

Odyssey Dracule

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*Welcome
Class of 2009!*



A few letters from Class of 2008 to Class of 2009

Stay strong, knock those walls down, and keep stepping. . .



The best feeling for me was when I brought my Frederick Douglass book

home and my son smiled and said, "Ma, you're gonna love that book." Boy, was he right, and God knows I didn't want to read it. But once I got started, I couldn't put it down. I read it all in one night.

What a wonderful journey I've begun, and I'm glad to see you all starting yours.

(Candy Gonzalez)

I remember the first night of class and being unsure of what was ahead of me. I cannot even put into words what the Odyssey experience is.



There will be reading and writing, laughter and tears. One thing is sure. You will finish this class a different person than when you came in. **(Mandisa Hayes)**

You will be changed. I knew that I would feel different, but I had no idea the extent of the transformation. Stay focused, don't



give up, and just embrace the new family you are about to gain. **(Sheriah Quartey)**

Are you ready? Are you ready to receive power? If not, get ready because you are about to enter into the mind



opening, self

empowering world of knowledge.

Knowledge is power—power which will allow you to liberate yourself from whatever obstacle or issue may seemingly be the cause that has not allowed you to seek and reach the goals that linger deep down in the depth of your soul.

Get ready! For you are about to become the catalyst for your family and friends, linking them to newer heights and greater possibilities.

(René Robinson)

Welcome, Odyssey class of 2008-2009.



Welcome to the first day of your new life. Sit down, open your mind, and be ready for change!

Lost dreams will be awakened, feelings and emotions will erupt, and you will again take hold of the reins of your future.

(John Shields)

Odyssey is the real deal. Don't be tempted to think that Odyssey is six cushy credits given out to people who've experienced difficulties to help them feel good about themselves. You will earn



every single credit. On top of that, you are earning them at one of the most respected universities on the planet.

You've been given an opportunity of a lifetime. For the Odyssey seed to take root, it helps for you to know that you are bigger than your life experiences. Like an old abandoned building with memories of life's difficulties, my life was littered with the vestiges of a difficult childhood and a litany of failure trophies. Despite all of the "going nowhere" choices I made, I still had that "going somewhere" hope. I hope you feel a fire of desire burning in your belly: a desire to learn. A bit of discontent with your life could be useful; it's what got me to apply for Odyssey.

Your class, no doubt, comes from all walks, races, genders, religions, and situations. Some of you will be tempted to quit, skip an assignment, and maybe even give up on yourself. Don't do it. Don't give up. Have faith in Emily and your other professors. You were specifically chosen for this program because of who you are. Emily saw in you what you might not see in yourself.

OK, then, get ready for the ride of your lifetime! You will never be the same after this, I promise! Good luck.

(Kevin Schoen)

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.



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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.



Two Poems By Jeffery McCarroll '08

Doing Time

What of a man that commits a crime?
Should he give his life for a time?
While sitting in time should he gain an education?
Or does society fear he'd rule a nation?
Should he live for free off you and me?
Or should he suffer for eternity?

What of a man that commits a crime?
I say remember the man is doing time
In his body and his mind.
This will haunt him
Until the end of time!
Punishment eternally!

Physical freedom is easy to obtain
But freedom of the mind can drive a man insane.

My Odyssey

I am a man of many thoughts among my peers.
My deep thoughts cause most of my tears.
A peaceful place I search for in my mind
But in my mind I'm still doing time.
My escape came on an Odyssey I took
And for the most part in a book.
I escape with Walt, Langston, and Emily for weeks.
Socrates, Martin, and Thoreau made me think.
Oh, and wait, my Odyssey is not complete
Finding freedom and peace in pictures I see
Frida has been my favorite for weeks.
Art has become a newfound wealth
Because in the art work I can find
A place for myself.
Aw, freedom of the mind
And in this new freedom, My Odyssey
Shall continue till the end of time.





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 writing teachers, Marshall Cook and Emily Auerbach, will help you make it happen—and make sure it happens. They'll be here each week, and you can contact them 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. The *Oracle* will circulate to other people, too: graduates of the first five 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 Marshall, Emily, or Kegan, and start writing. Here are some possibilities:

- Movie/TV show review*
- Music/theater review*
- Opinion piece
- Humor column
- Poetry and fiction
- Book reviews
- Profiles in courage
- Moments in history
- Personal Reflections
- Sports commentary
- Political/cultural commentary
- Health and wellness column
- Comic strip

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

Odyssey Alumni Association Mission Statement

The Odyssey Alumni Association was established in the summer of 2008 in order to help build upon the foundation of independence through education that the Odyssey Project provided. In an effort to promote and maintain respectful relations among our peers, the Odyssey Alumni Association will offer support and guidance for educational and financial goals as well as any mental, physical, or spiritual challenges and/or triumphs to current and future Odyssey alumni members. The Odyssey Alumni Association will attempt to establish and maintain relationships with all Odyssey alumni in order to preserve the communal bond established in each class. For more information, please contact Oroki or Kegan at: help.oaa@gmail.com

Goals and Values

The Odyssey Alumni Association (OAA) will achieve this by utilizing several methods of support, including:

- **Mentorship** – Members of the OAA will attempt to help others by promoting and maintaining relationships between current and future members by guiding them through strategies to achieve short- and long-term goals.
- **Self-Sufficiency** -- In order to promote self-reliance and success in all areas of life, members of the OAA will help other current and future members by providing information regarding community resources, education, scholarships, etc. The Alumni Association can also provide opportunities for short-term, paid assignments to those in financial binds.
- **Respect** – The OAA will provide advocacy to any current or future alumni member who may feel threatened, insulted, etc. to prevent future occurrences and to facilitate healthy, sustaining relationships among peers. In the tradition of the humanities courses provided by the Odyssey Project, the members of the OAA will emphasize the importance of respecting the ideas, feelings, beliefs, and opinions belonging to self and others.
- **Encouragement** – The OAA strives to support self expression, civic engagement, scholarship, and celebration of the arts and humanities through the sponsorship of various scholastic and cultural activities.

**Mark your calendars now for an OAA
Event on November 1, 2-4 PM, in the
Harambee Lobby!**

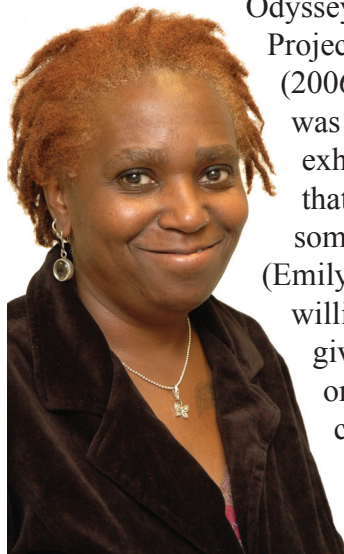
Meet the People behind the Scenes: Oroki Rice, Kegan Carter, and Diane Dennis

I am a survivor of child abuse and neglect, drug addiction, mental illness, teen-pregnancy, incarceration, and poor choices. Reading helped me to survive each of these traumas.

I grew up in a family that did not have money for books, yet my mother instilled a love of learning through reading. Subsequently I read anything I could get my hands on: library books, milk cartons, cereal boxes, sale papers, church bulletins, instruction manuals, anything. Educated in Chicago's segregated public system of the 50's and 60's, I don't think I ever saw an unused textbook until I got to the newly integrated Lake View High (1967). Reading laid a foundation that would open doors for me throughout my life.

In fact it was while serving time in a correctional drug treatment program that I applied for and was accepted into The

Odyssey Project (2006). I was so exhilarated that someone (Emily) was willing to give me one more chance to



E. Oroki Rice '07

get my life in order. I knew that being accepted into Odyssey was something to be grateful for but had no idea of the magnitude of change that would take place. To show my gratitude I never missed a class, completed all assignments (including extra credit), and soaked up all the every opportunity to be engaged with the top notch instructors and my Odyssey peers.

After my graduation (2007) the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation financed several months of employment with Odyssey. I've been blessed to be employed as an Office Assistant. This May I was hired as the Program Assistant at Neighborhood House Community Center. Last year I commuted from Madison to Chicago to complete three classes in my major (applied Behavioral Sciences) at National Louis University. I am currently enrolled in the second of four math classes I need to complete my bachelor's degree. I've created and performed four self-featured productions and been interviewed on television, radio, and newspapers.

All three of my daughters have since returned to or started college since my graduation. One of them, Mandisa Hayes, is an alum of the Odyssey class of 2008. I would like to believe that each of our successes feeds upon the others.

Imagine standing on one side of the Beltline. You can clearly see your destination on the other side of the highway, yet you cannot get there because of the cars whizzing by and the barrier that separates you from your goal. You stand there forlornly wishing, almost about to give up and go home. You pray and ask for help. Then along comes The Odyssey Project. You find yourself transplanted to the place you almost thought you'd never arrive. You now know if you faced the challenge of speeding cars and other obstructions, you can do anything!

Talk show host, painter, author, magazine editor, rap star. Currently, I am none of those things, but ten years ago, I planned on accomplishing all of that and more. Unfortunately, a little thing called LIFE intervened with my dreams, and I found out that sometimes reality is a lot harder to deal with.

I moved to Madison in the fall of 1999. I am the mother of three children. I graduated from the



Kegan Carter '04

Odyssey Program in 2004. Being in Odyssey cleared the cobwebs from my mind, and helped me realize that knowledge doesn't expire.

Since then, I earned my Associate of Arts degree from Madison Area Technical College. I am now a senior at UW-Madison. I am a part-time designer, full-time student, and overtime mother.

I have accomplished many things so far. The past five years, I designed the yearbooks for the Odyssey program. I was on the Dean's List twice. One of my photographs was a finalist in a Nikon contest. I was inducted in Phi Theta Kappa, an honors society for students in community colleges with grade-point averages of 3.5 or higher. Scholarships from the Business Forum, P.E.O., and the UW have helped pay the way, as have internships at Madison Times, UMOJA, and the Odyssey Project.

My determination to succeed has kept me focused on my goals. There have been many times that I thought about quitting because the work was too hard or LIFE threw me a curveball. But those were the times that I looked to my children. If I quit, that would show them that it's okay to give up when things are difficult. And I refuse to set that type of example.

This is the third year I've done the Oracle, and Oroki and I are the coordinators for the Odyssey Alumni Association. Please feel free to ask questions about the OAA or UW-Madison

or anything!

My contact information has been provided on the cover.

Good luck this year!

I've been working as an administrative assistant in the Division of Continuing Studies at the University for many years, during which time I also have raised two children.

Odyssey is only a part of our department. We provide Independent Learning courses in English, Math, Music, Foreign Languages, and other subjects to people who live all over the world. We offer continuing education classes to students of all ages in our community. For example, Emily teaches a book discussion group at the downtown library on Tuesday mornings, and she coordinates a free lecture series by retired faculty. I help with the paperwork to make these and other classes successful.

Being the Odyssey Project coordinator is the most rewarding, challenging, and fulfilling part of my job. I tremendously enjoy meeting so many new people and take pleasure in watching your hunger for learning.

The year before last Emily coaxed me into taking the class for credit myself and doing all the homework. I can now relate to the complexity of this course, the hard work, and the strong determination it

takes to keep going. Learning is a lifelong process.

I am here to provide support for you if needed and can assist you with grammar, proofreading, and basic computer skills. I can help you set up your wisc.edu account for email. There is a lot of behind the scenes work for the Odyssey Project, such as registering students, chartering buses, ordering textbooks, administering grants, locating community resources, stocking supplies for dinner, and duplicating handouts. I'm here to help you in whatever way I can or just to listen, so feel free to email me at ddennis@dcs.wisc.edu or call me at 262-3885.

Thank you for letting me be part of your Wednesday evenings.



Diane Dennis '07