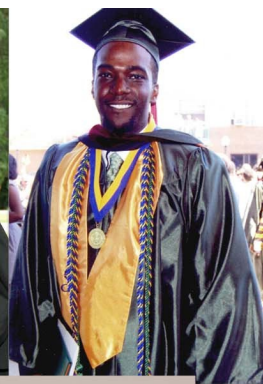


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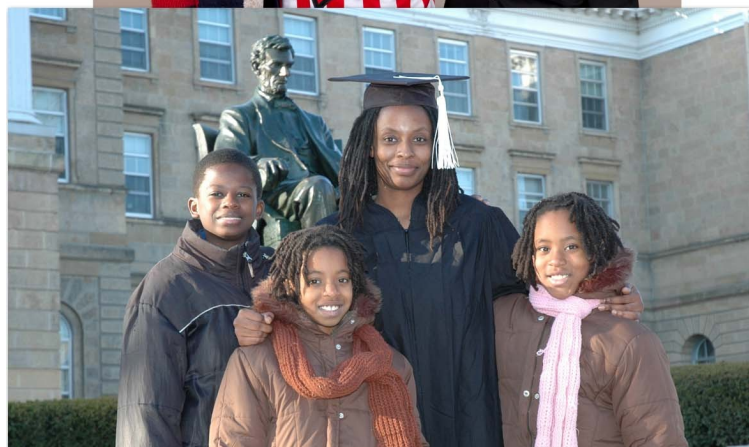
# ODYSSEY ORACLE

## WELCOME CLASS OF 2014



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# LETTERS FROM THE CLASS OF 2013 TO THE CLASS OF 2014



It is a great pleasure to write this letter. I hope you all love this class as much as I do/did, if not more.

This was one of the best years of my life. We all met great people inside of class and outside of it as well, from an actor named Baron Kelly to

Maxine Gordon, the widow of legendary jazz trumpeter Dexter Gordon. We went to events like football and basketball games, operas and orchestras. Listen and pay attention to everything that comes across in class. It is all valuable information.

The love we all shared is like having a family that's from different families. Trust me: every last one of them will become yours, and the classes of years prior will be part of your Odyssey community, too. **(Lewis Black)**



Do your BEST no matter what level that is! Take the time to smell the roses. Out of all of the applicants, you were selected to sit at this famous table of thirty. Make it count. Use it as a stepping stone to greatness! **(Jasmine Banks)**



The Odyssey class is the coolest and most unique class I have ever been to. You will have a lot of different thoughts in every class and in every week. Please trust me: in the next week, you'll get a new thought.

So remember: every class is leading you to your success, to open doors for your life. By the end of this class, you'll have satisfied and

complete thoughts and feelings. This is the best feeling ever, I'm telling you! Good luck and keep moving forward. **(Tanatnan Chaipang)**



I want to welcome you by saying congratulations, Class of 2013-2014. I know you might be nervous and excited. This class is a very good learning experience while you are on your journey to better your education.

If at times you think things get rough, don't quit. Anyway, Emily won't let you. How do I know? I experienced difficult when I was in 2012-2013, but I'm glad I stayed in class so that I could continue my education. Most of all, I want to lead my family and show my kids you can do anything you want if you put your mind to it. **(Tracey Cherry)**



I am so glad you made the choice to come and be interviewed and accepted into the program. Now the fun begins! You will learn and cry—a lot! You will befriend people you normally would walk past. You must first let go of judgment. The class will then be more than you

dreamed! Don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone because then there is much growth. You will learn there is more to you than what eyes can behold!

I am so thankful that I have met the 30 friends in class and so happy that I made the choice to better myself. If you can dream it, you can do it! Thanks to Odyssey I can and will get a degree like my children. Have fun. **(Eunie Conley)**



Be afraid, but not discouraged. Class assignments, discussions, and the rat race in the unfair game of life may make you overwhelmed. This is a trap you'll know all too well, but this time you can have the tools available to avoid such pitfalls.

I suggest you attend every class, homework complete or not, LISTEN attentively, reread the week's lesson to keep it fresh in your mind, and read anything and everything you can get your hands on.

When that seed of doubt keeps trying to plant itself in your brain and its next door neighbor named procrastination comes knocking, turn around, take a deep breath, and focus on your short-term goals. Remember, you were chosen for this program for a reason. Professor Emily saw something in you. There are a lot of people who get that phone call stating they weren't selected this time around, so don't waste time.

Do it for yourself. There's a difference between being selfish and self-preservation. You owe it to yourself to be the best person with the most knowledge you can get. No excuses. Not anymore. It's your move now. Make it count. **(China Moon Crowell)**



Congratulations and welcome aboard the Odyssey class. Now you are part of this amazing project where the staff will support you in many ways. For example, tutors will be available to help you with writing, reading, and homework. I am sure you will

not be disappointed because you are going in the right direction. Emily is a great professor, and she is always available to help with all academic material; therefore, you will find a short note in

each assignment: "Call ... if stuck." So you will not be alone throughout the two semesters.

I never let the obstacles and barriers defeat my dreams. For that reason, I believe it is never too late to go back to school; thus, continuing to pursue my dreams is a part of my personal goal. My advice to you is never give up on your dreams. Over all, I hope you learn as much as you can throughout the two semesters. **(Angelica Cuahuey)**



I'm writing you to inform you that you are in for the experience of a lifetime. All the things that have held you back before are gone. This is a new start towards your bright future ahead. Professor Emily chose you for a reason. I believe she saw

something in you that you may not even know existed, or the true potential you have inside of you. The 30 students you meet on the first day of class will become friends for a lifetime. I'm sure you'll learn as much from them as they'll learn from you. It's your time to shine.

Congratulations! Good luck! You are blessed. **(Sharisse Hancock)**



Congratulations on being accepted into the Odyssey Project! I'm sure when you got that call from Emily, you were so happy and excited. Odyssey is a journey that will take you to a place you won't ever want to leave. This course will change

your life and should motivate you to fulfill your dreams. It won't be easy, but I will stress this to you, and that is not to quit. Press forward because you can do anything you put your mind to. Again, congratulations and enjoy the ride on this fantastic voyage to knowledge.

**(Dominique Haskins)**





Keep pushing no matter how tough things get. This class will definitely be a turning point in your life. It seems whenever you try to do good in life and make changes for the better, that's when the Devil tries to put every obstacle that he can in your path

to make things difficult. Class of 2014, I would like for you to know that things will get tough and obstacles will arise, but giving up is too easy. So keep pushing. Open up your mind and absorb all the teachings that you are about to receive. From Socrates to Dr. Martin Luther King, everything you receive will be life altering. (**Fantasia House**)



Hear ye! Hear ye! Attention, Kings and Queens! (That means you, too!) Please pay close attention to what you're about to hear. Turn on your thinking caps. Leave your troubles at the door. Have no fear because you are so very welcome here. Odyssey is going

to make you think. It will challenge you. You will have questions you need to ask. You may think you know what you know, but you will awaken and realize that you don't know everything.

You now know something new. You will be compelled to get up and do something about it. That's when your Odyssey experience will have its full completeness, when at the end you get up on that stage and know you can do what you set your mind to, making you the Kings and Queens you are meant to be. God speed! (**Carrie Llerena Sesma**)

Today you are taking a stand. As you begin your journey, I would like you to take the time to think about where you have been and where you want to go in life. Enjoy every day you have in Odyssey because this will one day be a stepping stone.



Open your mind. When times get hard, keep pushing. When you feel like giving up, stay strong. You can do the impossible. You can make a stand for your life, present and future. Keep the faith. Keep your head to the sky and your mind in the books. Good luck!

(**Derrick McCann**)



I want to welcome you to the first day of a very new and unfamiliar beginning.

My first day of the Odyssey Project, I was nervous and a little scared because I had no idea what would come next. As I learned

what we would be doing in the class, I got down right intimidated. But you are here for a reason—because you wanted to be. Enjoy the ride because it goes quickly.

The people in my class and the wonderful professors that take the time to come in and teaching you things are irreplaceable. Times will get tough, whether it be a personal crisis or just being overwhelmed by classwork. Keep moving forward. Show up and learn. I can tell you this class will take you places you'd never thought you'd go. I wish you luck on your odyssey.

(**Mary Millon**)



This journey "Odyssey" is about you! It's your opportunity to discover the precious gift that lies inside of you and will lead you to success.

Allow yourself to trust, believe, and honor your already acquired knowledge, understanding, and wisdom to teach and help one another grow. Be open and apply

patience when things seem to be outside your grasp, for it is then—at that moment—when clarity of thought and vision will take you to the heights you are destined to reach.

Lastly, I will say to you that your pursuit of knowledge must be combined with the tools and desire to apply that knowledge. Be true to yourself! Kamia/Peace (**James Morgan**)



This year for you is special. Why? It's special because you are at the start of something special and you don't even know it. I didn't know what I was signing up for, but now that I know, I would like to share my opinion with you about my Odyssey.

Don't be afraid to ask questions; you can do that here! I came into this class with a closed mind about slavery, racism, and poverty. Why? I had no idea of the depth of confusion that I had endured over my years of existence. I was taught to hate how my ancestors and I were treated. I was even taught to hate myself because of the paths in life that I had chosen or because of the paths that were given to me. Well, I'm proud to announce that after my Odyssey through "Allegory of the Cave," Martin Luther King, Langston Hughes, *Raisin in the Sun*, and classes from September to May, I'm learning to love again.

(**LoLita Phillips**)



This letter is to all thirty of the Odyssey Project Class of 2014. I want you to know that this class will change your life.

You're coming to a class where you are in a family setting. The Odyssey Project family is your family for life. This is the first

day of your Odyssey Wednesday Night Delight.

Enjoy each time you meet at the South Madison Library for Odyssey class. Please open up and enjoy learning about some great people. There will be literature classes about William Blake, women writers like Toni Morrison, Walt Whitman, and Frederick Douglass. I know you will love Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and the art history tour of the Chazen Museum of Art. (**Jovenus Price Pierce**)



Welcome, Class of 2014, to the Odyssey program. This is a place where you will gain new realities and knowledge, and you will read lots of books. OK, I hope the last part did not scare you. You will actually enjoy these books! At the start, you may be

nervous, like I was. But as you look around you will see others just as nervous. This is the beauty of this program: everyone will be in one accord. Now is someone is out of place, then everyone as a group will bring it all back together. There will be some challenges and downfalls within the course of your journey, but DON'T GIVE UP!

Every time you feel a little discouraged, remember what brought you here in the beginning. Remember those around you because they will become your family. You are not alone in this. Those before you and after you depend on your achievement.

I had great pleasure being a part of this program. I hope my expression through my words and stories will only help you and those in the future.

So once again: DON'T GIVE UP! This is a lifetime opportunity. Be a blessing within yourself to be a better you! You deserve greatness in your life, and the Odyssey Project is just the beginning of it. (**Britney Sinclair**)



Welcome to your journey. Be proud of yourself, for you have taken a step that most people don't. You will be amazed at your growth this year. As we all know, things and the world around us continue to go 'round, and there may be roadblocks or delays. Just

know that there is always someone, especially Emily, who will be more than willing to help you along the way. At times you may get discouraged, but push forward, for it will be worth it in the end. Remember your future is worth it. (**Patrice Smith**)



You never know what your journey will be or how it will end up, but you have to start somewhere. If you don't start somewhere, you can't get anywhere. Everyone has obstacles; everyone looks at life a different way. Odyssey is a new

beginning, a new journey, where you can start fresh!

I cannot say this too many times: life can bring you down. It can literally break you to pieces, and you have to continue to pick up and try again. You may be at the point where you close your eyes and feel like you can't anymore! But when you close your eyes and you think about all the stress, pain, and hardship, open your eyes and have the persistence to move forward. Remember "you can't get put through anything you can't handle." Odyssey is the best experience. They are here for you to help you grow to be better and succeed! You can be anyone you want to be. Let this be your start, here and now! Your new journey! Don't let anyone or anything get in your way to stop you from making something new for you! Keep your head up, work hard, and NEVER GIVE UP. It's worth it! (**Amber Turner**)



Welcome to the Odyssey Class of 2013-2014. This is a wonderful journey and opportunity for life changing. Most of the people have been changed by this class in a good way. You are a part of something bigger than you think.

During this journey you will doubt yourself, find strength you didn't know you had, and use parts of your mind, heart, and soul that you may have wanted to forget or didn't know were there. Please don't give up, no matter how hard the obstacles are, but aim higher in everything you do. I wish you all the best throughout the journey. (**Nancy Wambua**)



What a ride I just took on the Odyssey express! One day I realized that I was locked in a cave. In that cave, it was dark, empty of life and movement. It was shackled from neck down, naked, cold, and lost. I just sat there and sat there doing nothing

about it. Then one day the shackles came off and I was free. I stepped out on an unfamiliar path named Odyssey.

As I walked, I met a lot of others—some I met in physical form and some I was read to, such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, Robert Browning, William Shakespeare, August Wilson, Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Thomas Jefferson, and many more. They took me on a journey I would never forget. Now I will have them take your hand and lead you down that same path. (**Tosumba Welch**)

Welcome to the Class of 2014. You ought to feel real good about yourselves. You've gone through the application process and been chosen as one of the thirty students in this class.



As you probably know, you are in for the experience of your life. This experience will change you from who and what you are. I'm not going to tell exactly what that change is, but I will say this: if you push yourself hard to do better than you've ever done, you will experience you in a way that is totally unique.

I speak for the whole Odyssey family (and believe we are a family) when I say welcome. I'll see you one of these Wednesdays and definitely at your graduation in May of 2014. **(Munroe Whitlock)**



This is the start to a bright future. This class will challenge you to greatness, and with all the help and support from teachers you will succeed. Each and every one of you will be here surrounded by your fellow classmates for two full semesters. So take the chance to

get to know each other. We are all different but all want to succeed. **(Brandon Williams)**



You don't know me yet but you will. I am your sister and I travel with you on your Odyssey, just as the brothers and sisters before me did on mine. Set for yourself a goal and then strive for it. Let it be known that the goal you have set for yourself has begun to unfold,

and let it be your story told in a way that only you can. We are all with you and within your reach. That's what sisters and brothers do: teach. So as you embark on your Odyssey, know that like a dream it is attainable. **(Michelle Whitman)**



Don't be scared! Sit back and enjoy this Odyssey Ride. Come to class prepared to listen and ready to learn. It's going to seem hard in the beginning, but it will get better because you will notice that everyone's here for the same reasons. You will feel a sense of

worth and will find your place. Everything you thought you couldn't do you will be doing. So sit back and enjoy the Odyssey Ride.

**(El-Rasheedah Wilson)**





# I LOVE ODYSSEY

BY JUANITA WILSON '07



I love Odyssey because before Odyssey I always felt like an outsider when I was among a group of people. I now feel that I can contribute to the conversation and feel that I am no longer a slow learner. I feel that I can accomplish whatever I set out to do. I am happy most of the time now.

I am going to be a lifelong learner.

I feel that I am not alone anymore if I need help with a problem. I feel that I am loved by my teachers and classmates. I feel that life is beautiful this year and the rest of my life because of Odyssey. I feel that there will always be help available to me. I feel blessed.

# MY JOURNEY

BY RENÉ ROBINSON '08



My journey started about eight months ago,  
 How I would fare, I really didn't know.  
 Reading, writing for sure there would be,  
 But from six to nine, that I couldn't see.  
 The professors were there for all to meet,  
 Outlining History, Humanities, and Philosophy.  
 I was scared but I didn't know why,  
 Maybe it was the thirty years that had quickly gone by.  
 Getting acclimated was a little rough at first,  
 But soon thereafter to read books I would thirst.  
 See, prior to Odyssey, I didn't read,  
 All the info I got was from the TV.  
 But things have changed  
 Mainly the screen  
 From the TV to the computer  
 I'm now a Google Queen.  
 My journey, my journey,  
 Who would have thought  
 Would be the beginning of me being taught,  
 Being taught the importance of opening my mind,  
 Instead of sitting around wasting my time.  
 Thank you, Odyssey, for choosing me,  
 I've found knowledge,  
 My greatest discovery

# DON'T QUIT

BY JOE ROBINSON '04

My advice to the new Odyssey class is don't quit. No matter how hard it gets, don't quit.

When you get off work at 5:30, and you only have 30 minutes to get the kids situated and get to class, don't quit.

When you get stuck in the middle of writing a paper or doing a project, don't quit.

When you find out that your father has cancer and has to have surgery and treatment, don't quit.

When you have circumstances that occur that make you miss a class and you get behind on your work, don't quit.

When you feel as if you're not getting anything out of a particular subject, don't quit. When people tell you you are wasting your time, don't quit. When your car breaks down, and it's twenty below outside, and the only way to get here is on the city bus, don't quit. When your spouse is complaining that your five children are driving her crazy every Wednesday night, don't quit. When one of your

classmates makes you feel stupid for voicing your opinion, don't quit. When your boyfriend or girlfriend accuses you of cheating on them because you had to turn your cell phone off during class, don't quit.

And if you get to the point where you just can't find any more motivation to force yourself to keep coming to this class, my advice is to call Emily, and I guarantee you that she won't let you quit! There were many times that I wanted to just give up, but Emily would not let me. She believed in us more than some of us believed in ourselves.

Finally, I would like to say that, the first couple of weeks, I was in class trying to figure out, what is the catch? Why are these people offering us this course for free? There must be a catch. I found out what the catch was. Each one of the teachers was trying to trick us into believing that our lives would somehow be better if we completed this Odyssey class and then go on to graduate from college. I guess I must be a little naïve, because I fell for it, hook, line, and sinker.



*Joe Robinson with classmate Tineisha Scott, who earned her Master's Degree at Edgewood College*



*Joe Robinson with his family*

# SPECIAL ODYSSEY MOMENTS



Channel 15 news reporters with Terry Hart '12 and Josephine Loyra '08; author Sonia Nazario with Beatriz Mairena Kellman ('12); Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson with Oroki Rice '07, Ivonne Ramos '08, and Kegan Carter '04; former UW Chancellor Biddy Martin flanked by Madison Police officers Anthony Ward '04 and Corey Saffold '06; Sesame Street actor Roscoe Orman with Marilyn Sims' 06





TV personality Tavis Smiley and scholar Cornel West taking Odyssey students out to dinner during their Poverty Tour; poet Nikki Giovanni with Stephanie Pamperin '11; scholar Henry Louis Gates with Kegan Carter '04 and Josephine Lorya Ozulamoi '08; Yolanda King (daughter of the late Martin Luther King, Jr.) with Emily Auerbach, Juanita Wilson '07, Pamela Holmes '04, and Denise Maddox '04; former Channel 3 news anchor Katy Sai with Juanita Wilson '07 and Annette Bland '06