

# ODYSSEY



# ORACLE

## CONQUERING CAMPUS



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# CONQUERING CAMPUS

*The Class of 2023 traveled by school bus together to the UW-Madison campus to receive UW photo ID cards at the Union South, take a group photo, and tour the older half of the Chazen Museum of Art (Elvehjem building).*

It was very exciting, taking a picture to receive an ID card--just the thought of getting a Wisconsin ID Card. I mean, some people dream of doing this, and for me to have the opportunity is just amazing. Then for me to show off my ID is like, "Yes, I finally made it."  
**(Tameia Allen)**



I love going to museums in general. The Chazen was no exception. It was a wonderful experience that ended all too quickly for me. Everything from learning the history of coins and how they came to the museum, to observing the paintings up close, to seeing the very directions in which the various artists guided their brushes over the canvases. Everything about it was phenomenal. I will certainly be taking up Professor Gene's offer for the private tour some point as well. There was a wealth of knowledge that was seemingly untouched, and I would love to venture more into the history and backstories behind each piece.  
**(Kaitlin Birdsall)**

I enjoyed our trip to campus. It was so nice to be able to go and get a UW identification card; now it really feels official. I haven't been to the Chazen Art Museum since I was a little girl. The artwork and ancient artifacts were so cool. I liked seeing them as well as getting some background knowledge. I haven't really had a nice and peaceful outing in a while. I will definitely be going back to the museum. I have now found something I can do when I just want to get peace of mind.  
**(Antoneah Armour)**





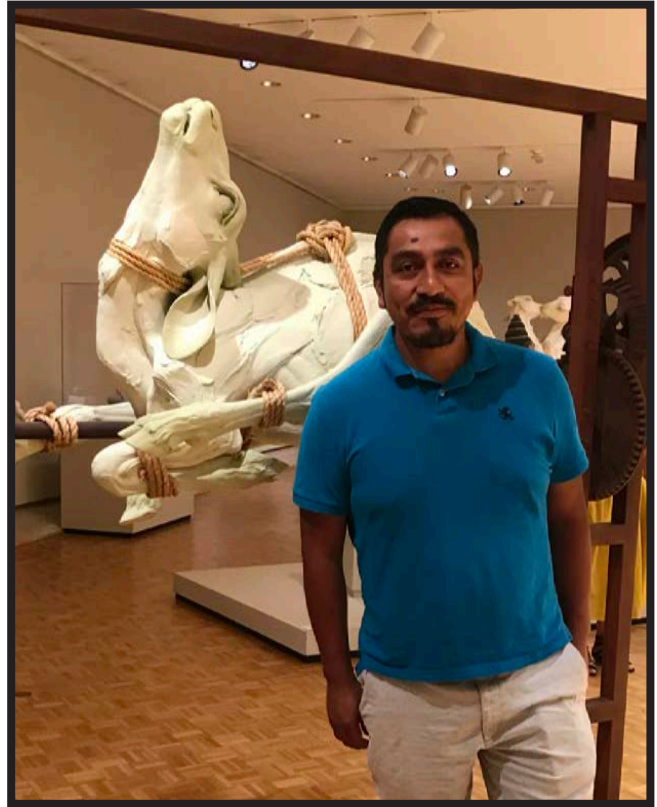
I made a special connection with Amanda Willis. We both share the same sign and bonded over a sculpture that represented our sign (Sagittarius), a man with a bow and arrow. When we were taken to the top floor, a creepy sculpture really stood out to me—a round fat man with his head tilted and mouth coming out of his throat with people all over it. **(Jekeira Booker)**

Well, I guess the most memorable was finding the other part of the museum holding more traditions and newer art. **(Sarah Branch)**

It was amazing, to say the least. First, riding the school bus again brought back so many memories. Like wow! I'm in school again. When we arrived on campus, watching other UW students staring made me feel a little nervous, sort of out of place. But, once my ID picture was taken, no one could've told me this wasn't for me. I felt so good. I couldn't wait to show everyone my ID, what I was a part of.

The Chazen Museum of Art was beautiful. I've never been to an art museum before. I felt like a big kid. The evening was perfect. We all were so amazed. **(Gabrielle Brown)**

I was so excited because I've never been to one; it was my first time at a museum too. I imagined being in UW and finishing my college degree. I learned a lot at the museum about pictures and history, and I enjoyed it a lot. **(Fredy Carcano)**



The most impactful moment for me was actually being on a bus without handcuffs and shackles. The experience for me was surreal. Knowing that I was officially a college student for me was a proud moment that I celebrated in silence. The art was amazing and being in a room with such treasures will forever live in my memories.

**(Mark Español)**

The paintings were very interesting. I enjoyed looking at the paintings from the 1800s until now, how the paintings changed and started to look realistic. I really liked the second floor, how things looked like real life. The art was very real, how they cooked food and how they put a lot of the art figures together. One of my favorites [on the top floor] was the goats. The one I really want to know about is the half human half animal. I really want to know about that particular art. **(Curtrice Foster)**



The most memorable moments from the class trip were going to see the beautiful art. The trip to the museum showed me from back in time vs. time now. I feel like back then they didn't have as much freedom to explore art to express their emotions. I came late to the field trip due to a hair barrier. My birthday was the next day after class and I was going out of town Thursday. I doubt I'll be late to the next field trip due to a special occasion. My favorite

part of viewing the art was the nude paintings. It makes me feel like everyone any shape or size is beautiful and unique. **(Geresa Homesly)**





It was amazing to go to the museum to see the different kinds of art from different time periods until today. **(Tyrone Hudson Sr.)**

The most memorable moment was when I received my first UW student ID card. In my hands, I felt my dream of going to school just happening. Something that impressed me was the artwork. We looked them up in the rooms. I was surprised how creative painters/artists in past eras were. I was comparing the type of imaginations they had to depict all their creativity on the canvas with the imagination current artists have. I was questioning what kind of inspiration artists in the past had and what kind of inspiration actual artists today have. Also, I loved the diverse coins the Egyptians had because they had very tiny coins to bigger coins. **(Aida Inuca)**



If I'm being honest, I didn't enjoy the art museum as much as I would like to. I struggled with the people that oppressed my ancestors using slavery to educate young black women and men. The story has yet to change, and it is extremely sensitive to me. I apologize if the words I'm saying can be confusing or not straightforward. I guess I'll try to sum it up in this sentence: My people didn't come from slavery but overcame slavery. I will not allow the ones who oppress my kind dictate what art means to me or what is considered worthy, unique, and... nothing else.

(I.D. Cards) I enjoyed going down to campus and seeing other college students. Possibly this is the start to my future as a UW student. **(Monè Long)**

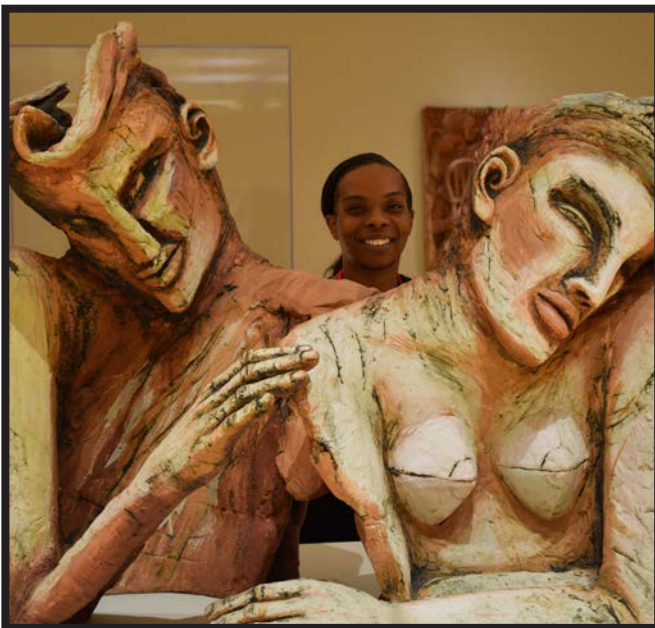


It was a great and unique experience. The emotion to know that I was able to get my UW-ID card makes me feel very proud and with a lot of responsibility to continue this journey of learning.

The museum of art was a really great experience. It was my first time going there. I learned that a museum is not only a place to see some figures, it is a place to find history, culture.

Professor Gene Phillips was a great museum guide. He helped me to know, a little better, the reason of the art. **(Maricela Martinez Munguia)**

Walking into the Union South for the first time in 10 years was amazing. What caught my eye was how different it looked. The entire place looked warm, relaxing, and made to appeal to the UW Madison students. There were spots for the students to have access to quiet time. I smelled food from earlier that was cooked maybe for lunch. But most memorable was the fact that my class was able to take pictures. Some asked each other how they looked, and a couple of us women shared what I call lip grease (chapstick). Pictures were taken for UW Madison ID cards because my class members are students of UW Madison. **(Lavinia Miller)**



I had an amazing time. I love experiencing things I haven't had much time to do on my own. It felt so good getting my UW ID and interacting with my peers. I do wish we had more time to look around at the museum. It was a beautiful place throughout, but I did feel out of place and like I didn't belong because I never thought I'd be here. **(Keely Nelson-Gray)**

Getting off the bus, I remember everyone being very happy people, talking to one another. I remember getting in line to get my picture taken and being nervous, but when I finally got it I was proud of myself because I am officially a UW student. **(Gael Rodriguez)**

I have been at the Chazen Museum before; however, this time was a very special time. For the first time, I feel like I belong in the museum because I'm accepting the idea of being an artist. This time I was able to enjoy the colors, the displays, and the inspiration the artists were expressing. My favorite part was being able to enjoy the freedom of my mind going from one part to the next. I'm making a commitment to go back to the Chazen Museum to get inspired. **(Saul Naxi Perez)**



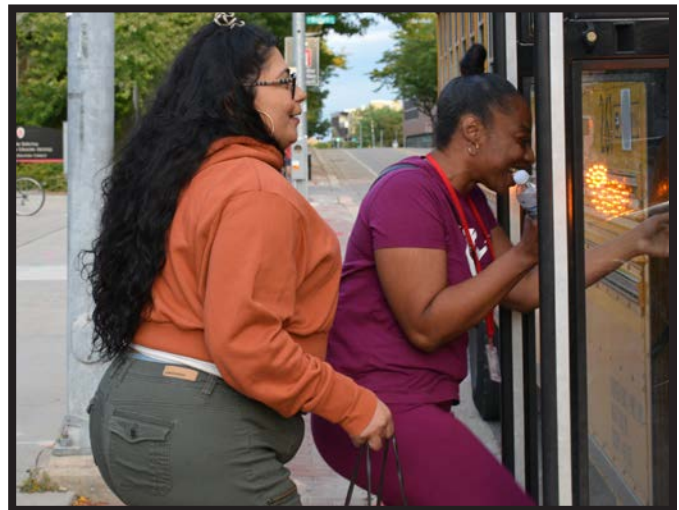


Late & Lost & Fast. I was late due to the timing and no childcare. Then I never got my ID. I was kinda mad, after relaxing and heading to my car alone. I couldn't find my car, things started moving fast, and I was lost. After I lost my car, I found it. Then I went and had a drink, well, a couple drinks. **(Kiana Sims)**

The trip solidified my purpose in the Odyssey program. Taking the pictures for my Wisconsin I.D. is the start of the rest of my journey to a better me. It was rewarding to end the trip with a visit to the Chazen Museum. Looking at the variety of cultural artifacts with an open mind piqued my interest, and now I want more. **(Dominique Smith)**



The most memorable part was visiting the museum and seeing all the creative artwork from the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Artists have become so creative; you can see their personality through the art. Expression came through heavy. **(Tiara Smith)**



The class trip was amazing. Just looking at my UW ID brought tears to my eyes. The fact was that I couldn't call my father and share the news. He always told us that education is a big part of life. For many years, I thought I failed. I have proven the odds and statistics wrong by having the honor to be part of the Odyssey program and experience the museum of art. The history of the paintings and sculptors was so vivid. **(Roxanna Sobrevilla)**



I felt so great being able to get a student ID card again. But I also looked around and felt odd and out of place. Then I looked at my Odyssey family and teachers and suddenly I felt like I was right where I needed to be.

I also enjoyed the art museum. There were some things I didn't like as much, like the naked kids or the goats with wieners, but I did like the section on Egypt and the newer art across from the "Ding-a-ling goats." **(Mya Whitson)**



Some takeaways from the field trip I got were when we went to the Chazen Museum of Art. I enjoyed the tour that was given to us. I've never been there before so it was a wonderful experience. I will definitely be back and bringing my family. I felt super excited to get my ID. It was like the first day of school feeling when you can't sleep. It was a wonderful experience and I'm happy to share it with my classmates. I also got to talk to some of my classmates and met new people. I was really happy.  
**(Lupita Valerio)**

The first most memorable moment from our trip was getting my UW ID card. It was such a proud moment for me. It's been something that I looked forward to since the program started. It almost made the start of my journey official. I also loved the art museum. It's something that my kids and I enjoy on the weekends that we're free. This was also a good time for me to bond with my classmates. **(Andrea White)**



Entering into the doors at UW, there were students everywhere with red and white UW gear and I knew it was real. Like Pinocchio, I was a real student! Being at UW has been a dream since I can remember. Taking my picture was the icing on the cake. The museum was kind of sad to me. **(Amanda Willis)**



On the first trip to campus, it was cold and super fun to be able to walk around and see more inside the campus. I really liked the museum and how we got to see cool and super weird art from different points in time. When we went upstairs with Emily, I was shocked. The art was so crazy. The bus driver was just as crazy. I can't wait for the next trip. **(Sinetra Wilson)**



I loved taking pictures and I also loved the art museum. It was amazing seeing everyone having fun and communicating. We saw the artwork, naked art, colorful art, and nice sculptures. **(Zykia Wilson)**



# EMBARKING ON AN ODYSSEY

*In their first homework assignment, Odyssey students looked up a definition of odyssey and commented on why the course is called that—and how it might be an odyssey for them.*

***odyssey: a long wandering marked by many changes in fortune; from an ancient Greek poem by Homer about the warrior Odysseus' adventure-filled journey home from Troy.***

I think the Odyssey Project is called that because it attracts people that have been through long journeys and are waiting for that light at the end of the journey, waiting for something to break the cycle. It's an odyssey for me because I've been on a long journey. I've been through a lot and I'm wanting and looking for a change and/or break. I want to be successful and happy again.  
**(Tameia Allen)**

I think this class is called the Odyssey Project because based off of what I have learned so far in the class, we will be dabbling into many different courses of study and doing many different projects. We will be learning about different cultures, visiting different museums and other sites, making this journey we are taking to get our jumpstart on starting our college careers very eventful and exciting.  
**(Antoneah Armour)**

We are all the Odysseus of our own journeys. Some wander for only a short while; for others, maybe a lifetime. Fortunes differ for everyone as well as the final destinations. More than anything, I'm seeking the things that I didn't know needed discovering.  
**(Kaitlin Birdsall)**

It's called Odyssey because of it being a journey. No matter the person, this class will be an adventurous journey for all of us. It'll be an odyssey for me by learning and growing with people I've never met, and staying open-minded and positive no matter the subject we're talking about. **(Jonathan Booe)**



I believe it's called Odyssey because it's a place to find yourself/your voice in this big world while on your journey. This is an odyssey for me because I feel like myself and others in the class kind of wandered across this opportunity while trying to navigate through the struggles, changes, and misfortunes life sometimes brings.

**(Jekeiria Booker)**

This course is called Odyssey because it is a journey that can help me reshape my life. The readings should help me reconnect and rediscover things I had forgotten about. The support and network shall help me belong or think differently.

**(Sarah Branch)**

It gives you a long period of time to accomplish whatever it is you're seeking—a change that I made that will bring me good fortune.

**(Gabrielle Brown)**

It's called Odyssey because it is a program that teaches us to overcome difficulties and reach our goal. **(Fredy Carcano)**

I believe it's called Odyssey because we are about to embark on a wonderful journey of insight and an inner awakening. **(Mark Español)**

A change of life that can be used for a lifetime, to me, Odyssey means finding your place in life to accomplish your dreams and goals. **(Curtrice Foster)**

I think this program is called the Odyssey Project due to the life-changing education, mind opening, and support we will be receiving. This is based off the strength of how to grow and learn in order to have a better future. **(Geresia Homesly)**

Odyssey exists to help people who want to go back to school but had to quit school for some kind of problems they had. It can help me further my education and help me learn more about myself as a person. **(Tyrone Hudson)**

In our journey of every class and everyday learning, our visions and perspectives might change and make us a great Odysseus of our own life. We are already the Odysseus of our own life; however, nurturing our soul and our knowledge every day, it can make us better fight for life with dignity. **(Aida Inuca)**

This class is a journey to finding self, finding what makes you a whole, and finding what attributes you possess that make you you. **(Monè Long)**

For me, this Odyssey Project is like the wandering Odysseus' journey to find his wife. Even though there were a lot of obstacles in my journey, and it can have some up and down times, the dream to get some other opportunities in my life helps me to continue this journey of life. **(Maricela Martinez Munguia)**



The Odyssey Project is called this because, for me, it's an adventure to find myself and a journey to do things that I wasn't able to do before. **(Lavinia Miller)**

I think it is called the Odyssey Project because all of us in the program wonder and have questions and curiosity. The project is a gate, a bridge for us to uncover and rediscover ourselves. The project is an odyssey for me because I will answer my own wonderings by uncovering what I'm really capable of doing with my life. **(Saul Nazi Perez)**

I believe it is referred to as Odyssey because we will be following along with each other on this journey. This class is meant for me because I went through a lot of obstacles in my life alone. To come together as a pretty different group of individuals and different journeys will help me open up to new experiences and people. **(Keely Nelson-Gray)**

I think the class is called Odyssey because it's an adventure for everyone. This class is an odyssey for me because it's a new beginning for me and a fresh start. **(Gael Rodriguez)**

I think this is called Odyssey because we are focused on poetry and all kinds of history, and we are all joining as a team. **(Kiana Sims)**

The course is an opportunity for participants who were faced with hurdles or setbacks that may have swayed them or slowed them down from continuing their educational journey as seen at the usual pace.

Like Odysseus, I faced many changes that took me off course from obtaining a higher education. Faced with financial hardships, I had to prioritize food and shelter, making it impossible to continue until I found stability and support. For me, Odyssey class offers that change of fortune in the right direction on that path to obtaining a higher education. Although it may seem late by standards of the usual, it stands as an opportunity to achieve my goal. **(Dominique Smith)**

The definition speaks on the change of fortune; the class might be named this because it changes the bad in people's lives to good and gives them a fighting hope.

It can change my bad ideas about the future classes and programs into good ideas. Someone who struggles with life like I do might use this as a gateway to success! **(Tiara Smith)**

I think the course is called Odyssey because it has to do with poems and Odysseus' journey.

The class might be an odyssey for me to start a new journey or to change some of the ways for my journey. **(Roxanna Sobrevilla)**



I'm not completely sure why this course is called the Odyssey Project, but I think this class will be an odyssey, being an eventful experience. **(Lupita Valerio)**

I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because it's a quest that may have many obstacles for me to overcome over the next eight months. Every week is going to be an opportunity for me to learn a lot about the world and myself. It's going to be an odyssey for me because I'm balancing being a mother, a fulltime employee, and a student. I'm sure there are going to be challenges that I'm going to have to overcome this semester, and I'm also going to learn a lot about the world and myself. **(Andrea White)**

I think that this course is called Odyssey because it's a program that has seen, and will see, many journeys to self-discovery and learning. We will have adventures into who we, the students and facilitators alike, will become as we unlock new and different understandings in the future. Parts of ourselves that are colored by things we learned and experienced in our past will evolve and expand, helping us become wiser, much like Odysseus when he returned to Ithaca. **(Mya Whitson)**

I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because it is a quest, or an adventure, and you will come across so many unplanned obstacles on this educational journey.

For me, the class is an odyssey because it's an unknown quest that I'm about to take. Although this is out of my element, I'm ready to take this unplanned and unknown adventure, and I can't wait to see where my girls and I end up! **(Amanda Willis)**

I think it's called Odyssey because we're learning every day, going through new challenges every day, and learning to overcome. **(Sinetra Wilson)**

I think this course is called the Odyssey Project because we learn new things and we read a lot. Odyssey for me means helping others, learning, and just having a better life with education. **(Zykia Wilson)**

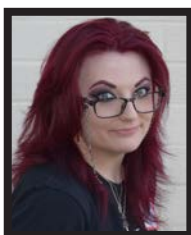
# ORACLE OVATIONS

*The first night of class, Class of 2023 students received a Welcome Oracle with letters from last year's class, pictures of graduates in caps and gowns, and samples of alumni writing.*



The comments and letters from last year are very encouraging. They are telling us that we got accepted into pretty much a life-changing class. They are telling us what we thought we couldn't do will be possible.

Reading "We Ate Dog Food" reminds me of my life a little. Not everything—but the fact that I'm going to be the only one in my family to complete high school and to get accepted into such a program to further my education. My mom and dad didn't pass grammar school. **(Tameia Allen)**



I'm moved beyond words. I've never been a confident person, and generally never thought I was worthy of a lot in life. But reading everyone's words of encouragement...

I'm completely overwhelmed. If I'm being completely honest, I almost couldn't finish reading; my eyes were too filled with tears. But I drank in everyone's words, all their stories, every mention of "don't give up," "don't quit."

I've always had the thought that everyone has a story that deserves to be heard. Every single reading I've done so far has exemplified just how important everyone's voice is.

The last thing my mom told me before she died was, "don't get upset." At the time my 14-year-old brain thought she just meant that since she was leaving us soon. As I grew up, I learned that sentence was meant to encompass so much more. Don't get upset at leaving you to take care of dad when his diabetes gets the best of him. Don't get

upset when you learn that I kept the secret from you and your sister about your other siblings. Don't get upset about not being able to afford as much as others. Times will come where it'll be easier to get through the day and breathing will be steadier. My days are usually filled with anxiety and overthinking, with some self-deprecation sprinkled in. The more I hear about the opportunities and experiences that await me this year, the more nervous I get. But it's a new kind of nerve that's flowing through me. It's excitement. Anticipation. Exhilaration. I finally want to expand my own story. I'm hoping this year will help me discover my voice, and I'll finally be able to share it. **(Kaitlin Birdsall)**

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## ODYSSEY ORACLE

### WELCOME, CLASS OF 2023!

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Last year's Oracle is the reminder of how important this is to my family. It was inspirational to have others speak positively about feeling overwhelmed yet they achieved! "We Ate Dog Food" was related to "The Circuit" due to the plot twist and irony they portray. I was not expecting either to be what they are titled, yet that's exactly what the audience wants it to be. I love plot twist and irony, so for me, I relate to both for different reasons. My mother is brilliant, as in Alice's story. "The Circuit" related more to personal experiences. I learned from last year's Oracle that it's normal to feel overwhelmed. I have a lot of ideas for this program such as making videos to persuade others to take the leap. Our education is our success.

**(Jonathan Booe)**



Reading all of the Odyssey graduates' welcome letters was so inspiring and heartfelt. I cried tears of being seen and heard reading Ericka Booe, Capri Booker, Yasmin Dobbins, Ontario Frazier, Talaisha Goodwan, Cinderria Harwell,

Helena Lee, and Cylinthia Olle. I really resonated with how transparent and motivational their passages were.

Other graduates left me with words of wisdom I'll never forget. For example, "Remember that there is beauty in the process." -Jonathan Adeyanju. "These people are just like you, afraid of the journey that's to come." -Yasmine Dobbins. "Show how much of a person you are." -Erendira Giron Cruz. "You are capable of change." -Michelle Mack. "You will love yourself for completing." -Reginald Moore. "All of you are here because you wanted this." -Mechele Williams. I also really appreciate how informative Yael Gonzalez was in his section about UW student ID perks; it got me excited to utilize my ID.

"We Ate Dog Food" and "The Circuit" were very similar. Both families faced financial hardships but were led by hardworking, smart, and kind-hearted parents. Joe Robinson's essay "Don't Quit" also touched me to the utmost. His words were simple, powerful, and encouraging. I believe I will truly find

myself on this journey and with that will be able to create some incredible writing. **(Jekeiria Booker)**



Reading this Oracle made me feel welcomed. It's like I joined a new club where everyone is cheering for my success. "My advice to you is to just let it happen for you."

Exploring self. A lot of the responses talk about the journey and improvement in self, so I'm eager to see how my sense of self will change from now until the end.

"We Ate Dog Food" is similar to "The Circuit" and my family life. The lack of education made reading a challenge. This is true for my mother. She wasn't able to read, and pictures became her words, only able to identify things she already knew. Alice's dad had to work in the fields and wasn't able to attend school. This was also true for the main character in "The Circuit." **(Sarah Branch)**



One of my favorite sentences was by Jonathon Adeyanju. "The torch has been handed to you guys, and we do so proudly." I take this sentence as a responsibility to not only myself but also to the rest of the class. Knowing where most of

us come from makes me even more eager to do my utmost best to complete this journey. I have new ideas for stories. I have a path that needs to be told and all of it is a reality for me. **(Mark Español)**





It gave me positive vibes on finishing up the Odyssey Program with no hesitation. I also know that any help I need I can ask, knowing that no one will turn you down and you always have that helping hand.

I laughed to myself reading “We Ate

Dog Food.” Oh, I know the feeling of that. Hash and Spam have always been a figure of dog food to me, but also a full course meal if you know how to fix it. My mother never finished high school but is very street smart and an intelligent individual, although she never got the hang of being a parent until her late 40s. By that time it was too late. She’s a loving, caring parent that never turned her back on me, but I can say that I will be the first to finish schooling and actually be the first who can say I graduated from college. I know for sure I’ll be the first leaving school with college credits. My children motivate me the most to continue to go to school and finish with a degree. Even though I still don’t know what I want to do or get a degree in, hopefully after the Odyssey Program, I’ll have an idea. **(Curtrice Foster)**



I feel supported by the Odyssey staff because LaRonda Morris says that Odyssey is there to help you no matter what. It is a relief that I am not alone in this journey.

A sentence that jumped out at me is from Mariam Maiga: “Through Odyssey, I gained the confidence I needed to further my education, and now I am more motivated than ever to continue until I am where I want to be.” I would like to feel the way she is feeling when she writes these words. I know if I have that positive attitude I can go farther in my life.

I also like the sentence from Will Nunn: “Don’t quit because you better wait on the other end.” Sometimes I might feel weak, but these words will help me stand strong and go further.

Alice’s “We Ate Dog Food” reminds me that I know that there are so many barriers in our life, but Alice and Francisco Jiménez believed in their power and kept going with education. I also related to them that in both cases education was the tool for success. Education is freedom. Also, after reading their stories, I believe that sometimes it is important to ask for help. There will always be people with a good heart to help us along the way.

Yes, I do relate to comments in the letters from last year’s class, I cannot mention just one because each of them mentions great messages that give me power to continue with my journey.

I learned that the Odyssey Project is a family with great supporters who offer the best tools to help students to believe in themselves. That way we can dream high using our own powers. So far, I am grateful to the Odyssey Project for believing in me, so I feel supported by them to continue in my journey.

I would like to write biographies, or community visions of the story of my indigenous community. I love to read biographies because they are inspiring, and I learn new cultures and forms of life. I might write about the history of my family and the Kichwa community from the Andes where I come from or belong. There has been a lot of oppression toward my community which has transformed or changed people’s view, and there is still a lot of pain and need for healing. I believe that we might not be able to go forward if we do not recognize our past and our present.



I would like to write about indigenous herbal medicine because I had the privilege to learn some from my parents. We did not have hospitals or clinics in the community, and our pharmacy was natural. We had to learn about plants no matter what, so I love to write about it.

I have tons of ideas to write about, but I am sure more ideas will come along the way as long as I go forward. **(Aida Inuca)**



Reading the Odyssey Oracle made me feel connected to a chain of the wealthiest people in Wisconsin. Being a part of a program that has touched so many people and changed their lives only made me more excited and anxious about the journey ahead.

I read something that stuck out to me while reading “We Ate Dog Food.” The author said, “Education is the key to freedom.” I recently watched a podcast interview hosted by The Breakfast Club, and his story is extremely inspiring. Reading Alice’s story shortly after was simply validation for me. **(Monè Long)**



I felt great reading how other graduates welcomed our class. One student said his tooth was painful, and I can relate to it. I’ve had tooth pain to the point where I felt I was dying. “We Ate Dog Food” related to “The Circuit” by not having much but the family love, not having much education, but having family love. **(Lavinia Miller)**



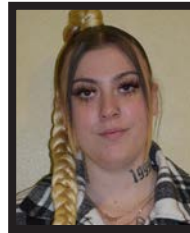
Reading made me feel like I’m learning again. Reading is making me feel excited to know more and how I can use the knowledge in my everyday life.

“We Ate Dog Food” reminds me of being a father of two and how I hope that, whatever I did to raise my daughters, it is for the best regardless of my mistakes. I did my best, and I hope they understand that.

I relate to all the letters from last year’s class because we all have struggles and we all have something painful inside of us that we are trying to heal. “Education is power.”

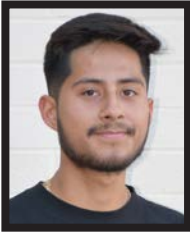
I learned that the Odyssey Project is a place that has given others the opportunity to believe and dream again. I also learned that it is not easy, but Odyssey has the power and resources to make

dreams come true. The idea I have in mind is to share my story. I want people like me to be able to reach out to places like Odyssey. I want immigrants to grow personally, and, most importantly, I want people like me to overcome their fears and heal their trauma. **(Saul Naxi Perez)**



“Some of you may still be trying to figure out if this class is the one for you or if you have the ability to complete this class period”—Talaisha Goodwan This sentence stood out to me because entering this class I felt a lot of anxiety and doubt in myself at first. I was scared and didn’t know what to expect. I haven’t been in a structured school environment in a very long time, but to meet all the teachers and classmates has given me hope. Everyone is so supportive and helpful so far with childcare, meals, financial support, etc., which I am so appreciative for because I wouldn’t be able to attend or continue my education right now without all the wonderful support from you all! I cannot wait to see what the future brings and to meet and engage with my classmates more! I never got to experience a graduation ceremony due to life circumstances, and it will be such an honor once I finally can; it is something I am looking forward to! **(Keely Nelson-Gray)**





I feel very special to be in this class right now. I was reading Yael's paragraph and something that really jumped at me was when he said that out of 100 people that apply to the program, only 30 of us actually get accepted.

**(Gael Rodriguez)**

The reading made me feel relaxed; it made me feel a part of the movement.



I work from 8:30 – 5:00. I have only 30 minutes to pick up JR from the west side of Kids' Jungle and pick up Princeton, Legend, and Kaliana from the Boys and Girls Club.

"We Ate Dog Food" reminded me of "The Circuit" with their struggle of having to survive, doing what you had to do to make it. It saddens me.

What kinds of ideas do I have for writing a story? It will be for single mothers who feel like nobody understands. You may feel like the world is on your shoulders, you may feel judged or even regret your choices on being an unmarried mother or having a failed family relationship. You can turn your pain into power. You are worthy of anything you envisioned; dreams will come true, and all you have to do is fight, keep going, and reach for the stars. You are powerful, you are worthy, and don't listen to the lies in your head. Tap into that strong voice that you have on the inside of you and let her blossom. Don't worry about how you should've done things; just worry about how you're about to do things. Enjoy the experience.

I was so thankful when I got accepted because I am all down for beating the odds and putting a single mother on the map with a lot of kids. My hunger for success is big, so big. I want to make it easier for my children and my grandchild. My goal is, if I won't be able to see it, then my great grandchildren get to be set enough to relax with great jobs and beautiful families with limited stress and worries. **(Kiana Sims)**



Reading the Oracle, one word that resonated with me is "support," the overwhelming feeling that the Odyssey Program will be an environment where I will be supported in my journey to further my education. I will be

supported in times of discouragement. Where I may feel like giving up, Emily and the rest of the staff will not let me give in. I am supported in my decision to become a better me.

Reading the letters from last year's class, I am more confident than ever that I made the right decision to apply to the Odyssey Program. It was like reading my own story narrated by someone else. From Cynthia Gonzalez, who stated that, "After having a child, you really have a different type of ambition, like you can conquer the world." That hit home for me. After having my two daughters, I knew it was up to me to show them the best example of living to your full potential. And this is, "the start of my new future," as Ontario Frazier stated in his letter.

Understanding the importance of higher education and setting yourself up for success, I see how Alice's father mistook the dog food for the hash in "We Ate Dog Food." Like many, when we don't understand something, we look for a visual example, and I am sure the hash looked very similar to the dog food. Not to say Alice's father was less of a person, when in actuality he was a good provider with what he had to offer. It reminds me of the family in "The Circuit," how due to certain hardships the family faced, the young men were made to prioritize working over employment. Alice's father was only afforded the chance to attend school up to the third grade because he was the eldest male child and had to work to help support his family's survival.

For many years, I have looked for an environment outside of my home where I have an eclectic support system. I am super excited about being a part of this program and enthused about the journey I will embark on through the Odyssey Program. **(Dominique Smith)**



Reading the article gave me motivation and encouragement. A lot of the past students had trials and tribulations, but they got through them. I like how every person said that Odyssey helped them; even when they were

struggling or wanted to give up, they knew they could turn to people from the program. That puts my mind at ease.

The “We Ate Dog Food” story reminded me of “The Circuit” because her father had to miss a lot of school due to working. Although the characters in that story were dedicated to learning and growing, her father did not have the time, which led to some difficulties in the long run. Education is powerful and important. It can make or break you. **(Tiara Smith)**

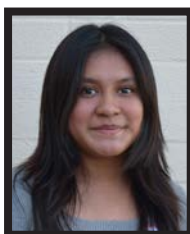


The reading made me feel encouraged and excited to start. All the letters jumped out to me; the support and the advice just feel so welcoming.

“We Ate Dog Food” is similar to “The Circuit” story. Both families had to work in the fields and couldn’t go to school some days.

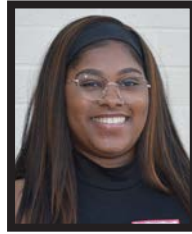
Reading the letters from last year made me feel more at ease, just knowing they know the feeling I’m feeling right now.

I have some ideas I can write about in my stories. My family and I were immigrants; my father and mother would work the strawberry, beet, and corn fields. I went to a lot of different schools. I will have more ideas. **(Roxanna Sobrevilla)**



By reading the Odyssey Oracle, it motivated me even more to never give up. Taking three classes, other classes, and work might be a little

difficult, but the “Don’t Quit” reading helped me out. **(Lupita Valerio)**



Reading the first Oracle made me feel very motivated and excited about being a part of the Odyssey Class of 2023. Everyone’s words were so encouraging and warm. Some things that stood out to me were people sharing the obstacles

they had during their time in the Odyssey Program and how they leaned on staff and their classmates for encouragement and support. It’s nice to know that I have a supportive team to help me along the way. I related a lot to the comments in the letters from last year’s class. I’m a single parent and I work full time so I know that there will be obstacles ahead of me, but I’m excited and determined to make it to graduation. By reading the Oracle I learned that the Odyssey Program is, and has been, the start of something great for many individuals and has also won many awards.

After reading “We ate Dog Food” and “The Circuit,” I feel like they were a lot alike because, in a way, they both represent generational traumas like poverty and illiteracy. In “We Ate Dog Food,” her father could not read because her parents didn’t have the opportunity to complete their education due to obstacles. Her father had to step up and be the man of the house due to his father not being present, and things like that cycle through generations. In “The Circuit,” his parents left their country for a better life and ended up in poverty due to them not knowing much English. But, in both stories, both families still strived for a better life and worked to break those generational cycles. I can relate to each story in my own way. My oldest brother dropped

out of high school to act as the man of the house, and my mother didn’t have a chance to complete her education due to being a single parent. I’m the first of twelve kids to graduate high school and go on to college, working to break generational traumas.

**(Andrea White)**





I will start by saying reading the letters from alumni really reminded me of the power that words have. I am not now, nor was I nervous or anxious about joining Odyssey. However, reading so many letters asking if I am nervous

before the start of class caused me to feel this way. The letter that stuck out to me the most was from Capri Booker as well as the story “Don’t Quit” by Joe Robinson. They both spoke to me because I forget that life will always test you, but quitting is no longer an option. I have done that too many times and I know where that road leads. Now is my time to see it through till the end come hell or high water.

The story “The Circuit” and “We Ate Dog Food” really brought my bias towards men to the surface. Not all men, just dumb lovable ones, like the two fathers in these stories. These stories reaffirmed my belief that some men cause unnecessary hardships for their families that could probably be avoided if the woman took the helm. I relate to this because although I adore my father and still respect his memory, I now know that while he was perfect to my childish love-struck eyes, as an adult I realize most of the struggles that my family experienced were due to the idea that the man’s voice and opinion should always be followed in the family.

When I consider what story I would like to write, I have ideas bouncing all over the place inside my head. There are so many things I have experienced and so much I’d love to share with anyone that it could help including me. Self-discovery and awareness are tools that I love using the most.

**(Mya Whitson)**



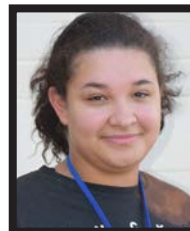
Reading the Oracle made me very proud to be a part of something so special and also proud of all of the graduates. All of their stories were very moving and motivating. It also made me feel a little more at ease reading how supportive everyone is

to each other. There were so many sentences/words that stood out to me reading the article. Almost

every graduate wrote “ask for help no matter what.” I saw a lot of references to Odyssey as a “judgment free zone,” which really means a lot to me. Another sentence that sticks out to me is “take advantage of this opportunity.” “Use the help and resources they provide you.” “You are a UW student and don’t let anyone tell you differently.” “Do not give up.” “One of the great gifts that comes with being a part of Odyssey is that you are a special student of UW Madison, one of the most prestigious universities in the country, possibly the world.”

Alice’s “We Ate Dog Food” reminded me of the story of the “The Circuit” when she talked about how hard her parents had to work and how her father became the man of the house at the age of four and stopped attending school in the third grade. It shows how education is everything and if you don’t have it, you’ll probably end up eating or feeding someone dog food!

In the Alumni Corner, “Don’t Quit” by Joe Robinson was my favorite as well as several others; however, “Don’t Quit” really stuck out to me. The way my life is set up right now, I’m already broken down and tired with my full-time job, no car, and motherly duties on my plate. Your girl is depleted and it’s only the beginning, but I won’t quit! **(Amanda Willis)**



Reading everyone’s letters from last year made me feel excited to be a part of the program and to get to be able to learn more and expand my learning. “Taking Advantage” sticks out to me because this is a big opportunity. **(Sinetra Wilson)**



Reading the Oracle was great. I loved to see all the families and their stories; they seem happy they made it. I felt happy and encouraged. They will be me next year.

Well, from reading the Oracle about the Odyssey Project, a lot of people talk about change and a whole way of thinking. Never giving up. All also say just have a fun and positive experience, feeling good about yourself. **(Zykia Wilson)**

# MOVED BY MUSIC

*In class while Bob Auerbach played piano, Odyssey students wrote about the role music plays in their lives.*



When I think about music, I think about the lyrics in the song. Rod Wave is an R&B singer, and when I listen to his songs I think just the way he is able to incorporate

so much passion and sentiment into his lyrics is as good as it gets. No matter what artist has been through similar struggles, no one seems to be able to fully encapsulate their pain and emotion in their music quite like him. He puts you in his shoes like you're actually going through what the lyrics are saying, like you can feel his pain on another level. Music puts me in a calm and sometimes deep thought. I start to think about the things that I've been through and how I overcame them. The lyrics speak to your soul. **(Tameia Allen)**

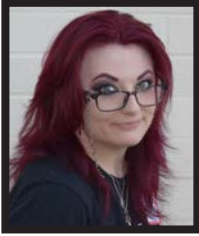


I listen to a variety of music, but I would say my absolute favorite is R&B. R&B music is my top pick because it's the type of music that speaks to your soul. It's something you can actually feel. When I was a little girl, I always wanted to

be a singer, so I've always loved music. I was in the church choir growing up, so it's always been something that's been a part of me.

I think music is a way that a lot of different people can connect and relate to one another. You can use it as a way to cope, relax, or just have fun. It has many different purposes. Everybody around the world loves music and in fact needs it. There are so many different genres of music within so many cultures. Without music, I don't know how life would be. The world would be an extremely different place without it.

**(Antoneah Armour)**



Like writing, music has always been a way for me to get my voice out, to let my feelings not just be heard, but to be felt. Any time I get stuck in my head, I can always and without fail turn to music. It's a necessary outlet for me in my normal day to day. My voice is small when I speak, but I feel mighty when I sing.

I seek music that connects to me in some way, whether it's a melody or a lyric that resonates with me; it doesn't even matter the language it's in. Music is something to be felt above all. When I'm able to make a musical discovery, I can feel the notes coursing through my very marrow. Music is incredibly powerful. **(Kaitlin Kyle Birdsall)**



I usually listen to rap or R&B music. I love music, so I listen to it pretty much every day when I have free time to do so. Music is very motivational at times and can take you out of that funk you're in. When I'm down and need some

words of inspiration, I listen to music even if it doesn't help right then and there. It still takes your mind away temporarily. I wish I was more open to other types of music because I could be missing out on something so joyful. **(Jonathan Booe)**



Music means a lot to me. It is a form of expression where there is no wrong or right answer. Music is a way to be heard and seen when you feel no one understands you. I listen to all types of music. When I choose a song, I focus on the lyrics

and beat the most. If the lyric doesn't move me, I don't care for it. Music affects me in a lot of ways because I use it to interpret my feelings or to uplift my spirit. **(Jekeiria Booker)**



To me, music is a soul saver. Music helps me find my peace, joy, or even release. I play music throughout my different moods. If I am working, playing music helps me stay on track and gets me in my groove. If I need a pick me up, music is playing to help uplift my mood. I use music to help me deal with stress. Sometimes the right words come on to help me get through a day.

The different tones are soothing. The beat moves my heart. I don't listen to rap music often. I don't like the message to conflict with my beliefs. I do listen to hip hop, which holds a powerful message for me. Overall, music is therapy, a love language in which we all can connect. **(Sarah Branch)**



Music can either make you happy or sad, depending on the situation (in my opinion). I tend to listen to hip hop/rap when I'm feeling good, in an upbeat mood, full of energy.

I find slow music, such as R&B, to be very soothing. It takes your mind to another place. It also can bring up emotions, depending on your situation. I listen to slow R&B music when I'm down a lot – which I've noticed doesn't help. If I do, it usually mirrors my situation. I can relate to it. I love music. **(Gabrielle Brown)**



I can express my feelings. I do listen when I work, when I want to say something. I listen for therapy too, even. I listen for good memories.  
**(Fredy Carcano)**



To me, music soothes the spirit but at the same time can be motivational at any level. Music can make me laugh, cry, scream, run, and sleep. Music has the power

to bring people together, but it can also cause division. Music makes me tap my feet, clap my hands, and dance the night away. Music takes me home, and it transports me to distant lands. I listen to all music from Beethoven to Biggie Smalls, from Salsa to EDM. Without music, stories could not be told the right way. There would be no soundtrack to life. **(Mark Español)**



of music brings the soul out of you and refreshes your body. Music puts me in a good mood. It also helps me sleep at times. **(Curtrice Foster)**



Music to me means so much! I have different genres for my different set of moods. Music I listen to in the morning while cleaning up is very much soulful and loving. I love to do things out of love so why not clean! When I'm sad I play upbeat music to help me take my mind off of the sadness I'm feeling. I feel like music is healing to the mind, soul, and body. When I shower, I love to play party music; it excites me and makes me feel like I'm clubbing while cleaning myself. When I'm angry, I listen to R&B, Soul, or James. This helps me unwind and find a loving space in my brain to want to communicate my emotions verbally without being afraid.

The music I listen to has great meaning in my household as well as my life. I love to listen to pop, R&B, hip hop, and jazz. I'm very versatile when it comes to music and setting moods.

**(Geresia Homesly)**



What music means to me is peaceful and soothing. You can relax off of music. Most of the time I like playing music while cleaning. It makes me feel good. It also helps take away bad feelings like if you're down. Music is such good relaxation and meditation. Listening to certain types



Music has been the joy of my life because when I was growing up, my parents and grandparents always played music from country, jazz, gospel, rock, and dance, to R&B Soul music. As of today, I still listen to old school music, the best music, and I like house music too. **(Tyrone Hudson)**

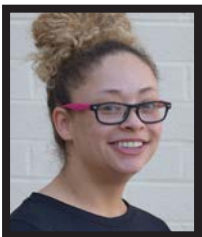


It's the language of the mountains  
It's the strike of the rain that  
Every drop falls on the leaves  
And ground.  
It's the only company that  
understands  
My soul's voice.

What kind of music?

I listen to my native song-wind music  
The sounds of Mother Nature  
The sounds of my ancestors  
Singing in the fields while harvesting  
Corn, wheat, potatoes.

It activates every cell in my blood  
It makes me go back to the land where I was born  
It makes me talk with the voices of other beings  
that are around me  
Because we are not always alone.  
Music is the language of the Pacha  
Mama—Mother Earth. **(Aida Inuca)**



Music has always been a very big part of my life. I come from a long line of musically inclined individuals on my father's side. My grandmother has a beautiful and boisterous voice. My aunts were also gifted with wonderful voices. Then it passed on to me as well as my oldest son. My oldest son, Rylan, has an angelic soprano voice. To me, music is a gateway for our souls. It can also be soul-binding.

As a child, I used music and singing as a hobby, but also as a coping mechanism

when I started to struggle mentally with depression at the age of thirteen. For me, music has no rules or bounds. I like all types of music genres. A few I lean towards more than others are R&B/rap and "alternative" music styles, competitions, and even private singing lessons. Now that I'm older, I tend to only sing when I am feeling low. But maybe with reason, since I get to feeling better near the end. My children's dad and I started dating when we were sixteen years old. Music has always been a huge foundation in our relationship.

**(Tierra Kimbrew)**



I always loved neo soul and 90s R&B growing up. I enjoy the sound, but also the story behind the sound speaks to me, especially if I've experienced something similar. Now that I am older, I've learned about sound therapy,

Frenchies, and vibrations. I meditate daily and I find myself getting lost in that. The solitude of 432 HZ Musik is one of my favorites.

Depending on the tone, music can make you excited, sad, happy, anxious, etc. We are energetic beings, and music is pure energy. **(Monè Long)**





The music that I usually listen to is with a form of social justice music that I can feel my emotions. Also, the kind of music I listen to is jazz, salsa, and reggae. I think it depends—how I feel is what I will choose.

the same time a bit sad, I listen to the blues. And when I feel the need to heal my mind and reset within myself, I listen to the native healing songs.

In all, music is a way I express my love, compassion, my sadness, and definitely my happiness. I love music! **(Saul Naxi Perez)**

Music is culture. Music for me is art, a voice, feelings, a safe space to express my mood. Music inspires me; music is for releasing the stress. Music is magic. Music is a powerful weapon for creating amazing things.

Music helps to remind me that it's good to take a pause in my busy life and be aware of the present moment.

Music is also a way to express our intentions or feelings to someone or to bring to a community event, or any event. **(Maricela Martinez Munguia)**



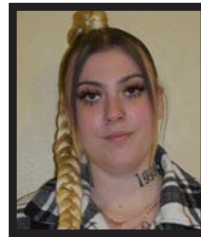
I love music. It's relaxing, gives me calm. I listen to music in the morning to help gain energy for my start of the day. Just hearing a song can lift my spirit. I use music for many different reasons. Music is important to my life. I enjoy

all music. I grew up on blues, jazz, on what they may call the oldies but goodies. I can use music in many ways: gatherings, cleaning, working out. Music is motivating and affects me sometimes in good and bad. Just to note that this century's music sometimes gives me a headache, mostly from the beats, but more from the lyrics that are used to target the youth and the mentality from where it's coming from. **(Lavinia Miller)**



Music is a way to express my feelings. I listen to cumbia, blues, bachata, healing songs of Native Americans. My mind dictates how my feelings are coming

through my heart. When I feel happy and I want to dance, I listen to cumbia and bachata. When I feel in love and at



Music helps me tune out things I am going through. When music is on, I don't only hear it, I feel the words and beats running through my veins. It is my escape, my distraction from the world. I can usually relate in some way to most

of the music I enjoy, which isn't always a great thing, but it still fills me with peace, serenity, and love. **(Keely Nelson-Gray)**



Music can be like a therapy. It can clear your mind of things. You can relate to things in music also. Music also makes time go so much more quickly. I don't know what I would do without music. At work,

I sing along, hum to the rhythm, and it makes my work feel so much easier, and makes the day end faster. Music can also change your mood really quickly. **(Gael Rodriguez)**



I listen to music to uplift me when I wake up in the morning before work, while I'm getting ready. What music means to me is life, hard work, and living a different lifestyle. I like different music. My favorites are rap and R&B, old



R&B soulful music, gospel music. I listen to whatever makes me feel my mood in that moment—sad, happy, in love, broken-hearted—whatever I feel. **(Kiana Sims)**



Music for me sets the tone, mood, cadence of my emotions at the present time. I listen to a wide range of music, from jazz, rhythm and blues, hip hop, pop, gospel, and country Western to even opera (classical). Music also

serves as a source of therapeutic release for me when my emotions may feel overbearing or too much for me to hold onto. I let the lyrics of certain songs tell my story at the time. Music has lent me a shoulder to cry on, music has congratulated me for my accomplishments, and music has celebrated my birthday. I love and appreciate music for loving me no matter what I go through. **(Dominique Smith)**



Music means a lot to me and my culture. Music has always been a way for African Americans to express themselves. It does not matter your mood, there is a song for everything, whether you're happy, sad, mad, or misguided.

Music gives a voice to unspoken issues. It's a guide that helps the soul. I listen to 90s R&B music, like Mary 5, Jodeci, Avant, Aliyah, Whitney Houston, and more. **(Tiara Smith)**



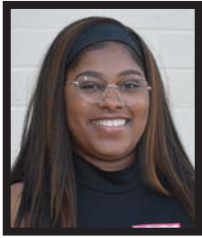
Music is my getaway, my relaxation. I listen to all types of music, from Spanish to English. It includes jazz, blues, and hip hop, as well as Spanish rock, salsa, corridos, and some country. Growing up and having my mom

blast her favorite songs in Spanish when she was cleaning, that will forever be a memory I never forget. Music affects me in many ways. When I'm feeling sad or happy, it gets me in a mood to get motivated. Music is a big part of my life. **(Roxanna Sobrevilla)**



Music is a way to forget about my problems, or when I'm happy, cleaning, doing something/ anything. I love music. There are so many types of music; I am always open to listening to any kind of music. But when it

comes to my favorite type of music, I like to listen to reggaeton, bachata, cumbia, and some of my English songs like Ariana Grande and Selena Gomez. When I'm sad, I tend to listen to blues heartbreak, even though I'm not going through one. When I'm doing stuff, like cleaning my room, I like to listen to more upbeat songs. It helps me get into cleaning mode. **(Lupita Valerio Aragon)**



Music is my everything! There is a song for when I'm happy, depressed, or just plain chillin'. I quote songs every day, all day. I can dance to music. As long as you have a great beat and meaningful lyrics, you got me. The lyrics don't always have to be meaningful; they can be fun!

Music brings back memories and different feelings. I love all styles—Rap, R&B, country, hip hop, Latin, reggae, reggaeton, I love it all! I love kids' music too! Disney is one of my favorites. It takes me back to my childhood when I didn't have a care in the world. "Music is what you feel when you hear it." —Jekeiria B. This is so true to me, too! Emily, your father's music is amazing and breathtaking! I can listen all day! **(Amanda Willis)**



Music to me is a way for me to relax my mind and go into another world for a few moments. I mostly listen to upbeat music to boost my mood. Sometimes I listen to old music that my mom would play when I was a kid as a way to comfort me. Music is a way to express myself and let loose. **(Andrea White)**

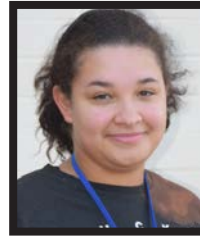


Music is life. I have never known a time without it. My mother was an avid music lover and a singer. My father played the trombone in a blues band. I have music in my DNA. All music evokes

feelings in and from me. No matter the situation, there is a song for it. Music can heal; when I'm feeling a certain way and I don't know what it is, I go to music to hash it out. I play song after song until the lock clicks, and out comes the feelings I couldn't put my finger on.

Music always knows the way. Music is memory. When I want to remember a particular time or place, I play a song I heard then. This song your dad is

playing was in a movie my husband and I used to watch called "Untamed Hearts." Listening to Nat King Cole's "Nature Boy" always brings me back to this happy time in my life. Music is LIFE! **(Mya Whitson)**



Music is my therapy. When I listen to music, I imagine myself in a world all by myself and just dancing so freely. When I'm sad, I'll sing my sad songs and let all my feelings fade away. When I'm happy, I dance with my son and watch him smile and laugh. Sometimes I feel like we're in a movie. I love all music and can sing at least one song from almost every type of music. Music heals my soul. **(Sinetra Wilson)**



Music means to me happy, warming, full of life, hope, and a sense of stability, calming fun. I like Motown, R&B, hip hop, rap. Music affects me. I can relate to some things. When it's sad, it makes me happy; it makes me feel like I'm in that situation and brings tears to my eyes. It makes me feel like I'm there; some music makes me mad also. I don't like hate music. But music is my life. In my family we dance and have fun when music is being played. It's also relaxing to hear music. I used the white noise sand a lot with my son. It helped him sleep. I know a few songs that are my favorite, like "I Believe I Can Fly." **(Zykia Wilson)**



# CONNECTING WITH “THE CIRCUIT”

*That day I could hardly wait to get home to tell Papa and Mama the great news . . . but when I opened the door to our shack, I saw that everything we owned was neatly packed in cardboard boxes. —from “The Circuit” by Francisco Jimenez*

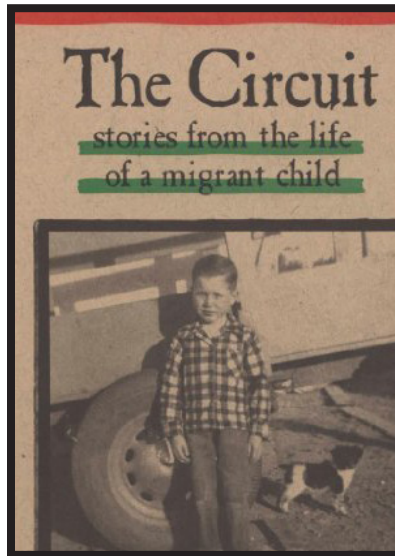
I connect with just the title alone, “Circuit.” In my life, I’ve been there with the good job, the new place to live, then “boom, something happens” and I’m back to square one. Just when I thought everything was going well and in my favor, here comes the circuit. **(Tameia Allen)**

I have also had my fair share of starting at new schools more than once during the year. It’s never a good feeling to finally get comfortable somewhere and have to leave out of the blue. I was nervous every time. **(Antoneah Armour)**

Every part of the story is something I can relate to personally and learn from. My in-laws came from Mexico in search of a better life for my fiancé and his little sisters. Despite the countless and painful struggles, they made it in the end, thankfully. “It doesn’t matter whether you work in the fields like I do or you’re president of this country, we’re both human beings and we should be respected for who we are.” People tend to forget that to be human is to be humane. **(Kaitlin Birdsall)**

I personally relate to being told to pick up my things and go. When I was 11, I moved with no notice to Wisconsin from Gary, IN. This gave me similar feelings of regrouping and feeling out of body experiences like Francisco. **(Jonathan Booeey)**

I can relate personally due to facing homelessness numerous times in my childhood. Similar to the family in the book, we packed up in garbage bags. **(Jekeiria Booker)**



Although the family was poor, they were always together. It’s a family origin story. Growing up, we didn’t have much. I also started school in November. It seems in life, it’s always something. A circuit.

**(Sarah Branch)**

Some days are hard, some are easy. But, never give up. Never stop trying. **(Gabrielle Brown)**

My family has moved before. **(Fredy Carcano)**

I learned the most from his statement that with his family, they held onto the value of hard work and love, and that was the reason they would eventually break through.

**(Mark Español)**

As a young child, we were always moving and couldn’t keep a stable place long enough to create any memories. We were always on the go or on the move. **(Curtrice Foster)**

I learned to be more sympathetic towards everyone. You never know what anyone is going through; a smile can uplift someone.

What I can relate to him about is making movies, writings, or even teaching others. Asking my teachers for help was always nerve wracking, but that’s what school is for.

I like to capitalize from events in my life that helped me learn, grow, and even open my mind. I can relate to him on numerous occasions; learning something new is challenging, but overcoming the ignorance gives you more power than ever. It is something no one can give you or teach you. **(Geresa Homesly)**

When you constantly have to move it takes a toll on you and your family. **(Tyrone Hudson)**

The part of the story that I relate to and learned from is that as an immigrant in this country, like Francisco and his family, I share many of his feelings, especially when it refers to language barriers. When I just came, I was learning English. Every time I had to make a call, I used to first write on a paper and carefully read while I was on the phone. I felt really sad when I did not understand the message that another person was trying to send me. I concluded that English is a very hard language to learn. I am still learning English.

The lesson I learned is that no matter where we are, we always find good people with a good heart ready to offer their help, like Francisco's teacher, who offered to teach him music. I admire Francisco's courage to continue with this education despite the strong barriers that he came across along his life. This is a lesson I am learning from him. **(Aida Inuca)**

I could relate to the schooling aspect. He met an understanding teacher. He had something to look forward to. I remember a time when I had a very stressful childhood/upbringing, and sometimes one encounter from a nice educator was all I needed to get me through to the next day. **(Monè Long)**

I can relate to and learn from the story regarding immigrants, discrimination, and injustice. **(Maricela Martinez)**

From childhood to my adult life, it's been a journey from having children, changing jobs, and being in foster care. I can relate to having to move a lot and becoming comfortable, then being disappointed. **(Lavinia Miller)**

I completely understand Francisco. When I moved to the USA, I had to say goodbye to everything I love. I said goodbye to my parents, brothers and sisters, my friends, my town, my country, but the saddest of all the things to say goodbye to was myself. I said goodbye to my dreams and hopes. I said

goodbye to my education in my own language and to the possibilities to put my education in my own language. So I absolutely understand the pain that Francisco went through. **(Saul Naxi Perez)**

I can relate because there were many times that I didn't feel accepted by many of my peers or teachers. I had to start work at 14 years old to support myself. My parents were gone away in prison and I felt hopeless. I had entered into an alternative program junior year with an amazing teacher who believed in me and helped me so much. She would tell me, "Keely, you always second guess yourself when you were right the first time. Don't do that and go with your gut." I'll never forget that. **(Keely Nelson-Gray)**

A part of the story I can relate to is when I was little, we didn't really have much. Also, I hardly saw my dad because as kids, he would work day and night to feed us and keep a roof over us. I remember as a little kid asking where my "Papa" (Dad) was, and the answer I always heard from my mom was, "Está trabajando" (he's working). The days we got to spend with my dad felt as if he were someone famous. I would be so happy getting to spend time with him. **(Gael Rodriguez)**

How I can relate to the story is moving around due to being in foster care. **(Kiana Sims)**

When my mother passed, I realized my life would be changed forever. I no longer had that comfort zone where I had unconditional support. Like this family, stability was a thing of the past for me as I faced homelessness at times due to the threat of eviction. The cost of living became unbearable for me. I worked where I could to survive, picking up extra hours to stay afloat, living paycheck to paycheck, even putting my educational desires on hold because I couldn't afford it financially or prioritize it in my schedule. I needed to survive. No matter how hard I tried, it just felt like my life was going in circles. **(Dominique Smith)**



When I was younger, I moved around a lot and always had to start a new school. I never had a routine life as a kid, but I became good at adapting. **(Tiara Smith)**

I can personally relate to the story because my family and I were immigrants. We had to move every winter season. I can relate as well as my family was from Mexico and went through this similar experience. **(Roxanna Sobrevilla)**

I had a best friend that moved a lot. She was in Madison for a school semester, then would leave to Mexico for a semester. But I can't imagine how it would feel to leave a place you have a personal attachment to. **(Lupita Valerio)**

The part of this story that I can relate to the most is the constant moving. From 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I went to a different school every single year. I hated getting used to the place because I knew that we would be moving again. I really never got a chance to get settled and make friends until the end of high school. **(Andrea White)**

I relate to having to grow up fast because of poverty. When you have to be responsible like an adult, be it working for pay or extensive house chores, it grows you up. Also moving so much forces you to adjust to new surroundings and people all the time. I had a lot of good and bad

qualities because of frequently moving and being the new girl in school. I was great at reinventing myself to be whatever I wanted to be, which was fun. On a bad note, I never let myself get close to anyone because, just like in the story, I never knew when we would move. It was too hard to leave when I had made connections to the people in my class. **(Mya Whitson)**

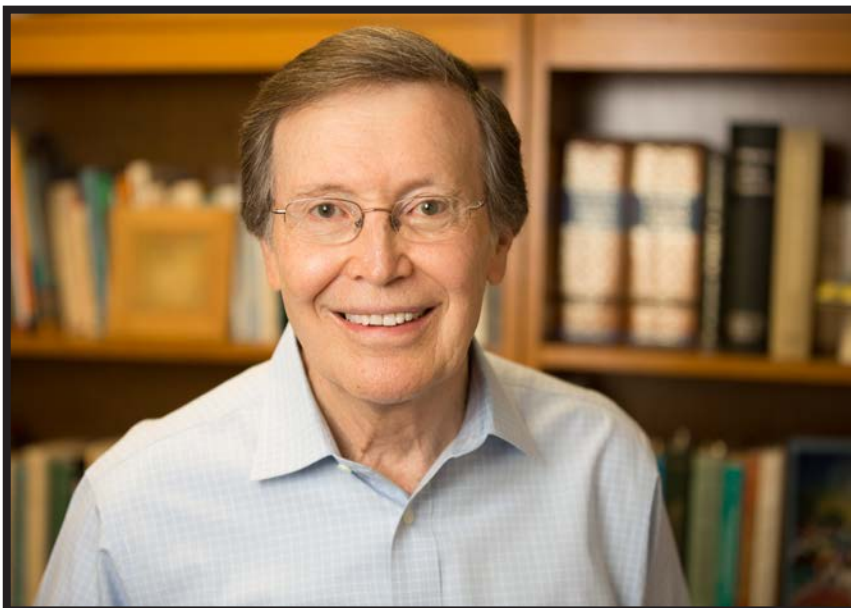
Be grateful for what you have because others may be worse off than you. Everyone has their own story, and most won't get a chance to share theirs.

I can definitely relate to Francisco Jimenez's story. I work as a SEA (special education assistant), and I recently just lost a great relationship with a super unique Spanish-speaking student. Before he started kindergarten with us, the teachers were informed that the student was aggressive and would probably be that way towards students and staff. As time went on, the staff and myself still hadn't seen this behavior we were informed of. The kindergartener became very close with the other students in the class as well as staff. The student engaged in learning and enjoyed being at school. The progress the student was making was tremendous.

The next thing you know, the kindergarten tells me it's the student's last week and he's going to a new school. Even though we didn't speak the same language, we spoke the same language: LOVE. Love is how you learn, grow, and thrive! **(Amanda Willis)**

I can relate to moving around a lot, moving from state to state since I was little. I had to learn everything all over again. **(Sinetra Wilson)**

I can relate to not having a lot growing up as well, and also I moved a lot growing up. My mom was on drugs. I always switched schools a lot as well and I worked young, too, because I wanted nice things like other children. **(Zykia Wilson)**



# LOVING THE AUERBACH LOVE STORY

*Odyssey students read two Wisconsin State Journal stories about Bob and Wanda Auerbach—one about their journey out of poverty and golden anniversary, and the other about Bob's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday benefit for Odyssey after losing his beloved wife.*

Reading the two stories is very inspirational. The couple has been through a lot. They have also overcome a lot. There was a lot of people saying negative things about their relationship, but they let it go in one ear and out the other. They automatically did what they wanted to do. The two were in love, and that's all that mattered to them.

They overcame obstacles growing up; Bob managed to escape concentration camp. They didn't grow up with things "handed to them." In my eyes, they broke that "generational curse" and beat the odds.

No matter what happened in their childhood, they didn't let that get to them. They came out on top! **(Tameia Allen)**

First and foremost, Emily, your parents are phenomenal. Their love seemed like the rare and timeless kind that pops into life more and more rarely. Thank you for sharing their story with us. It certainly reminds me of my parents and their love that I was lucky enough to witness, even if it was for a brief time.

I always hope to emulate that type of relationship with my fiancé. Although we're quite a few decades shy of what Bob and Wanda had, life still throws all sorts of things our way—from losses to findings and everything in between. We even face



discriminations of our own when we walk into small towns still brandishing Confederate flags.

My questions for Bob: What fuels your positive and generous outlook on life to this day? What advice can you give to people who are either still looking for their love or are seeking to keep their love strong and thriving? **(Kaitlin Birdsall)**

I think it's amazing he narrowly escaped Germany to America, and not only that, but he also attended a college in Kentucky and met Wanda. I can relate to this by being a black man

in America who invites love no matter the race or religion. People should love people for who they are. **(Jonathan Booe)**

The thoughts I got from the two articles made me feel inspired to face struggles and love with a different outlook. I really respect how Mr. Auerbach carried himself and his values through the ups and downs of life. I am speechless and moved by how much equality and respect he and his wife had for each other. Their relationship appeared to be very gentle and committed. Also he clung onto his generosity and intelligence. I believe Mr. Auerbach is a real humanitarian, a generous, honorable person. His life proves to me that what I see as valuable, or achievements, are obtainable. **(Jekeiria Booker)**

This was a great read. I loved the quote, “No bank ever would be allowed to speak the ‘head of the household,’” as I believe all relationships should have equal rules. One shouldn’t feel less or more due to gender. Equality and respect are the best ways to hold any relationship together. If there’s disagreement, we can respect each other and sort them out. I feel a lot of relationships fail due to the lack of respect. Some can’t treat their partner as another equal adult, with their own thoughts and ways. **(Sarah Branch)**

Reading these stories gave me chills. This was a true love story. Love is something you’re not supposed to give up on despite the obstacles. The negativity from family and friends, the differences that you two may share—love is love, and no one can stop it.

Bob, I would like to say thank you for being you. Thank you for everything that you’ve done for Odyssey and this community. **(Gabrielle Brown)**

Love breaks adversities. Always having the support of your partner is the best. I wish there were more stories like these in these times. **(Fredy Carcano)**

The first article gave me hope and love. Knowing that two people from opposite worlds could have such a story is amazing. After serving almost a decade in prison, I was losing hope in a normal life. I thought no one would want me, and I had nothing to offer anyone. The article was inspiring to say the least, and I will remember it for as long as I live.

The second article was sad but at the same time encouraging. Knowing that losing someone that you love so much never gets easy, he lived his life honoring her and their love for each other. **(Mark Español)**

This is always a woman’s dream come true: to find true love. In this world today, it’s hard to find love like Bob and Wanda. Reading their story is so magical. To be with someone for so long, I’m glad that Wanda didn’t listen to what the staff were saying about Bob. Right there if she would have listened, she would have lost out on a blessing.



Bob is a wonderful man. He’s done wonderful things, found the love of his life, finished school, and is now volunteering for the retired people in assisted living and hospitals. I am happy to know that he offered so much money for others to get an education who couldn’t afford to go to college. I am blessed to see that there are still good people in the world who are willing to help others like me. **(Curtrice Foster)**

My thoughts on the reading are quite overwhelming! Bob is such a strong lover, not only for himself but for others. Knowing the hurdles and hills that came along the way made him want to spread joy to others. In marriage you become one; it doesn’t matter where you come from nor what you are made of. Bob showed everyone who he is. Good or bad, that takes a strong soul to encourage others who are different to fight for love, joy, and pride.

I always state, “knowledge is power.” Bob is certainly correct with believing in the power of education. Learning more and understanding life will broaden the mind to new experiences. Bob has had so many traumatic experiences that his brain had to rewire and think about life differently for others to understand that love, education, and hard work will eventually beat any form of discrimination due to ignorance. **(Geresa Homesly)**

Love is very strong in a marriage, and to be together as long as they were, means that communication is the best thing for everlasting love and devotion to each other. I feel that all people should be treated as equal. No matter what race, color, or gender you are, we are the same. Hate has no place in the world. **(Tyrone Hudson)**

I loved the stories because they are inspiring, and they touched my heart deeply.

In the first story, "Auerbach Wedding Anniversary," the story talks about how they met in college. The story makes me think of how pure and sincere their love was, and the wishes of so much joy and hopes that families and friends sent to them became a beautiful and inspiring reality.

I love that the story mentions the tools and ingredients that made their marriage full of trust and respect and a long-lasting relationship. This is, for instance, how Robert used to bring coffee to bed for his wife Wanda while they both were working on writing grants. This seems awesome to me.

In the second story, "Passing It On," in the fourth paragraph, it talks about the Statue of Liberty and how Bob's family arrived in New York City by boat. This tells me how brave and courageous his family has been arriving on the new territory in America. I see a family with great values for generations



because I see Bob at his 90 years old fully with the desire to help others to have a better life, helping others to build their path to dream high, helping others to find their inner power. This is impressive to me.

My words to Bob Auerbach are that I feel honored to be part of this beautiful Odyssey Project because it is not just coming to class and reading books and articles and doing assignments, it goes deeper than that. It helps me to look deep in my inner heart and find my real me. It is something that I have not thought about before reading these stories.

**(Aida Inuca)**

Seeing the start of their story, then fast forwarding 50 plus years down the line, is extremely inspiring. The trials and tribulations are so sentimental to me because I am now a part of their story. Imagination speaks volumes to me after reading the story because who would've thought the Odyssey Project would be invented through this. I'm forever grateful, Bob and Wanda. **(Monèl Long)**

Reading this story, I was able to think about the strength of both and the true and unconditional love, overcoming the bittersweet obstacles that life presented to both of them, but above all that they decided to choose to paint rainbow-colored experiences instead of living in the gray that lived in those moments of anguish. I think that for both of them, love was their best armor to get ahead and shine through adversity.

In this story, I can also empathize with the subject of emigration, the advantages, and barriers that one finds when arriving in this country, but they also showed me that being in distant lands can also get ahead, bringing resilience, strength, perseverance, and never stop dreaming; the values that my mother modeled for me continue to accompany me.

Thank you, Bob and Wanda, for your story of love and perseverance. Question for Bob: Why did you choose to be the piano man? **(Maricela Martinez Munguia)**

To be loved! When reading both stories, it gave me more of an insight on what is love and does love cost a thing. Coming from different backgrounds and heritage, it was clear in their eyes that unconditional love was priceless. A question I would have for Bob is, what is one key in communicating with a true loved one? I would love to keep that key in mind. **(Lavinia Miller)**

The two stories are so inspiring, and they touched my heart with feelings of love and compassion. To think about the hardships one has to go through when moving to a new world connects me with Bob's story. I had to migrate to the USA, and it was not easy to adapt to a new way of living. In fact, at times I feel like I do not belong here when hard times come my way. For example, when I have to deal with paperwork and there are forms I can't understand. Moreover, I can't imagine what Bob had to go through with the discrimination in his life as a new kid in the USA. It is hurtful when I think about my experience of being discriminated. For example, the fear and sadness I feel deep inside me when I remember being called a wet back.

Or how I'm being treated at work and other public places; I can hear it with the tone of voice or the glare in the eyes that are speaking to me. Reading Bob's story uplifts my heart and gives me hope that maybe one day I get to tell my story from a different point of view.

I'm honored to meet Bob in person. His actions of love, compassion, and generosity are very inspiring. I hope that one day I can too give back what I'm receiving today from people like Bob.

Thank you, Bob, for being a good father all these years, for inspiring others with your story, and for being a loyal and dedicated husband to your beautiful wife. **(Saul Naxi Perez)**

This story touched my heart from the start. So much love and kindness in the stories. Knowing it's possible to overcome the things Bob did in life gives me a lot of hope for the future. I would like to thank Bob for the huge role he's played in contributing to



this amazing program I get the honor to attend. It gave me a lot of hope on love as well. **(Keely Nelson-Grey)**

It takes a lot of dedication and commitment to achieve their relationship. One question I would ask is what's the number one rule in a long-lasting relationship? **(Gael Rodriguez)**

Like Bob and Wanda, my grandparents married in March of 1950 in Lexington, Mississippi at the tender age of 21 and 22. They were blessed to share a matrimonial household for 55 years before the passing of my grandfather in December of 2005. During the course of their marriage, I was lucky enough to witness the love and respect they shared for each other. I experienced their nurturing and care firsthand. I was able to celebrate their 50th anniversary in a beautiful vow renewal ceremony that inspired me to strive for a love like the love they shared.

After so much hardship and judgement against Bob, it is commendable and inspiring to read about his resilience when faced with adversities and negative expectations. Most people would have given up and given in. Bob didn't give up or give in, he gave back. **(Dominique Smith)**

When it comes to love, I can't wait for when that time comes. I grew up with both parents in the same household. I come from a culture/era that back in the 80s, divorce was not a thing. My parents got married very early. My mother ran away from Mexico to the USA at age 15. I believe having someone to share your life is a beautiful thing.

What kept you going after 2012? Do you dream about her still? **(Roxanna Sobrevilla)**

Both articles are very inspiring. I hope to find love that pure in my future. Some questions for Bob: Why the piano? If you could play a different instrument, what would it be? How do you deal with challenges in life? (advice)

**(Guadalupe Valerio)**

Reading both articles was so inspiring to me. I aspire to meet the love of my life one day and build a foundation for our children, as well as be able to help people obtain an education. Both Wanda and Bob faced many adversities and still were able to build a great life together. One thing that stood out to me was the part where you spoke about the "head of the household" and how Bob wanted equality in his marriage. I was raised in a household where my mom and stepdad had equal roles in the household and they were married 25 years, before my stepfather passed away. I think it's very cool to know more about Emily's parents and how the Odyssey program came about. **(Andrea White)**



People don't believe in true love anymore. It was very heartwarming to read about a love that stood the test of time, trials, and tribulations. I'd like to think that this is what my marriage would have been like, if my husband had not passed in 2009, only six short years after we met, and three years after marriage. I completely agree with Bob that time does not heal the wound of losing a spouse, it merely dulls the pain. **(Mya Whitson)**

Thank you for your donation; your story is so humbling. Thank you for your love of all human life! Thank you for helping people find their voice! You and your family are truly an inspiration, and I strive to be the best that I can so that I can give back to this amazing movement to show my appreciation. I'm so honored to be a part of this life changing project!!!! I will continue to pass the word about Odyssey, and if I ever come across a large sum of money just know I will be donating to Odyssey to keep your family's philosophy going. Odyssey is a part of me now and a way of life. **(Amanda Willis)**

When I think of love, I think of strength and connection. People can be from all over the world and find each other and blend worlds so easily. When you love someone, you devote your whole life to them. Donating \$100,000 is so amazing and thoughtful to help give people another and better chance at life. **(Sinetra Wilson)**

# NOTICING NATURE

*After reading William Wordsworth's poetry, students wrote their own responses—positive or negative, in prose or poetry—to being in nature.*

On a warm, sunny Saturday morning in August, I went hiking at Devil's Lake. It was so soothing walking in the cool shade of the huge red and white pine trees and smelling their citrusy odor. Hearing squirrels and small creatures scurry in and out of the nearby bushes brought a great sense of calmness to me. I walked slowly, sipping my nice cool and refreshing water, just soaking all of the brilliant green, red, and yellow view in and enjoying the noisy silence of nature.  
**(Andrea White)**



When I go hiking at Devil's Lake with my family, I feel one with nature. Air is in my face, my feet are kicking the loose rocks on the floor, and I am talking with my family, seeing bugs, bunnies, birds, and all types of animals. **(Gael Rodriguez)**

I feel like life is a journey, like a maze that you can get lost in without any directions, no handbook or handouts. I feel I am in school, in Phy Ed class, being placed ahead of everyone because I move so fast that no one can keep running. Wondering

## On a Sunny Day of Summer

The soles of my feet feel the texture of the green grass in the park. My body feels the breeze of the wind like the moon kisses the night. The white petals of blossoming elderflowers greet me while slowly I pass by their side.  
**(Aida Inuca)**



when I am going to make it to the finish line, my heart beats fast everyday like I am flying, speeding, zipping, zooming like I am the next new invisible race car. Success is my addiction and high; it also can be my biggest distress. To fight every day feels like physical blows daily and can be the best street fight or the worst nightmare. **(Kiana Sims)**

When I was growing up, my mom didn't have a car or a license. If we needed anything, we had to walk, come rain, sun, snow, even wild turkeys. Fun fact, they are so much more intimidating when



you realize they can indeed fly and the only thing you have to defend yourself is a bucket of ice cream.

This is what we experienced on the bike path we used to walk to the store. We walked through the seasons, from the brilliant shimmering green leaves of summer, to the exuberant colors of fall that danced around us down the long trail, to the barren branches of the grey winter, right back to the rebirth of life in the spring when even the birds couldn't contain their songs.

After my mom passed away, I walked that same path alone. Though it was lonely without her, the intense amount of life all around kept me company. Even today, I find solace in the treetops as the wind flows through the creaky branches.

It's a place of my youth. Now that I walk that same path with my love, I find a deep comfort in knowing the same trees that shield and inspired me as I grew up will still be there for my children as we walk that same path together. **(Kaitlin Birdsall)**

One day, I went on a walk on a path. I didn't know my destination, but I kept walking because I needed to clear my head. It was the evening time; the mosquitos were out, also the lightning bugs. The leaves were blowing due to the cool air. I could hear kids running behind me as their parents followed. The path had little rocks on the ground. I kept walking and walking.

Eventually I ended up at a small pond. I picked up some of those rocks and threw them in the pond. My mind was at ease. The fresh air put my mind,

body, and soul at a different place. I laid on the grass and watched the sky. I closed my eyes and was thinking and thinking. **(Tameia Allen)**

When I was sixteen, I went hiking. It was a hot toasty day. Sweat was accumulating before I even started my journey. Every step I took, you could hear the rocks clashing against one another, the breeze whooshing in my hair. I can smell the fresh air of burning flowers from the sun. When I finally reached the top, I felt as if I'm on top of the world. As the sun went down and the sky changed colors, I made my way down the hill to then drive away. **(Sinetra Wilson)**

I still remember my summer vacations and my father's voice telling me, "The horse is ready." That meant it was time to go to work in the tomato field. That work was every summer, but I liked doing it because when we harvested, I would have a little money for school.

Those were difficult times; after a few years I decided to emigrate to the United States. One day, my wife invited me to her father's garden and there were tomato plants. I cut a leaf and its smell brought back memories of my childhood, my father, and my small town. Being in a tomato field and smelling the leaves brings me memories of all the good times that I spent with my father.

**(Fredy Carcano)**



When I was a teenager, I was in a group home in Frederic, WI. We spent many of our days hiking and visiting bodies of water. Us being so close to Minnesota, one of the lakes we hiked around was Lake Superior. The scenery of the crystal-clear lake was so beautiful. As soon as we came forward, I could feel the wind from the rushing current blowing through my hair. The breeze was cold blowing against my skin but made me feel so warm inside. There were unique rocks of all shapes and sizes lined along the edge. I was far away from home, but being here took my mind off of all of my negative thoughts and let me feel free. **(Antoneah Armour)**



I remember that moment when the great majesty of nature welcomed me between its winds and its warm climate; at the same time, I felt so vulnerable knowing that my parents had passed away. The sadness of my being was accompanied by the waves of the water, moving to know the freedom they have when navigating in different parts of the world, there in various signs that my being was stripped away. I yearned to be like the water that flows or that bird that spreads its wings to reach other horizons of the world without systems that oppress for being immigrants from different lands. With immense sadness, I longed so much to be in that land where I was born and for the last time to say goodbye to my parents. My tears came out of my eyes almost like a rainstorm while in time the afternoon was falling with that wonderful scene of colors that radiate a sunset in Madison, WI. There, I remembered again that life is so ephemeral, and that a day of life is a great opportunity to start living again. **(Maricela Martinez)**

As I was stepping out into the warm summer air, that was when I knew that day was the beginning of a fresh start. The air was so crisp, it was refreshing. There was a breeze I'd never felt before. Everything felt so different, at ease... **(Gabrielle Brown)**

My garden is a very busy place. Work is being done everywhere, as I tend to the weeds, growing this way and that. The busy colony of ants marches past; fast as lightning, a yellow jacket swooshes past my head. They want to get to the Queen Anne's Lace swaying in the wind. My tomatoes are so ripe and happy to see me, but they are restless, I think, and want to come home. The squash and the pumpkins are creeping everywhere; I think it's time to let them grow in the air. **(Mya Whitson)**

As the sweet melodies of birds float through the breeze, it awakens the song that lives within me. Soprano, alto, and bass all meet, composing the perfect symphony: golden rays of sun warm the green bed, which lies beneath me. In this moment my heart skips a beat. I can now feel the birds carrying me with the breeze. **(Sarah Branch)**





remember the sun kissing my skin as I sat there in meditation as the captain chauffeured us through the emerald currents that high fived the boat as we passed. That day, I tapped into my inner elements that Mother Nature provided and let nature guide my mind as the wind whispered directions. **(Dominique Smith)**

Over the summer I took a boat ride on Lake Mendota with some friends. We were surrounded by a glittery dark blue body of water sparkling in the bright warm

golden sun. The propellers sliced through the water, splashing and creating small white waves, leaving ripples of the boat behind.

Now it's time to turn back; the sky is starting to close its warm golden eye, turning the sky sleepy peaceful amber shades of orange, purple, red, and blue, afternoon flowing into the starry dark blue glistening sky. **(Amanda Willis)**

Deep in water somewhere in Puerto Rico, watching the turtles, fish, jellyfish, and crashed ships work in sync, for a moment I see the quote "As above so below" as clear as day. Lost in the vibrations, nature offers every day at the price of \$0.00. I am free, the place where laws don't exist. **(Monèl Long)**



For me, nature brings peace as well as chaos. There have been times growing up as a kid that I personally witnessed the ocean change moods. I lived in a beach house with my parents for eight years of my adolescence in Rockaway, Queens.

In different seasons, the ocean reacted either by living peacefully or by showing its might. I love the ocean most in the winter because of its color and sound. During the winter, the ocean hums at a low hum. The waves crash lighter on the shoreline, and it was white in color because of the snow that would line the white caps.

The ocean also didn't smell as fishy as it did in the hot summer nights. The ocean during the summer and fall is always the most active. Hurricane season would cause the tide to rise so high that the water would reach the flood wall right by our driveway. I guess for me nature can be either a place of peace or a place of danger. **(Mark Español)**

When I was able to swim, I had fun going to the beaches and swimming, playing in the sand, and finding some seashells. The smell of the water was fresh. **(Tyrone Hudson)**

As a child, my family would take an annual trip to the Dells. One sunny day with a slight breeze, we decided to partake in something a little adventurous. We settled on the duck ride. The duck ride was a chartered boat ride on Lake Delton. I

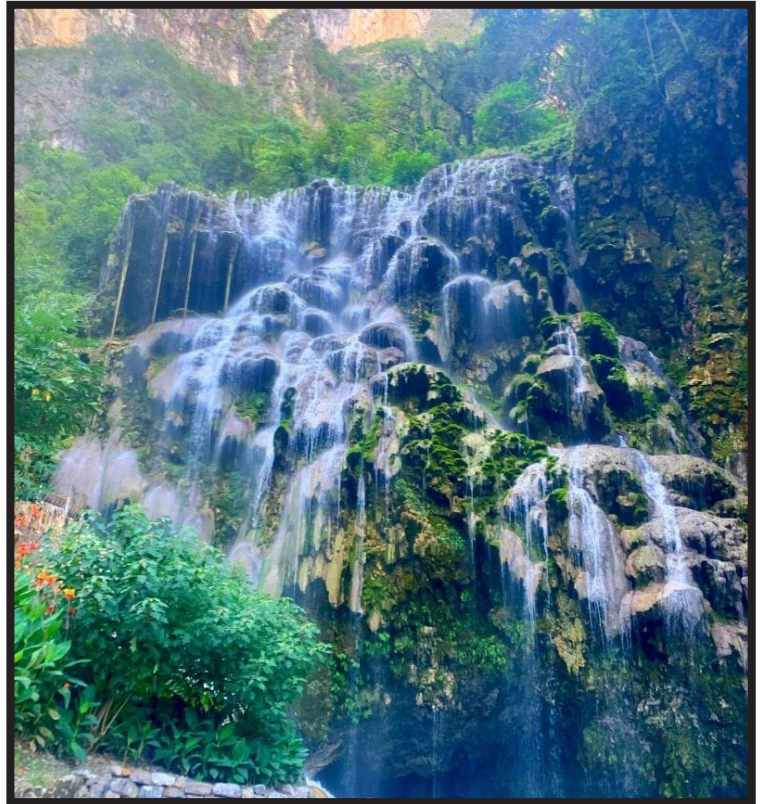
I took a bus to get to Grutas de Tolantongo, Mexico. On my way to the Grutas, all I could see through the windows in the bus was the desert full of dead brown grass, rocks of all sizes, blue and tall mountains in the distance, green cacti of all sizes, shapes and species, and the long black top road that seemed to take forever to get to the waterfall. The bus ride took almost three hours, and every time the bus got closer to our destination the surroundings changed. For example, as we got closer now there were trees accompanied with the raisin-looking rocks all over, the beautiful green cacti, and the giant blue mountains in the distances.

Next, the bus was starting to go down in this valley, and the black top road turned into a dirty, rocky, dusty, very narrow, and very curvy road. At times it felt like the bus was going to full off the very scary cliffs on the side of the road. I was very afraid at times and closed my eyes tight and squeezed my fist grabbing the sides on the seat.

Finally, the bus came to stop at the very bottom of the valley, and when I got out of the bus, I realized that the bus was climbing down from one of the blue mountains I saw in the distance in the desert. That experience alone was a wow experience, and I did not want to think about the ride going back when it was time to leave.

Now the hiking to the waterfall began, and I was so happy and excited to see what was waiting for me at the end of the trail. I was not the only one heading in the direction to the hissing sound; there were others walking with me in the direction I was heading. The dirty trail became very dusty as the herd of people rushed in the same direction. Shoes of all color turned all the same color, the clicks and sounds from cameras were like flies and mosquitos buzzing near my ears, and the surroundings changed once more as we got closer to the waterfall.

The herd took a turn to the left, and all I could hear were sounds of disbelief. Next to us on our right side was a turquoise-colored river that ran in the

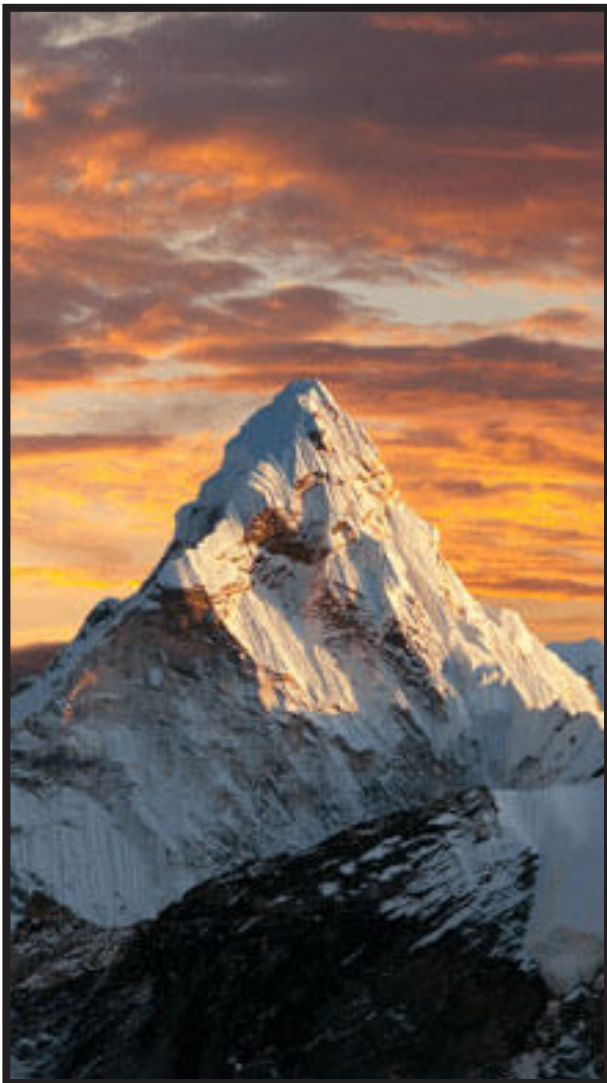


opposite direction of the hike. The water was rushing fast as if it was late to get to its destination. The vegetation on the side of the river was completely different: the grass was no longer dead, the trees were even taller, and now flowers, birds, and frogs were added to the picture.

Finally, we took one more turn and there it was! I was standing right in front of this beautiful tall white curtain. The sounds of grownups yelling, kids screaming and crying, birds singing and chasing each other, and vendors trying to sell me souvenirs were overtaken by this magnificent hissing sound that came from water tumbling down and crushing into the rocks at the bottom of the waterfall. The water falling from high up and crashing into the rocks filled my heart with true happiness as I witnessed the true beauty of Mother Nature. I was so overwhelmed with feelings of all kinds that I was paralyzed like a deer when it sees a light at night. My eyes were full like a full moon, my heart was beating strong rushing blood through all my body, and my mind was blown away. This experience will live in my heart and mind forever, and I cannot wait to go back to this place once more to feel this happiness again. **(Saul Naxi Perez)**

My first time feeling the ocean and the hot Miami breeze, I felt so much peace. The sand in my feet getting stuck in my toes, the sun piercing my skin, the waves overflowing the shore—it was something I had always dreamed of. When I got to the water, the salt filled my mouth, the waves rocked me back and forth, sometimes a little too much. I thought I'd never get out of them, but I didn't care. I felt so free. I felt reality leave me. I had no worry in the world. I never wanted to leave.  
**(Keely Nelson-Gray)**

The sand burning my feet.  
 The birds chirping in my ear.  
 The kids screaming their heads off,  
 The smell of the SPF on my body,  
 And the water salty with jellyfishes.  
 The trip to the coastal tip of Texas. **(Roxanna Sobrevilla)**



Hiking to the top  
 of the tallest mountain  
 Clouds you can almost  
 touch  
 The perfect sunset  
 Trees as tall as  
 the sky. **(Lupita Valerio)**

Outside where the beaming sun warms my skin,  
 Queen bees flock to me, feeling my vibrancy within.  
 Running in horror of being stung,  
 Ending my trail where apples from trees hung.  
 Delightful sights of cherry red apples,  
 Tried to pick some, that was a hassle.  
 Moving forward towards a beautiful breeze,  
 Hoping to spot a mermaid in the wonderful sea.  
 Crashing waves, last to my heart,  
 On the water moving is one.  
 My mind says no! We will not depart!  
 Hair flowing out of its bun,  
 Floating face first while the sun toasts the buns!  
 Back on land from dancing with fish,  
 The big star in the sky is saying goodbye,  
 Watching the cotton candy horizon sends chills down my spine...  
 Skipping off into the late early night, pretty and bright,  
 I see a shooting star, make the best wish of life.  
 My heart throbs with joy and peace...  
 Back to my wheels heading east! **(Geresa Homesly)**

# WANDERING WITH WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

It seems that he is talking about the beauty of the daffodils. When he was wandering, he saw a field of golden daffodils that were moving in the wind. At the moment, he didn't think about how peaceful the site was. When he starts to worry, he's able to use that site for grounding. When I'm having a rough day, I often focus on something that brings me joy. **(Sarah Branch)**

It is the poet's resemblance to nature and the memories that make him happy. **(Fredy Carcano)**

Because of the writing style, I could not grasp the complete feeling in which the piece was written. However, in the opening line, "I wandered lonely as a cloud," it made me think of myself when I was still seeking peace and normalcy in my own life. I too felt like I was in a cloud searching for natural peace. **(Mark Español)**

An idea I got from "I wandered lonely as a cloud" was being in nature alone and at peace. Being in nature to him sounds so fulfilling. When I'm in the woods or on a farm, I love to smell the flowers. I love to listen to the tree leaves shuffle amongst each other. Being one with the earth will cleanse you and open you up to a lot of peace and serenity. **(Geresa Homesly)**

William Wordsworth uses his words very clearly and precisely because I see that he is talking about what he sees and feels in a specific place of nature. Also, when I read the verse, I feel myself in that place and as calm as nature is for me.

## "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils.  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze . . .  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance . . .  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

Also, in the line "What wealth the show to me had brought," I got caught by the word "wealth" because for me "wealth" in the poem means the wealth, power, energy, and health that nature can offer to me. **(Aida Inuca)**

A few terms that confused me were "o'er" and "oft." I enjoyed how Mr. Wordsworth speaks about how rich he is simply by watching nature. When I read it a second time, I thought... Oh, this is my type of guy. **(Monèl Long)**

In this poem I can identify with the lines "Fluttering and dancing in the breeze." In my life I have found many moments where I have to let myself flow like the breeze and immerse myself in the wisdom of nature, where each season of the year teaches me that each change is for the better; we cannot be in the same mood all the time because that would be a very boring life. Nature really teaches us a lot about the spirituality of being in the same universe.

**(Maricela Martinez)**



"I wandered lonely as a cloud" was the poem that stuck out to me. It was a noticeably short poem but seemed so real from the actual vision to the words he used. It was not confusing or misunderstood. From his poem I was able to feel he was happy feeling good as a cloud that floats on high o'er vales and hills.

There was a time I was not having the best of a day; there was a lot wrong, and I could not understand what the actual problem was. The sun shone into my eyes as I sat on the back of my porch. Smells of the pine trees and the flowers were spring cleaning. I gripped the chair that I sat in, and the words came to my mouth.

Our father who is in heaven, give me the strength to overcome my fears and disadvantages. Teach me to be more patient with you and my life. As I hear the bird singing in my ear, I continue to say the words keep me pure as whole. Keep my mind clear; because of you I am here and willing to accept my failures. Today I pray to you, Amen. (**Lavinia Miller**)

It is clear but confusing at the same time when Wordsworth mentions him lying down on his couch. It is clear that he is taking himself with his imagination to places (real places), but then I do not know if he has been in these places or they're just of his own imagination. I do connect with Wordsworth because I to go to places with my imagination while lying down on my couch. (**Saul Naxi Perez**)

The beginning of "I wandered lonely as a cloud" related to my childhood a lot. I spent a lot of time playing with daffodils in my front yard, going to the lake and playing on the beach. I loved swimming and being outside as a child. Thinking back to those moments always gives me a happy nostalgic feeling. I very much related to this poem. (**Keely Nelson-Gray**)

What seems very clear to me is that he is describing nature, a point of view, his journey. He started off as being lonely, so to have the readers relate and envision how he feels, he describes a cloud in the



sky. Once he got closer to a crowd, he described the crowd as daffodils. (**Kiana Sims**)

"I wandered lonely as a cloud" was clear to me on how he is alone admiring all the beautiful flowers. It cost him nothing to enjoy the scenery of the daffodils. When he thinks of the flowers, it brings him pure happiness. My image of the poem brings me to a happy place. It's a relaxation and just using your mind can change your mood. (**Roxanna Sobrevilla**)

When I was reading the first part, I could picture myself as a cloud, and I have seen that part of nature as he describes it. An image I have is when I went hiking at Devil's Lake; being at the top was the most beautiful part of nature I have seen. (**Lupita Valerio**)

In "I wandered lonely as a cloud" everything seemed very clear to me, from me picturing bright yellow daffodils underneath a big tree by the lake, to them blowing carefree in the breeze. I very often find myself in the winter or when I've just been in the house for a few days thinking about times when I was in nature. This poem was a perfect example of that. Sometimes you see small things in nature that bring you joy. Then you think of it anytime you need a little boost in your mood. (**Andrea White**)

It's clear to me that the author likes to be alone, and when he is, he lets his mind wander to a lonely field of daffodils. I like this one the most because I often find I am less lonely when I am alone in a valley of wildflowers, or even in my garden. Plants and flowers and trees have so much life in them. (**Mya Whitson**)

# ALUMNI CORNER

## MEET HEZOUWE WALADA

*In this article entitled “Student’s remarkable journey to starting his undergraduate degree at age 28, living his dream” for UW News on September 9, 2020, Lisa Bauer tells the story of Odyssey graduate Hezouwe Walada. Hezouwe will graduate from UW in May 2023 and apply to medical school.*



In his village of Koumea in Togo, Africa, 8-year-old Hezouwe Walada watched nearly half of his community—including three of his young cousins—die of malaria in early 2000. He decided then and there he wanted to become a doctor.

But his dream seemed unattainable—his family was poor, the nearest school was far from his village and he didn’t even have shoes.

After 20 years, nearly 6,000 miles and a host of trials and tribulations, Walada started at the University of Wisconsin–Madison as a first-year student majoring in biochemistry this fall, with plans to eventually go to medical school.

“Everything is possible if you are willing to work hard and sacrifice,” says Walada, a graduate of both the UW Odyssey Project and Badger Ready. “All you have to do is believe and keep asking questions.”

### From Togo to Madison

As a young child, when Walada made up his mind that he wanted to someday study medicine, he asked his father if he could attend school. He could, his father said, but not before he did morning chores. So Walada woke up 3 a.m., worked on the farm for three hours, walked 15 miles to school then walked 15 miles home at the end of the day.

“When I finished my chores, I started running to school,” he says. “I just really wanted to be a doctor and help people in my village and around the world.”

Walada studied hard and got admitted to one of the best high schools in Togo. He moved away from home and all he ever knew.

“I felt different because all my classmates had nice clothes, nice shoes and money,” he says. “I came there with two shirts, three shorts and one pair of shoes. Even though I was at the top of the class, I felt like I didn’t belong there. I was always sad because I didn’t have anything.”

But Walada persevered and eventually won a visa to go to the U.S. At age 17, he left his country for the first time, alone.

“I was terrified, but I kept reminding myself of my dream,” he says. “I knew people needed me to become a doctor. I will never forget the suffering I saw in my village. I still have flashbacks today.”

In 2009, Walada made it to Madison. Years before, he’d heard a teacher say that the University of Wisconsin–Madison was a prestigious institution. He did research online and decided to set his sights on becoming a Badger.

But his dream was delayed 10 more years.

Lacking resources and knowing very little English, Walada struggled in Wisconsin. He enrolled at Madison College, but without a stable home or sometimes even food to eat, his education stalled. He started “working like crazy”—mainly as a caregiver—to earn and save money. He met his wife, settled down and they had a daughter.

Walada began to wonder if he could ever return to his dream of becoming a physician, but he refused to give up. Then, someone told him about the Odyssey Project.



### Continuing his odyssey

In 2017, Walada applied to the UW Odyssey Project, a six-credit English literature course that helps low-income adults get a jump start at earning college degrees. Odyssey became Walada’s reentry into living his dream.

“When I learned that I got into Odyssey, I was so happy,” he says. “Odyssey gave me friends, taught me how to be confident and showed me I can defy the odds and make my dream come true. I needed Odyssey to become the person that I am today.”

Through reading, writing about and engaging in lively discussions of Emily Dickinson, Martin Luther King Jr, Walt Whitman, Shakespeare, Lorraine

Hansberry and more, Walada found his own voice and found another family in his fellow Odyssey classmates. He heard stories that sounded similar to his own, learned more about slavery and was inspired to fight against injustice and for equality in the U.S. He shared stories from his culture and home country.

“Odyssey was my family, not just school. Everyone was so welcoming, and I felt that I wasn’t alone anymore,” he says. “Odyssey really taught me about life, about ambition and about how to gain confidence to be what I want to be.”



Walada then found another opportunity to keep making progress toward his dream: the Badger Ready program.

### **Getting Badger ready**

In 2019, Walada entered the Badger Ready program, which helps adult students make the transition to college by supporting them through tailored UW–Madison coursework. As a University Special student, and scholarship recipient, Walada, who speaks seven languages, immersed himself in an English 100 class first semester.

“I was so excited that I was finally here, I went to the classroom the night before class and picked out where I wanted to sit,” he says. “I sat there alone in the classroom and thanked God for this opportunity and this journey.”

Second semester as a Badger Ready student, Walada took Biology 130. He was devastated when he got a 50 percent on his first exam. But his Badger Ready advisor encouraged him to ask questions and visit the professor during office hours. He did—after every lecture—and came out of the class with an A.

Walada successfully completed his program requirements in three semesters and was ready to apply as a transfer student to UW–Madison for fall 2020.



"I'm on a mission here in the U.S.," he says, adding that he does see the injustice in America and vows to work against it. "This is a great country, and if I have an opportunity, I will take it. I want to give something back to this country, to Africa, to the world."

Closer to a dream come true

As a newly admitted transfer student amid an unstable time, Walada is now an undergraduate majoring in biochemistry with a pre-health focus.

"I am ready," he says, adding that he's been studying all summer to prepare for the classes he is taking this fall. "I can't believe this dream is coming true."

After his undergraduate studies, Walada wants to attend UW–Madison' School of Medicine and Public Health to study cardiology.

Where does he see himself in another 20 years? His dreams remain big and judging by his path so far, anything is possible: "I hope to help my country make changes to the medical system, maybe I would help other communities around the world, too, through Doctors without Borders."

In the meantime, Walada plans to enjoy his time at UW–Madison, getting involved in a pre-health group, social justice organizations and with the Black community. He wants to relish his achievements, continue to work hard and pay it forward.

"You cannot understand how thrilled that I am to be a student here," he says. "My advice to people fighting for their dreams is believe in yourself. Seize opportunities. Fight for your moment because it is going to come for you."

