

Odyssey Oracle

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Letters to the Class of 2013.....3

I Love Odyssey

by Juanita Wilson '07.....7

My Journey

by René Robinson '08.....7

Help Wanted.....8

My Odyssey

by Denise Maddox '04.....9

Search Engines

by Molinda Henry '07.....10

Special Odyssey Moments.....11

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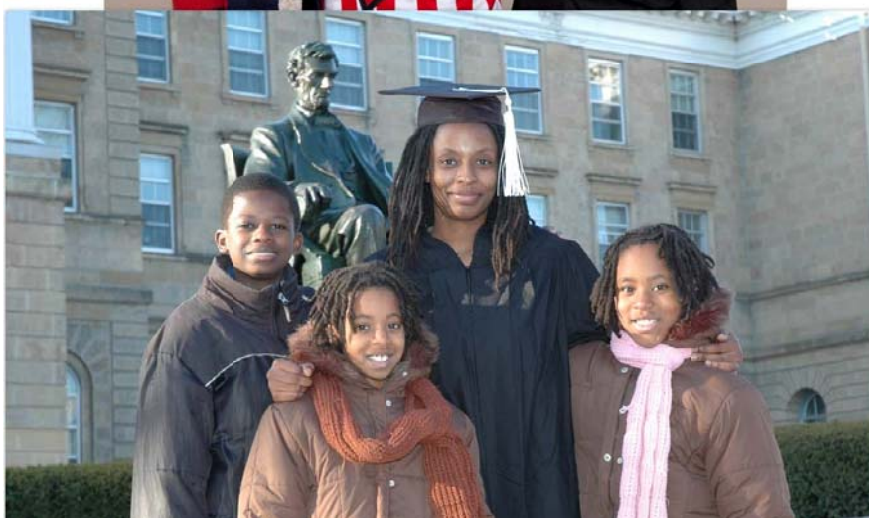
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*Welcome,
Class of 2013*





Graduates of the Odyssey Project have gone on to earn degrees from Madison College, UW Madison, Edgewood College, Upper Iowa University, and other institutions, have won scholarships and awards, and have gotten accepted into graduate school. Alumni pictured on pages 1-2 are Josephine Lorya Ozulamoi '08, Cameron Daniels '07, Brian Benford '07, Kegan Carter '04, Anthony and Quintella Ward '04, Mary Wells '07, Molinda Henry '07, Billie Kelsey '12, Sherri Bester '08, Tineisha Scott '04, Lorena Lovejoy and Katy Farrens '07, and Shanita Lawrence '09.

Letters from the Class of 2012 to the Class of 2013

Welcome to an Odyssey ride of knowledge and adventure. This class is a stepping stone to a journey to the top of a



beautiful mountain of incredible accomplishments. You will learn about famous people and their journeys to the road of success. You will get to know Socrates, Shakespeare's Macbeth, and Plato. You will read poetry by William Wordsworth, Maya Angelou, and Emily Dickinson. You will walk with Dr. Martin

Luther King, Jr., Henry David Thoreau, and Mahatma Gandhi. You will utilize your U.S. history book and English/grammar books to enhance your ability to complete assigned writing assignments. The road to success is not easy, but you have wonderful staff and tutors to guide you along the way. You may encounter bumps in the road, but don't get discouraged. The prize at the end of the road is worth its weight in gold. Climb aboard this Odyssey train of knowledge and enjoy the ride! **(Marcia Brown)**

You're about to take a ride, whether you're ready or not. You can decide right now if you're going to be a passenger or the driver. Afraid to take control, but still really excited, I



called shotgun right away. I wanted to see everything coming at me and going on around me. I learned a lot from my fellow passengers: the knowledgeable professors and friendly classmates. My favorite times were when we'd pick up a hitchhiker, like

William Blake or Walt Whitman. I'd spend hours listening to their stories and learning about their lives. I have to say, this has been one road trip I will never forget; I only wish I would've been ready to drive sooner. Now the question is: are you ready for a ride? **(Katie Pruitt)**

This may very well be the most important step that you're taking towards higher education. Life does not always present people like us with the chance at college. Many of us are coming out of bad circumstances or are still experiencing them as we speak. Whatever your struggles or whatever unhealthy chains bind you to the past, this is the time to break them and begin your Odyssey these next two semesters. The work will be challenging, the conversations will be intellectually engaging, and the food



will be plenty. Odyssey is now your home even long after you have graduated. You are now surrounded by likeminded students with caring staff and instructors who represent the best of UW-Madison, who are all here for YOU. I have never been talented with letter writing, and I am usually blunt and precise in regard to subject matter like this. All I can truly say is . . . don't quit! **(Brandon McCarey)**



The year was a fast-paced class. I hope you enjoy the ride. We started our journey by traveling to different lands and traveling through time. We tried to understand people and their lives, seeing it through their eyes. You will make new and interesting friends. You will laugh, cry, wonder, and question life in general. It will be an eye opener, and you will learn. So get set, pack your books, and have a wonderful experience. **(Samantha East)**

First and foremost I would like to say congratulations on your acceptance into the Odyssey Program. Some of you may feel nervous or doubt your ability to succeed in this class. Don't worry: your professors will make sure you feel comfortable on this cruise. You all have your reasons for why you have joined the Odyssey journey. Maybe you want to be a better student, family member, or learner; whatever your reasons, your professor has already seen



your potential. As you get to know your classmates and understand yourself a little better, make sure to stay positive, open minded, and encouraging to those around you. Never settle for less than your best. Your professors will not accept anything less from you because that is unfair to your families, your coworkers, your loved ones, and yourself. Remove your doubts and fears; replace them with an eagerness to learn. Remember your goals for why you joined the Odyssey; bring them with you every Wednesday evening. Trust your professors and classmates, and you will be a success. Good luck, Odyssey 2013! **(Run Barlow)**

Odyssey is a wonderful journey that you can take because it helps you un-disguise yourselves from the disguise you have been wearing in life. It helps you find your way out of the cave you have been hiding in. It helps you find your voice. And the staff and the volunteers are wonderful. You will look forward to Wednesday nights like my 29 classmates and I did. Take this opportunity and use it to your best ability because you will get a lot of satisfaction out of it, like I did. Congratulations to the Class of 2013. Embrace this journey because I guarantee it will change your whole life. **(Nkechi Johnson)**



I hope you are sitting down! What I'm about to tell you is that you've won the jackpot. Now the amount you've won is determined by you. Congrats! You've been chosen to be a member of the exclusive UW Odyssey Project, run since 2003 by Emily Auerbach and other esteemed professors. Now during your 30 weeks of class you will undergo a



major makeover in your thought process and in the way you approach things in your life. It's important for you to be focused and ready to work. During your wonderful journey you will study and learn about many important people, such as Langston Hughes, Martin Luther King, Walt

Whitman, Socrates, and many, many more spectacular people. It's important to be your warm and loving self.

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

First I want to congratulate every one of you for becoming an Odyssey student. I was once like you, just finding out I was accepted. The first day I thought this class was the same, just like all other regular classes I had in school . . . but every single day I came to Odyssey class changed me—in a good way. I figured out my weaknesses and strong points, and the class became my family. I promise you that this Odyssey class, the teachers, and you yourself will help you find yourself. **(Linda Thao)**



Brace yourself, for this is going to be one of the most exciting times in your life; it will be an awesome experience of growth and development. The professors will challenge you academically in every area of your thoughts and ideas, and your mind will be stretched beyond recognition. You will thank them for this. Last but not least, watch out for that igniting love flowing out from the professors. It's unbelievable. I can't even explain it; you just have to see it for yourself. **(Eugene Smalls)**



You are now a part of something much bigger than yourselves; something that requires you to find and discover yourself in order to be successful. During this journey, you will doubt yourself, find strength you didn't know you had, and delve into parts of your mind, heart, and soul that you may have wanted to forget or didn't know were there. Find comfort in the fact that 29 others are experiencing the journey with you. Collectively you will



cry, laugh, get angry, be proud, and hopefully surprise yourselves along the way. Odyssey moments will start to stack up in your memory, like books on a shelf. During your time away from class, you will put some away and grab others when you are out in the world searching for answers.

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

Don't be afraid as you will have guides on this journey to help illuminate the darkness that may have been overwhelming. Emily will light the way and provide warmth and encouragement. Coach will translate words that may seem like secret codes at first glance. Soon you will be able to decode them on your own everywhere you go! Diane and René will make sure you have all the provisions you need to get there. The Oracle will document your journey. Read it from cover to cover as it contains important insight. The professors and special guests will serve as emissaries, bringing forth valuable treasures. The debates and discussions that will ensue during these visits will

sustain and provide you with knowledge that you can later share with family and friends.

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

I am Beatriz and I'm from Peru in South America. I had been struggling with English as a Second Language. When I started in the Odyssey Project class, I found a classroom with multicultural students of different ages with a lot of energy for learning and very kind professors eager to help us. Odyssey and my classmates offered support and encouraged me to find my way in the new world. All of them became like my family in the USA.



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

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

To a friend, to a brother,
No matter religion, no matter color
The Odyssey Program is like no other
Searching to afford school, search no further
Because the Odyssey Program offers free
Education to husbands, wives, sons, daughters,
And even great grandfathers and mothers,
One big happy family.
On that note if I were you, I would be like me
and take advantage of the opportunity

to not only learn for free,
but also become a part of a loving family.
We love, we care, we laugh,
And we even cry together
Like birds of a feather
We always fly together.

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



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

Be prepared to be amazed, excited, and a little bit scared for what you are about to experience. Your life is about to change in ways that the Odyssey Project's brochure doesn't even begin to describe. That your life will be changed is a guarantee. Your opinion of yourself and your talents will also change, and places that you thought were stuck will become unstuck. Whatever occurs with you individually, however, will be positive and will move your life forward if you let it. How you look at yourself as a student and a learner will never be the same. You should expect the challenging homework and interesting classes to assist you in your growth. I recommend that you commit to the tasks set before you and don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask questions or get help. Count your blessings and prepare to move forward. You deserve it. **(Billie Kelsey)**



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

At times your past will scream lies to your ears. You may hear, "What are you doing? This is too hard! Give up!



You're not good enough." These thoughts have come to me and other alumni as well. Please remember these are lies. You are not alone, and you have support if you ask. Odyssey is a chance to learn that you can learn, that you can make new and better choices, all in an environment that

is full of love and no judgments. You are required to try, to ask questions, and to ask for help; then success will be yours. (**Yetta Harris**)



This program is what your life's missing. Everything you know now will change for the better. This program will give you the jumpstart to greatness that your life is needing. Odyssey is the key to every door that has closed on you. You will become a better reader, writer, and student. Every

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

Applying to the Odyssey Project is the best decision you will make, and you will always cherish it in your lifetime. Congratulations for being chosen to be part of this life-changing experience. For you see, Odyssey is a transforming power jet that stimulates your mind to think



big. The Odyssey Project is not only interested in you getting a degree but also interested in your welfare and seeing you excel in your endeavors. The wonderful professors devote their time every Wednesday night to enrich you with

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

Congratulations! Welcome to our Odyssey family. Consider yourself blessed. You have been accepted on an express train that takes you on a ride to the world of knowledge. You will visit Socrates, the famous philosopher, Frederick Douglass, the slave that escaped to freedom. You'll learn about art and music and poetry, with some important facts about history. And when you're done, you'll think differently. Your vocabulary will grow, and you'll want to show everyone you know. There are big words that will cause your mind to swell, and some that will make you say what the hell! Emily, Coach, Jean, and Gene, with Craig Werner teaching history, wow, what a team.

Emily saw something in you, she's giving you a test, so work hard and give her your best. Your passion for learning is the key, and when you're done you'll earn six credits from Odyssey. And you can use these credits toward your future degree. So please work hard from the very start because you are a part of Odyssey. You'll write and read and your confidence will soar, then you'll be transformed and want even more. I've always thirsted for a good book, and after the reading in Odyssey I'm truly hooked on Emily Dickinson and Langston Hughes; I now realize only half my mind got used. For the last eight months Odyssey professors have quenched my thirst for more, I can take a test and get a perfect score. You were chosen because you're hungry for knowledge, and if you work hard you'll



feel strong and empowered. Odyssey professors will feed you with knowledge, and before you know it you'll be off to college. They are dedicated and will expect the same dedication from you, and when you're done you'll have a better education. You can expect to laugh and cry with tears of joy, and play with big words like a toy.

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

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



*René will be
volunteering time to
help encourage and
motivate Odyssey
students in the Class
of 2013*

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



Basically, that's you.

That's right. You are the staff of Odyssey Oracle. You're going to write about yourselves and each other. You're going to report on what takes place in this classroom all year (and what happens in your heads and hearts as a result).

You're going to explore the humanities together and in this newsletter. You're going to give testimony for the students who will follow you in years to come. Your Oracle editors, Emily Auerbach and her daughter Beth McMahon, in consultation with former Oracle editor Kegan Carter '04, will help you make it happen—and make sure it happens. Emily will be here each week, and you can contact her between classes for assistance or questions.

The Odyssey Oracle will capture your feelings and thoughts and chart your progress

on the journey. At the beginning of each class, you'll receive the latest edition of this newsletter. We'll publish your essays and poems so that we can all share them. You can review concerts, plays, lectures, and movies.* The Oracle will circulate to other people, too: graduates of previous Odyssey classes, people interested in the program, and anyone you'd like to share it with. If you don't want something you write to be printed in the Oracle, just say so by writing "don't share" on the paper. We'll always respect your wishes (although we might try to change your mind).

Here's your chance to earn a byline in the big OO. Pick a category, create a topic, clear it with Emily, and start writing.

*We may be able to arrange tickets for you if you give us advanced notice of an event you'd like to attend.

My Odyssey by Denise Maddox '04

My name is Denise Maddox, and I am one of twenty-four people who were the first graduates of the UW Odyssey Project, Class of 2003-2004. I would never have thought that classes in the humanities would change my life forever. I mean “forever” without exaggeration because Writing, Art History, American History, Literature, and Philosophy transported me into a new world, where written words came alive and made magic inside my heart. An odyssey is a life-altering journey of discovery. Like Odysseus in Homer’s Odyssey, I too started out on a life-changing journey. The boat was our classroom at the Harambee Center in South Madison, and the reading materials (books by Shakespeare, Plato, Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, and so many more) were the rough seas we had to travel through. In each and every port we landed were wonderful lessons to learn. The Odyssey crew consisted of the UW professors and staff members who gave us supplies to maintain this one-year exploration of learning. The teachers were the compasses that directed us through these rough seas and guided us safely to our destination.

The journey started in September with William Blake’s poems from *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. We learned about a chimney sweeper who was a little child sold into slavery by his parents. As Professor Emily read the poem, tears rolled down my face. As an African American, I understand the bitterness of slavery. The poem went on to light a fire within my soul. I have been victorious in freedom. My freedom included wanting to better myself through education. This was the first time I realized how words can move you forever, even if the original writer is gone from this world.

WOW! The transformation had started, and there was no turning

back from this course. I wasn’t alone on this journey. Twenty-four minds started to look at the world with different perspectives. Indeed with each lesson taught, the fire of knowledge began to burn brighter and brighter. For example, my classmate Tiffany Smith said, “I always wanted and have the will to succeed. The Odyssey class pulled it all out of me, letting me know I could do it.” Another classmate named Joseph Hurst said, “I was fortunate to have been a part of the first Odyssey class. One of the great benefits of this class was studying the humanities. I have always loved history and knew about African-American philosophers, but through the Odyssey class I gained a great appreciation for the Greek philosophers, like Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates.”

Jean Feraca of Wisconsin Public Radio had heard about a free humanities program for adults near the poverty level started by Earl Shorris in New York. She asked Emily Auerbach, Professor of English, to set up and direct a program here in Madison. During the first-ever Odyssey Project graduation in May 2004, Jean Feraca quoted a poem by James Wright called “Today I was so happy, so I made this poem”: “An eagle rejoices



in the oak trees of heaven, / Crying / This is what I wanted.” The reason she quoted this poem was that the graduation was a confirmation and fulfillment of a dream: that courses in the Humanities offered to students who wanted to go to college and never had a chance could transform lives and lift them out of poverty. This was only the beginning. Our class laid the foundation for future Odyssey Project classes. Graduates of the UW Odyssey Project receive six credits in English.

Just months after starting their journey, members of the new Odyssey Class 2004-2005 showed signs that a transformation had started. Several students wrote about the emotional experiences they went through during the first weeks of the course. Terry Fox reported, “This class is thought-provoking. It increases your awareness of the history of man along with the origins of many current systems we use as well as language. This class teaches me to look farther, to read about and most importantly develop my own thoughts and opinions.” James Robinson, whose brother Joe graduated from the Odyssey Class 2003-2004, said, “I feel different because I did not know that I would look forward to coming to class. I enjoy this time in class because it is an escape for me, an escape for a few hours that lets me explore my mind.” Other classmates reported similarly enriching experiences.

Earl Shorris, who founded the original Clemente Course in the Humanities, a model for the Odyssey Project, explained in his book *Riches for the Poor*, “I like watching people having a second birth.” His statement is true—I am one of the examples of his words. “Rebirth” is the perfect word to describe what happened to me. I was like a caterpillar eating everything in sight, yet I was never full until I found focused learning in the Odyssey Project. The knowledge I received helped me finally transform into a multicolored butterfly. I spread my wings into the air to dry, and now I’m flying. I am pursuing a degree at MATC and I am on the Dean’s List. I hope eventually to transfer to the UW-Madison and earn a degree in writing and literature. The world might still see me as being poor, with little money and material wealth, but I am rich with knowledge and wisdom.

Search Engines by Molinda Henry ‘07

I am traveling on this Odyssey, and every day since embarking I have changed. I have learned, I have grown, and I have writhed back and forth, side to side, like waves on the ocean, from growing pains.

Before this class I didn’t consider myself a reader, and now I can’t wait to get my hands on the next book. I carry the dictionary we received on the first day of class everywhere I go.

There is no word created yet for the process that began the day I was accepted as a student in Odyssey. Someday, like Google, there will be a new word added to our vocabulary that can describe the search engine that Emily and Gene and Jean and Craig and Marshall, Diane, and my most highly regarded classmates have helped me become.

Search Engine. Yes. That is what I said. I have become a search engine, but from a different perspective. I am now the “little engine that could” search for knowledge, truth, and wisdom. And I endeavor to become a proficient search engine, objective, critical, and hungry for more. Thanks to this Odyssey with these Titans, I too have found my task: To Learn and Be Free.



Special Odyssey Moments

Over the years of the UW Odyssey Project, students have taken part in special moments with distinguished visitors.



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