. I was in attendance last Wednesday evening during your appearance in Madison, Wisconsin. First of all, I want to express my sincere appreciation on having the opportunity to witness your blessed talents. I loved how you wove stories and your messages with mixed media. The music and sound bites that accompanied your talk brought me back to poignant times.

While I couldn’t escape



Brian Benford

how wonderfully talented you are, I was profoundly struck by your candor and honesty. I thought it was courageous that you disclosed some of your perceived shortcomings to promote a life coach and the value of self reflection. As you performed and delivered, I would occasionally watch those in attendance from my vantage point in the rear of the facility. Heads nodded in affirmation. Smiles and laughter were pulled from young college coeds to seasoned adults who had a stake in the movement.

As I left your presentation, I looked around at the wonderful diversity present in that room. As each young child asked for your autograph, history connected with the future's hope. I think your father would have been proud that you were the commonality that brought us all together. Perhaps he would have been even prouder that almost forty years after his death, his legacy could bear witness to time. Thanks for allowing me and other members of my class (the Odyssey Project) to be part of that. **(Brian Benford)**

You did an outstanding performance of Rosa Parks standing her ground and not moving to the back of the bus, and the young lady being excited about being able to sit anywhere on the bus for the first time.

You speak of how close you and your father were. In so many ways, you are helping to carry on his dream through your speaking engagements of peace and working together in one accord. I agree with you that we must rise for we have work to do. We have to reach across the table to help one another. **(Juanita Wilson)**

Thank you for braving the cold weather in Wisconsin to come and speak to us. Your lecture



Juanita Wilson

will have a long-lasting effect on myself as well as everyone else in attendance. Before your arrival, I thought about the moment you would come to the stage many times, but little did I know that I would be moved to tears several times during the lecture.



Mary Wells

Believe me, I was not alone with overwhelming emotions flowing. I am happy to see that you "keep the dream alive" as your mother and father did for many years. I will look forward to seeing you again if you ever appear in the Midwest. **(Mary Wells)**

I went to your presentation with an open mind not thinking of you as Martin Luther King's child but as a speaker in today's society. As a speaker and writer your words should be able to move people without you dancing around on stage. People's minds should be juggling with thoughts of powerful stuff, not juggling with thoughts of



Kathleen Brown

what is she doing. . . . **(Kathleen Brown)**

Thank you for visiting Madison. I enjoyed your event very much. I loved how you mixed your messages and acting.

It's true that your father's dream is still a dream which we will only accomplish if we decide to live together as brothers and

sisters or perish like fools. As you said, our difference in scientific part is less than 1% of our DNA,



Lily Komino

but the hate people have to each other is as if we have lots of differences.

Thanks again and continue the good work of trying to make the world better to live in. (**Lily Komino**)

I would like to thank you for your visit to Madison, Wisconsin. I really enjoyed the thoughtful, enlightening, fun evening. The way you mix facts and events with acting and presentation is fun for all ages. I will speak of you and your father to my family and friends. I hope one day soon you will visit us again and share your world with more lucky young people. (**Dwayne Bland**)

First, let me say you are a beautiful woman in the inside and out, and also very exuberant in spirit. I loved and enjoyed every bit of your profound spirit.

I believe it was in the

Isthmus newspaper that I was looking at when I came across your name. I said to myself, I want to hear her speak. It was a couple of days later at my Wednesday night class at the Odyssey Project (a continuing education program), my professor Emily said that she wanted us to come and see Yolanda King. At that moment I said God has revealed to me my prayer. It was a revelation.

You are a wonderful speaker, just like your father, Dr. Martin Luther King. It was a pleasure to be able to hear you on that Wednesday October 11, 2006, at Edgewood College. The introduction for your entrance into the room was so glorious. The people really appreciate you. They



Dwayne Bland

were kind, loving, and generous.

I also appreciated your uniqueness. I wanted to thank you for putting emphasis on things that needed to be brought to our attention as brothers and sisters in Christ and the world. You were awesome. Although we may have gotten a check marked sufficient,

we are still waiting for the check to clear for peace.



Lakeitha Sanyang

Thank you again for your care, love, spirit, tenderness, and appreciation for everyone in this world. (**Lakeitha Sanyang**)

Your presentation at Edgewood College was an inspiration to me. A lot of what you said I agree with, and I felt that way before I even heard you speak. I feel that the people in this country still have a long way to go as far as the way we treat each other and how we still judge by skin color and not personality. Some can say, "Oh, I don't judge a person by their color or religion," but in reality they are and don't even realize it.

I also liked the part when you were talking about how if you are a good person or are good to others, then good people will surround you. Well, I always try hard to be good to others and try to show my kids how to be good to others, too. It's a hard thing to do at times because a lot of people don't return the goodness to you,

but I guess you just keep on trying and hope that it will pay off in the end. That's what I tell my kids, anyways.

The one thing I appreciated most from you was when my kids and I came back later and got the chance to meet you and get our book signed. You were so attentive to me and my kids and really took the time to talk to us, which I appreciated the most. You did not try to rush us past, even though your manager was bugging you to



Katy Farrens

keep the line going. You made us feel important and that you wanted to talk to us instead of having to because you signed our book. I even noticed that you were doing this with others in the line. That's what makes you so successful because you know how to treat people. You don't act superior or above them; you just act like yourself. Thank you again for your kindness, and I wish you lots of success with your book and future endeavors. (**Katy Farrens**)

I really enjoyed your

presentation at the Edgedome. The way you presented your message was really inspiring. The characters you presented and the way you presented them made me feel like I was really witnessing the experience of that person.

The message of unity was a strong one that riveted throughout



Angela McAlister

the auditorium that night. I hope people were really listening.

The message your father talked about those many years ago still rings true today. You are proof of that. Please continue to carry on the fight, and I will do my part to help you along the way. (**Angela McAlister**)

I was very glad to hear you speak and also to see the theatrical art form you used in your presentation to capture the audience's attention. I'm real sorry for the lack of blacks who weren't there. Most of my friends didn't or don't know who you are and that's sad. But I was there, and I learned an important point. I have power and that power "is my choice." I have to admit, though, I have given into the inferiority complex of self

to others, not having the courage to be successful or even positive, but



Troy Terry

after listening to and seeing you, plus being a part of the Odyssey class of 2006-2007, I have gotten my power back. I just want to say thank you much. (**Troy Terry**)

As an assignment I was asked to write you a short letter in response to your presentation at Edgewood College. I have both positive and negative things to say. To start with the negative, I felt as though you were putting on a performance versus trying to provide us with knowledge. I felt as though you were trying to promote yourself rather than speak of what happened.

Now on to the positive. I felt as if I was back in church. The poem you read at the beginning of your presentation gave me goose bumps. I really did enjoy parts of it. I also liked how you signed an autograph for a student in our Odyssey class as well as that little boy. You do seem, though, set apart from the "performance." You are a

**Melissa Plasky**

strong-willed woman.

One question before I end this letter. Where were you in the midst of all the work your father did? I mean the rallies and the marches. Were you right there also? Or did you stay home? How much participation did you really have growing up with your father

**Stanley Sallay**

around?

I do believe you are a remarkable woman and you have been through a lot. I do believe your heart is in the right place. God bless you and your family from now to eternity. Respectfully yours. (**Melissa Plasky**)

I thought your presentation was interesting. It wasn't what I expected, though. I thought that it would be more of a political view of the world instead of a history lesson. . . . We've already been beaten down with the history of Rosa Parks' triumph and the marches, sit-ins, and boycotts. I wanted to see something new.

I guess I was expecting a modern day Martin Luther King Jr., but those are some hard steps to follow and some enormous shoes to fill. (**Stanley Sallay**)

I enjoyed your presentation. It showed me the struggles my parents had to endure. I feel the explanation of the past will be the only way for present and future generations to face what this nation has been through—the suffering of its people and the strides and strengths it has taken to make it half way to your father's dreams. Hopefully because of teachers like you we will in the future fulfill the dream of Martin Luther King. (**Curtis Williams**)

Thank you, Yolanda King, for your efforts to advance our minds and titillate our thoughts with your speech. I enjoyed the communion of so many souls, in one place engaged, in one event.

I'm a member of the Odyssey Program. We're a class of eager explorers on a journey towards knowledge. We were

**Curtis Williams**

given the opportunity to attend our "Achieving the Dream" speech. May I take a moment to express our thanks?

We are a University of Wisconsin congregation of critical thinkers. Our goal is the achievement of our dreams, so the title of your speech and the family name you bear were the motivating factors in our zeal to hear you speak.

Our goal has a collective purpose, to gather some fruit

**Molinda Henry**

for thought from your speech. Although I'm sure your speech "Achieving the Dream" has great merit in its content, your delivery in my opinion . . . was only hindered by the character portrayals and the stand up comedian type stage genre you chose. I just want you to know that "acting" was not necessary. The rise and fall of your voice as well as your chosen content can stand on its own without the antics. The insertion of several quotes from Maya Angelou and your celebrated father were well conceived.

Your stage performance was captivating once one looked past the "performance." . . . Sister, just relax and say what you have to say. The words will stand, as good sense and truth must. Thanks again for your time and effort. (**Molinda Henry**)

I was very interested and very intrigued with your speech. The way you added acting into your presentation made it even



Lorena Lovejoy

more interesting. One thing in particular that really caught my attention was when you said, "There are three types of people, the ones that watch things happen, the few that help things happen, and the ones that don't know what happened. Which one are you?" It made me think. I sure don't want to be one of the ones that just watch. Because of that speech, I look at life in a different way and think of ways I can help better people.

But one thing I didn't hear you mention was all of this violence in our schools—these young children and the decisions they're making. What do you suggest we do to stop the children of the future from taking innocent lives and spending the rest of their lives in prison? We should not have to worry about our kids and their mentors in what is supposed to be a safe place. I'm just curious to know your thoughts about the situation. I learned a lot that night and would love to hear another speech. I will make sure the next book I read is yours. (**Lorena Lovejoy**)

I would like to thank you for your great presentation. Your presentation really inspired a lot of the people that came and saw you that night. One question that I wanted to ask you was what made you who you are today? And why do you still go around the United States and spread your father's word? Something that tells me inside that you didn't say enough of your own words. But still, some of your words inspired me. I was really inspired by what you said about how everyone in this world is less than 1% different in DNA. I even knew that since I was seven years old. I never treated anyone any differently just



Nou Yang

because of the way they looked. Like you said, everyone must find things within themselves. . . . Thank you again for your time. (**Nou Yang**)

I am enrolled in the UW Odyssey Project, a course in the humanities made possible for adults like myself who everyday face economic barriers that keep



Roslyn Phillips

us from attaining higher education. I would like to tell you your presentation was "Off the Hook." I am honored to have been in your presence for this blessed event. My family as well as myself were in awe over your legacy. I can't thank my professors enough for making all that is happening in our lives come true. I am truly inspired and motivated even more to achieve my dream. I am interested in public speaking with a touch of drama. Any tips, please email me Roslyn_51@hotmail.com May God continue to bless you and lift you higher. **(Roslyn Phillips)**

I had the privilege of seeing your presentation at Edgewood College on October 11, 2006. I enjoyed your portrayal of Tamu the best because it speaks more to the modern day activists. Tamu reminds us that even though Dr. King is gone bodily, he lives within each of us as we effect change



Yasmin Horton

one person at a time. I like the reference you made to becoming the change that we want to see in the world, and also how so-called

tragedies are just cleverly disguised opportunities for growth.

You gave me so much to think about, like the fact that we are more alike than different, and backed it up with scientific data. Your different characterizations helped to understand what individuals might have felt, acted, thought during the particular event in time. I am glad that you came to Madison to share your feelings with us. I know that I am a better person as a result because I will continue to go to school and begin working to effect change where I live. Many thanks. **(Yasmin Horton)**

I was really excited to get



Tiffany Puccio

the chance to see your presentation. It's nice to know that considering you are the offspring of one of the greatest men that ever lived, that you struggled to find your own inner beauty as much as most of us "normal people." I agree with you when you said "it's easier to build monuments than to correct

the world." However, the moving things that you told us I thought were put on the backburner. . . . Everyone there knows about Rosa Parks. . . . I was more interested in what you have specifically done to help continue the dream of your father, not just what you did in your theatre production. Just because you were in a predominantly white area (and college) does not mean that we are ignorant to your cause. . . **(Tiffany Puccio)**

I truly enjoyed your presentation. I really was interested when you said that 1% of our DNA



Angela Williams

could be in someone that was sitting next to us a different color and race. So why are we not getting along? I wish that you could have spoken a little bit more about your own upbringing and how it affected you being Martin and Coretta's child, and also what you had to do to avoid a lot of things. Also, how is your life now since your mom has passed away? I would like to say thank you again for your presentation. **(Angie Williams)**

I attended your presentation

with the Odyssey class on October 11th at Edgewood College. The Odyssey class provides six college credits in the humanities to persons near the poverty level. The goal is to provide a chance for these students to continue their education and help break the cycle of poverty. We have several grants and private donors who help us continue this program.

Since attending the classes as Professor Auerbach's assistant, I have gained self-fulfillment in my job in that I feel I'm giving back a small part to our community. This has been a very rewarding experience.

Your objective that everyone has a choice touched me. I wish more persons would decide to make choices to make change happen, to continue moving forward in our world so there are no longer prejudices or racism. Everyone indeed deserves to be treated as an equal.

I hope each one of your speeches or presentations continues to touch more and more persons and that our future will provide a better world for all of us to live among one another. (**Diane Dennis**)

Everything you said was so important, but there is something you said that I will never forget, and that is about the power of choices. That was beautiful and powerful at the same time. That made me think about me a few years ago when I was in a situation where I knew I have to make a choice but I felt I could not make that choice. A friend of mine told me, "When you can not make your own choices, then you are not free." I had forgotten those words until that evening at your speech



Sandra Ramirez

when I heard them from you.

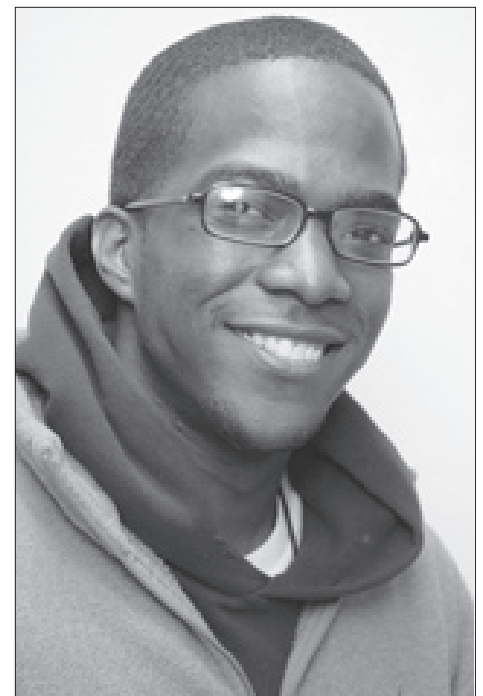
I'm sure that all the changes in history are because many people like your father, Dr. Martin Luther King, have made good choices for a better world. Your father, like many other people, chose to listen to their hearts, their inner voices. You did talk about that too. We could do better if we could make peace inside of us and then reflect that peace to the world.

I do admire your father for what he did. I'm from El Salvador, and I remember at school my teacher used to talk about Dr. King. I did not know who he was because it sounded like someone from far away and I was too little to understand the history. Now I live in America, and after reading "I Have a Dream" I do understand better. Thank you so much for that beautiful and inspiring speech you gave that evening. I learned from it. (**Sandra Ramirez**)

First and foremost, I want to thank you for taking time out

of your schedule to speak to us in Madison, Wisconsin. Though I must admit, once I heard that you were coming, I began to wonder why were you speaking at Edgewood College [a small private parochial school] of all places? Don't get me wrong, Edgewood College is an excellent private school. I was under the assumption that Madison could have accommodated you with a larger venue. More than likely, it had something to do with ticket sales and capacity, but you could have just as easily filled up one of the theatres here as well.

As far as your speech was concerned, I agreed with most of what you said. The best part was when you spoke about the less than



Cameron Daniels

one percent of gene differential present between any two given people. I wanted to ask several questions, but I did not get the chance. Pertaining to that "less than one percent" I mentioned earlier, why do you think that the lack of interest in integrating races is still

so prevalent (even after the works of your father and the Civil Rights Movement)? What institutions do you believe are responsible for preventing us from coexisting as a society? Also, if there are any, what do you think should be done to counteract them? Hopefully I will hear a response from you soon, and again, thank you. (**Cameron Daniels**)

Thank you for having the courage to stand up in front of the world and share your views on human behavior. A lot of my close friends and I agree wholeheartedly



TOP: Juanita Wilson and Yolanda King
BOTTOM: Emily Auerbach, Juanita Wilson, Pamela Holmes, Denise Maddox, and Yolanda King



Derrick Washington

with you. I can just imagine how you must feel coming from such a powerful family and constantly graded against it. It must be very hard for you to live in shadow of such greatness. Well, I respect you and your message and how you choose to present it. We all have a voice, and we should be able to relay our message using the gifts



we were given. We should not be “hated on” because of our past of who we are not. I realize you’re not your father, but you are a product of him, and in a way we all are.

One of my favorite quotes from you was “We either live together as brothers and sisters or perish together as fools.” I think that just about sums it up, the reason why we’re here, I mean. Humanity’s differences are less

than one percent. Huh, I never knew that. That’s amazing how we can tear up our whole world because of one percent.

I have faith in the fact that it won’t be long that the ignorant and blind lead the righteous and just. So keep up the good work and fight the good fight, and hopefully one day I’ll be able to join you. God bless, and God be with you always. (**Derrick Washington**)

When our teacher told us to keep an open mind about your presentation at Edgewood College, I thought that was going to be fairly easy but I can't say it was. From the time you walked in the room people gave you a standing ovation, which immediately gave



Corinthians Reese

an implication of some collective expectation. And you had said absolutely nothing at that point. The amount of pressure that must put on a person must be very overwhelming, to say the least. Now that I think about it, I would wager to say that most people don't understand the challenges that you go through in a year, or a month, or even for one day. And I wouldn't be worthy of your friendship if I didn't tell you, to be quite honest, I had my own reservations about what I expected you to share with us. Your father's integrity put us all—the whole world—on notice that we have to make sacrifices for the greater good of humanity.

I believe the youth of this country needs some sort of

direction. . . . Where exactly do we enforce and focus our power as a people? And what in God's name is the weapon of our power? How do we articulate what we so desire? Should we be writing the President of America about the war on Iraq? Or about the lack of relief to the families struggling from the attack of Katrina? Should we all strive to get into politics? Should we all strive to raise the bar on education or health care? Honestly we haven't a clue of where we should focus our energies to help the plight of humanity in this great nation of ours.

Perhaps we don't quite understand that the leader that we desperately seek is inside of us. Now there's a thought! . . . Perhaps there is some hope for us after all. **(Corinthians Reese)**

Your performance at Edgewood College in Madison, on October 11th, 2006 was thought



Anne Meyer

provoking, uplifting, entertaining and informational. It is certainly

not the type of presentation that I was expecting; yet I walked away from it with a stronger sense of what I want to achieve in my lifetime to help create social balance in our society.

I also left with a sense of anger and resentment towards a majority of the young, white, seemingly well to do student body in attendance. My resentment stemmed from the fact that they seem to have little to worry about, other than "when is my check from mom and dad going to arrive?" Certainly they have never had to worry about being discriminated against based solely on the color of their skin. They never had to deal with the emotional impact or the anger associated with walking into a store and (instead of being asked if you need help) being followed to assure that you won't steal anything, seeing someone go back to lock their car door after they see you or running to retrieve their purse when they see you walking down a store aisle. The list is endless.

I felt that most of them attended not because they were interested in the message, but as a way to gain credit for a class.

It also felt, as they passed by the bleachers and looked up through the corners of their eyes at the sea of brown faces, that they were saying to themselves, "Oh, those are the people she was talking about." They walked away from a performance with such an important message but were unable or unwilling to accept the fact that it is not about "those other people" but about all of us as a society. We don't live in a vacuum. What affects one will certainly affect all of us in time. **(Anne Meyer)**