

ODYSSEY ORACLE

POWERFUL POETRY AND PROSE



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Emily Auerbach, Executive Director; Oracle Editor
Emily Azad, Program Manager; Classroom Photographer
Sarah Lesmire, Assistant Program & Development Manager; Classroom Photographer
Christina DeMars, Odyssey Coordinator; Oracle Assistant
Beth Auerbach, Oracle Designer

emily.auerbach@wisc.edu
emily.azad@wisc.edu

608-712-6321
608-590-5862

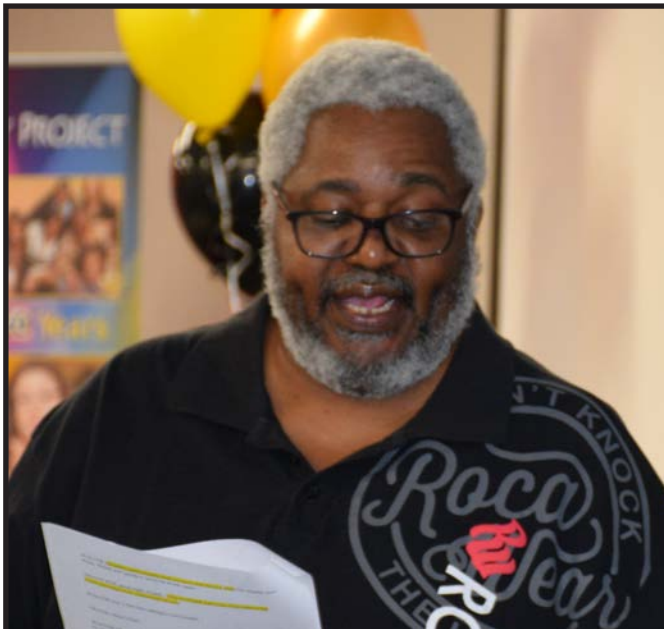
SONGS OF OURSELVES



SONG OF DOMINIQUE BY DOMINIQUE SMITH

I am Dominique,
A body of water touching the shores of Africa
To the ports of the “America” we seek.
A descendant of Jacob, the daughter of George and Marie
This is what made me.

I am a woman
Learning what to be.
Loved, respected, supported, and critiqued
Finding the true meaning of what is Dominique
I am a mother,
Protectively nurturing a legacy
To grow prosperously beyond the parts of me.
To carry on with lyrics
I sing sweetly to thee.
I am a sister
The youngest of three.
Navigating our own lives
While maintaining as family.
I am this song
Crescendoing through life’s obstacles
Adapting to the tone changes.
Finding the correct note
While exploring my octave ranges.
I am Dominique and She is me
I sing this song of mine proudly.



SONG OF TYRONE BY TYRONE OZEA HUDSON SR.

I am Tyrone
The oldest of seven boys
My brother’s names are Linzy,
Otis, Gregory (deceased),
Antonio, Delmar, and Roman.

My mom was a strong black woman who raised us
by herself.

I am who I am today because of her.

I am an ex-chef (retired).

I am a man of many trades and I love music and
sports.

I am a proud father of eight children, thirty-four
grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

I am Tyrone.



**SONG OF MARK
BY MARK ESPAÑOL**

I am Mark, a product of an environment where the dealer was the hero, where the working man was looked down on, and where every hardship life had to gift found its way to my doorstep.

I am Mark, a survivor of drug addiction, domestic violence, child abuse, and gang life. Educated behind prison walls, I possess the brawn to get up after every fall. I am Mark...

I am Mark, a student at UW, a barber that inspires, a DJ that rocks, a friend that you can rely on, and now a business owner. A lifelong student to life itself and a dedicated seeker of truth and love, I am Mark...



**SONG OF SINETRA
BY SINETRA WILSON**

I am Sinetra
I am black and Italian
I am beauty and divine
Loud and crazy but hard to find.
I am a lover, I'm a mother

I am brave, I'm a warrior.
I am Sinetra.



**SONG OF KIANA
BY KIANA SIMS**

I am Kiana, a real woman. That's why I am always finding my way, 'cause it's no other way, Kiana, who is me? Who is she? Who is her, a mother like no other.

Never will be another, and I am that mother. Nobody's baby mother!!! This girl is rider. I am keep shining brighter, ring around the rosey for competitors.

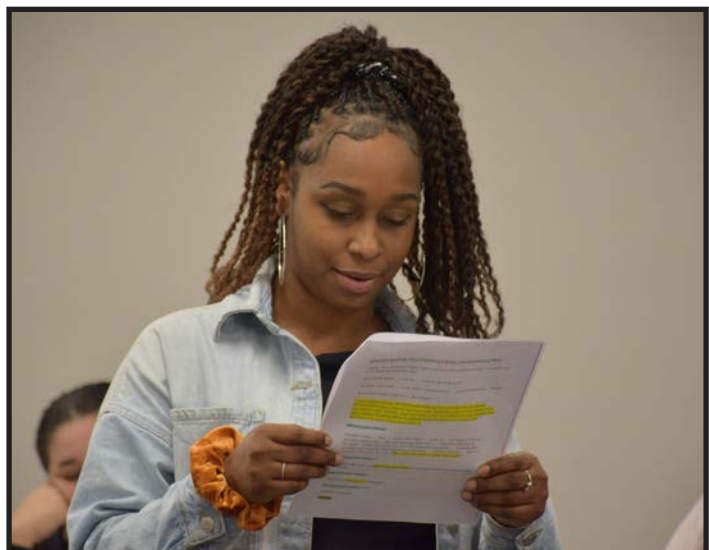
Providers, always delivering guidance, resilient, brilliant like a diamond, well always shine brighter. Outstanding, amazing, courageous. Kiana's always smarter, never a liar, this girl is on fire (hotter).

Ready to start a fire, Kiana never backs down, a real fighter, finding my way 'cause there's no other way. Now get out of my way!! I am Kiana.

My turn now, get ready for her, Kiana fighter. Never a flighter. I am Kiana.

A real-life bonfire winner now give me my title 'cause I feel untitled.

I am Kiana, there never will be another, 'cause I am that mother, you never are another!!!





**SONG OF SAÚL
BY SAÚL NAXI PEREZ**

I am Saúl.

I am my own creator.

I am not the same in every moment. My mind evolves with every thought.

I create my own suffering and I create my own happiness.

I am Saúl. I create my world through my thoughts. My mental continuum never stops.

I am Saúl. My goal in life is to bestow a delightful world free from hatred, detachment, and ignorance.

In all, my mind is a creator machine of worlds I live in. Hurry, there is not time! I must control my mind and tame it to create the nature of emptiness to cease all my suffering and live an everlasting happiness.

I am Saúl, I am my own creator.



**SONG OF TAMEIA
BY TAMEIA ALLEN**

I am Tameia

I am a daughter of a king and queen.

I am a mother to four.

I am a lover and protector.

I am a brown-skinned young woman in my twenties.

I am smart and quiet.

I am Tameia.



**SONG OF AMANDA
I AM AMANDA**

I am a mother

I am my father's twin

I am the youngest
of three sisters

I am a dreamer

I am my worst critic

I am discovering self-love

I am a student of life lessons

I am

I am hearing my voice grow louder and stronger

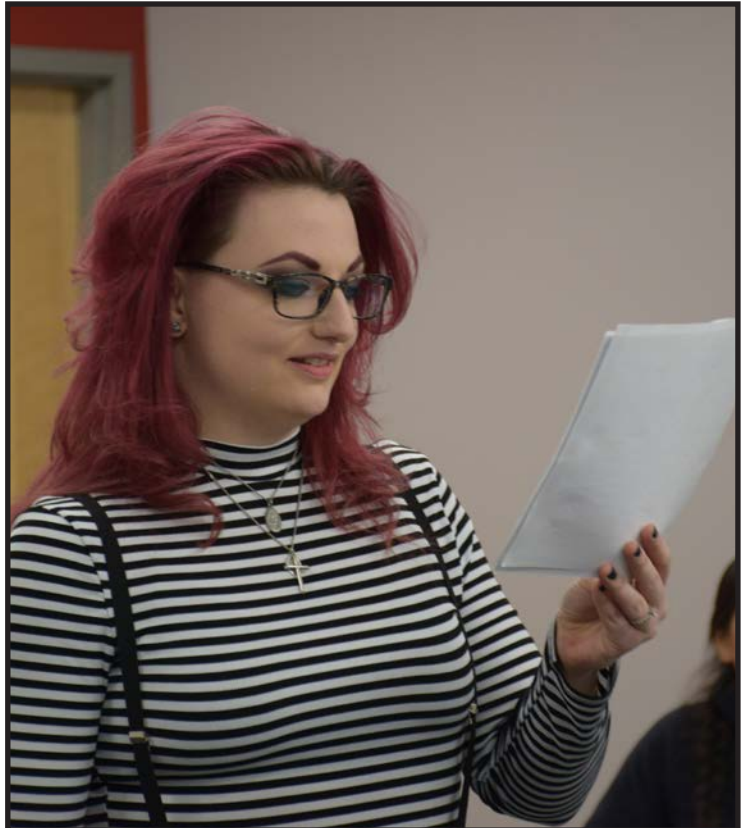
I am a survivor



SONG OF KAITLIN
BY KAITLIN KYLE BIRDSALL

I am Kaitlin Kyle
 A songbird with a lost voice.
 An aesthete of stories,
 and the tangible things attached to them.
 I am a childless mother

despite being a motherless child.
 A sister to the lost and found
 and lost again.
 A human fireplace
 filling the occupied space with
 warmth, light, and comfort
 where I can.
 At least according to those
 who know me best.
 An adolescent guided by
 the dead poets society.
 Forever borrowing words from
 those poets who spoke better than I.
 Sucking on the marrow of life
 trying desperately not to choke on the bone.
 'O Captain, my Captain,'
 I stand!
 Because it is true, we stay alive for
 the poetry, beauty, romance, and love.
 'O unspeakable passionate love'
 'O Captain my Captain'
 I continue to stand!
 Forever haunted by phrases and thoughts
 of yesteryear that have no need to echo the way they do.



나는 인정하기 싫다 (naneun injeonghagi silh-eo – I hate to admit)
 just how ignorant I am of the world
 and everything around me,
 pero estoy aprendiendo para mi familia. (but I'm learning for my family).
 Tearing, clawing, ripping apart
 the most breakable of barriers
 that divide me from understanding the world.
 Educate me please,
 I need to learn more.
 I wish to learn more.
 O Captain, my Captain,
 lend me your voice,
 because this songbird wishes to sing again.
 I am Kaitlin Kyle.



**SONG OF GUADALUPE
BY GUADALUPE VALERIO ARAGON**

I am Guadalupe
I am also Lupita
I am a daughter and a sister
I am a student and a hard worker
I am a girl that has big dreams

I am Guadalupe, but you can call me Lupita.



**SONG OF AIDA
BY AIDA INUCA**

My name is Aida
The daughter of a Kichwa woman
The light of the sun, and the moon of the night.
My name is Aida, I embroidered with my needles
Thousands of blouses with delight

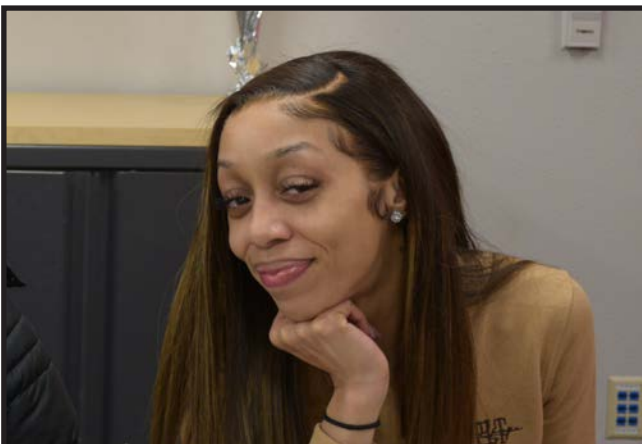
My hands felt the rough touch of the quinoa harvest
It was my only food, the gift of mother nature.
My name is Aida, and I take care of my family,
And teach the Kichwa language to others if they want.
My land is Pijal/Otavalo, but now I am in Madison.
I tried all the things, but my mind is still in the Andes
Yana Urku spirit, it still talks to me in my dreams and soul
My name is Aida, I cook champus-api for my family
I tell them we spoke Pukina, the language of the Incas.
I say we belong to the universe, the love of Mother Earth.
My name is Aida, no matter what it is, I am a fortunate Doula
And joyful being, with so much gratitude for being alive.
What else can I ask for if I have all I need, my family and my community
With whom I share and breathe.



Vocabulary:

Yana Urku = One of the mountains in the Andes Mountain chain

Champus api = traditional food/warm drink from the Andes.



**SONG OF GABRIELLE
BY GABRIELLE BROWN**

I am Gabrielle.
I am a black woman,
A mother of three,
Healing and growing
at my own pace,
Becoming unapologetically my own true self,
Loving myself daily more and more,
Beautiful, fierce, and shy with a pinch of spice,
Just a young girl with a beautiful soul...



**SONG OF KEELY
BY KEELY NELSON-GRAY**

I am Keely.
I am a creator.
I am a mother.
I am moving through the universe,
effortlessly.

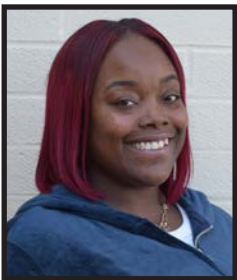
Manifesting my desires,
Living through my truths,
Loving those who love me.
My faith in God guides me, as He heals my wounds,
Growing like a flower, soon to blossom and bloom.
Bringing forward my flaws and learning to love them.
I am a creator
I am a mother
I am Keely.



**SONG OF CURTRICE
BY CURTRICE FOSTER**

I am Curtrice,
the oldest child out of two.
I am a mother of three and a
grandmother of three young men.
I am facing a lot of challenges;

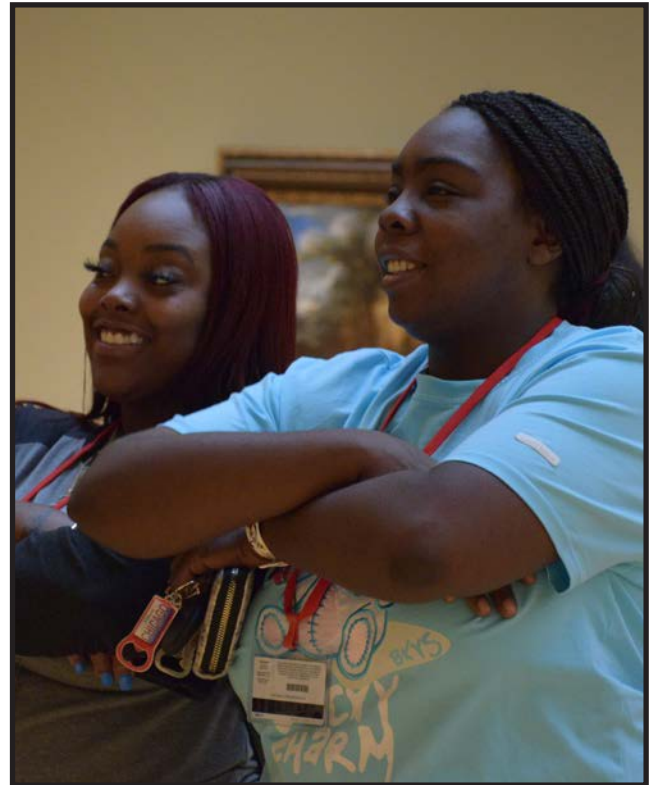
that's making me stronger.
I am a strong black woman.
I am on a new journey to success.
I am Curtrice.



**SONG OF ZYKIA
BY ZYKIA WILSON**

I am Zykia Wilson
mother of two boys and one girl
I was blessed with three
I am very outgoing and very shy
sometimes

but I still manage to be me
I'm a leader and dedicated to anything I do
I'm Zykia and this is what I do
kindhearted and sometimes an over-thinker
very creative and sometimes very persuasive
I'm a black queen who wants to fulfill all of her dreams
I have a big heart and this is why
I don't ever wanna fall apart





**SONG OF MONÉL
BY MONÉL LONG**

I am Monél
I use my magic eyes
To make sense of how I use my time.
Each step I take with pride
As I cross through state lines

I dream high and every
Accomplishment has been mine
Before I walk through the door.
My mind is my golden ticket.
I am Monél,
Monél with the magical eyes, legs that
Cross state lines and a mind that's NOT bound to time.



**SONG OF FREDY
BY FREDY CARCANO**

I am Fredy
I am Mexican
I am from where the river has no end
I am from where the sun is our blanket and
stars are our lights at night

I am from where we like to talk as a family
I am a father, son, husband, brother, friend of everybody
I am Fredy



**SONG OF MARICELA
BY MARICELA MARTINEZ MUNGUIA**

I am Maricela
I am light for the eyes of those who love me
I am worthy
I am a song of resilience and strength
I am the youngest daughter of five siblings

I am from Puebla, Mexico
I am proud of who I am.
I am proud of my roots.
I am a doula and community health worker
I am content with my present
I am the four elements of nature
I am a friend
I am a song
I am joy
I am a safe harbor for myself and others.
I am a healer
I am Maricela.





**SONG OF LAVINIA
BY LAVINIA MILLER**

I am Lavinia, given the name from my
mother's sister's daughter
to a mother whose sister was a cotton picker.
Holding a long line of women who gave
meaning of family love shines within me.

I am pure
I am outgoing
Perfect could not be me.
I am on this journey
Thanks to Odyssey for
The door that was opened to me.



**SONG OF TIARA
BY TIARA SMITH**

I am Tiara,
Beautiful and divine,
Smart and capable
A glorious mother to
A child who thinks I'm a superhero

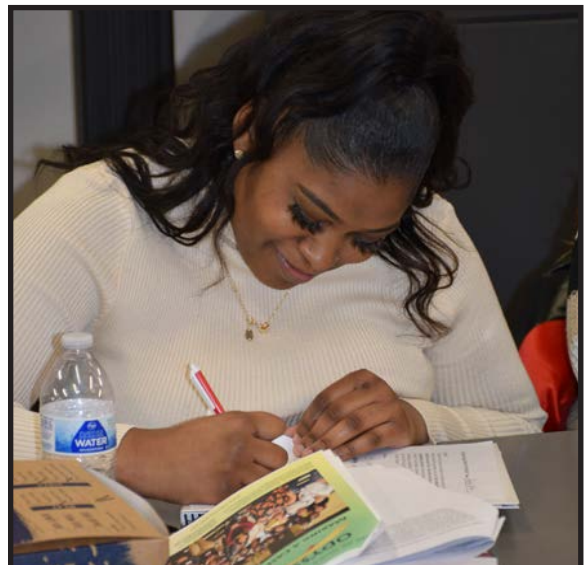
A student eager to gain knowledge,
To be the first generation to
Graduate college.
Built up by a strong black woman
With no degree but a lot of
Street knowledge.
A dream to the admirable, a threat to
the intimidated.
I am Tiara,
soon enough, Tiara the GREATEST.



**SONG OF ANDREA
BY ANDREA WHITE**

I am Andrea—Drea to some.
A mother of two brown-skinned queens.
I'm #9 in a family of 11 children,
but the first to graduate high school.
I'm 5'5", average in height,

but far from average in personality.
I am an advocate for those
who can't advocate for themselves.
A mixture of introverted and social.
I am Andrea.
I'm so many things--
I can't put them into a song.





**SONG OF MYA
BY MYA WHITSON**

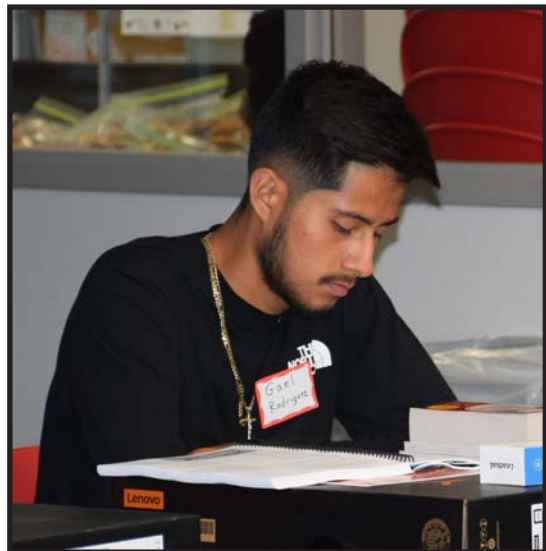
I am Mya
Magnificent
Yearnful
Ambitious
I am Mya
Mother

Young at heart
Abiding
I am Mya
Perfectly imperfect
Student and teacher
Mother and father
Angel and demon
I am everything I need to be
For those I need to keep.



**SONG OF GAEI
BY GAEI RODRIGUEZ**

I am Gael
I love work and my education
And dream one day of my graduation
Aspire to one day be somebody
And not worry about money.



**SONG OF SARAH
BY SARAH BRANCH**

I am Sarah
Daughter of Pamela.
Sister to the world.
Child of the Universe.
I am light filled. Shining.

Remembering what was forgotten.
I am a force within nature.
Blooming.
Energy ... I am
A student of herbs
A learner of crystals
Healer. (Love is who I am.)
An entrepreneur
Sending my gifts to the world.
I am the soul within the body.
I am Sarah.
She is me.
We are free.



SEVEN-WORD POEMS THAT PACK A PUNCH

In "Little Lyric of Great Importance," Langston Hughes wrote, "I wish the rent / was heaven sent." He defined poetry as "the human soul entire, squeezed like a lemon or a lime, drop by drop, into atomic words." So much can be said in just seven carefully chosen words. During a February blizzard when we met via Zoom, some of our staff, guests, and students used the Chat feature to submit seven-word poems.

All hard work, I hope to succeed. **(Anthoneah Armour)**

I hear music, this is heavenly sent. **(Bob Auerbach)**

Nobody should ever be hungry or cold. **(Emily Auerbach)**

Fleeting thoughts are my soul leaking love. **(Brian Benford)**

Fear instilled; I can get passed this. **(Kaitlin Birdsall)**

Ice, ice, I thought it was nice. **(Jonathan Booeey)**

Stressed, a mess, just need to refresh. **(Jekeiria Booker)**

You stole my heritage, not my dignity! **(Char Braxton)**



I wish I was a sleepy cat. **(Christina DeMars)**

There in my heart, I am free. **(Mark Español)**

I sing a song of love and happiness. **(Tyrone Hudson Sr.)**

Scary, slippery roads, no way, stay home **(Aída Inunca)**

No longer strangers - we share our warmth. **(Sarah Lensmire)**

Closing my eyes, I imagine better days. **(Maricela Martinez Munguia)**

Even on Zoom, still feel the room. **(Kevin Mullen)**

Saving and exploring the world, I'm happy. **(Saúl Naxi Perez)**

To be free is to be me. **(Keely Nelson-Gray)**

Hawk flying in the sky is heaven-sent. **(Kiana Sims)**

Talent without hard work is only potential. **(Dominique Smith)**

With broken hearts, broken dreams, now cry! **(Roxanna Sobrevilla)**

I hope I pass my biology test. **(Lupita Valerio)**

Too dark and cold, I need sleep. **(Andrea White)**

To be free I want to see. **(Mya Whitson)**

Was never told about the winter cold. **(Sinetra Wilson)**

Loving me is truly real and brave. **(Zykia Wilson)**



MAKING METAPHORS

I am the ocean
 Deep, dark, mysterious
 Stormy and still
 Friendly and frightening
 An entire world beneath my surface.
 People may never understand
 Powerful currents holding
 Life and distraction in my hand
 Soft waves crashing on hard sand
 Beginnings and endings on new land
 The ocean I am.

(Mya Whitson)

I am a storm
 Powerful and calm
 I water your plants and clean your cars
 With the power of the wind I can
 Destroy your plants and break your cars.

(Sinetra Wilson)

I am a bag wanting to be filled.
 People hold me all the time
 and I want to be filled up with all kinds of stuff.
 People sometimes take things from me. **(Zykia Wilson)**



I am a lustful temptation of love and joy,
 constantly shining in rays of positivity,
 vibrating from the divine.
 I am always on time;
 that term is only an illusion of my mind,
 sprinkling love crumbs of abundance every day in every way.
(Monél Long)

I am a masterpiece,
 beauty that lies in the eyes of its beholder.

I am a beautiful disaster
 An organized catastrophe
 So to fully enjoy me
 Open your third eye
 And look beyond what
 You think you see.

(Jekeiria Booker)



I used to be a rock,
But now I'm a diamond, shiny and unique,
made from tons of pressure.
Nothing will ever break me.

(Geresa Homesly)

I am a diamond
and I'm made from pressure.
I am a diamond in the rough.
I am a diamond! A girl's best friend.

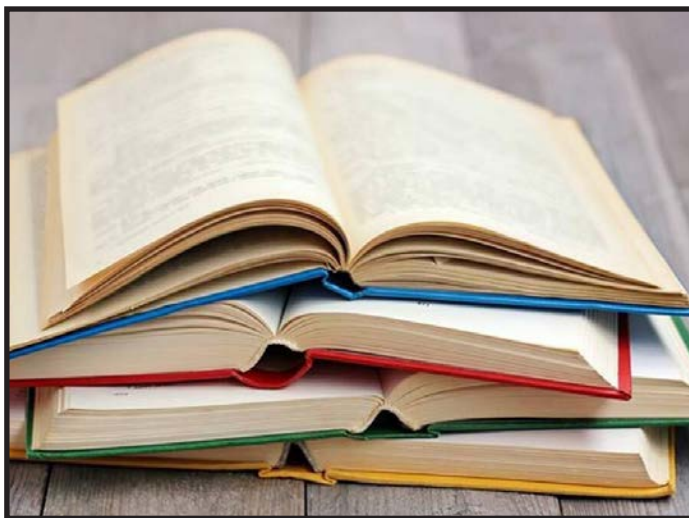
(Roxanna Sobrevilla)

I am a bird that flies high in the sky.
Sometimes I fly south for the winter
and come back north when the weather warms up
or sometimes I may stay here in the north
and just deal with the winter weather.

(Tyrone Hudson Sr.)

I am a junco bird
Small and hidden
I only peek out into the world for a short while,
Until danger seems to near,
Then I take flight to the safety of my hiding place.
A small little thing
Longing to become as dangerous as
A cooper's hawk, bird of prey.

(Kaitlin Birdsall)



I am a book
Many pages
Many chapters
Ups, downs, and surprises.
Fairytale and Tragedies.
Hopeful that I'll have a
happily ever after.

(Andrea White)

I am a book
Forming the chapters of life
Birth, growth, development,
With an epilogue as a wife.

(Dominique Smith)

I am not nobody's example because I am a leader
Never a follower because I am in power
So I need to collect my flowers. **(Kiana Sims)**

A puzzle with no instructions
is how I would describe my life,
pieces that need to be connected into one.
But now I am the instructions
that piece together my own puzzle.

(Lupita Valerio)

My mind is a web browser
13 tabs are open, 4 frozen
And I don't know
where the music is coming from.
Control, ALT, delete.
Reset me.

(Tiara Smith)



I used to be a baby cub,
Frightened and afraid of the wilderness!
Now I am a Simba
Frightened of nothing
Not afraid of anything
Protecting the wilderness!

(Tameia Allen)

I used to be a shadow
but now I am the light used to brighten up a room.
Give an idea in your mind and shine at any time of the day.
The light is to help get you and me through that tunnel.

(Lavinia Miller)

I used to be a turtle crawling slowly through my life,
but now I feel like a cheetah running through life.

(Gael Rodriguez)

I am a warrior,
a warrior that learned to fight
during the battles of life.
Once a lost soul, I found the courage to fight
while in the pits of depression,
addiction, and guilt.
I looked up from despair and the fighter
that lives in my spirit awakened.
I marched forward, and now the demons
that constantly attacked me
are afraid to show their face
because I'm a warrior!

(Mark Español)





I am a flower,
Growing and flourishing
For the world to see.
I will not allow
Anyone to stunt my growth on my journey.
I am a flower.

(Antoneah Armour)

I am a tree
that can change my leaves but not my roots.

(Fredy Carcano)

I'm everything and I'm emptiness.
You can't find me if you look for me.
However, you are my most precious puppet
and I'm the master. You can't control me...
I control you! The mind.

(Saúl Naxi)

I am a radio being played on max volume,
hoping to be heard and understood
by anyone willing to listen,
understanding that I will be tuned out by ignorance
and dissected by knowledge. **(Jonathan Booeey)**



Years ago I was a heavy sack of bricks
That couldn't be pulled up a cliff.
Years ago I was a dark winter's night
Now I'm a light cloud moving through the sky.
My light shines as bright as the sun. **(Sarah Branch)**

I am a blank canvas ready to paint a new journey,
leaving the old tarnished, abused painting behind.
(Amanda Willis)

I am a butterfly with a roller coaster of emotions
and a heart of gold. **(Gabrielle Brown)**



I used to be a caterpillar and stress
over what I can't control.
I found myself in a cocoon, being anti-social.
I eventually got over my fears, and now my fear is over.
I have bloomed into this butterfly that's not afraid to speak.
(Curtrice Foster)

I used to be a caterpillar
but now I am a butterfly!
(Tierra Kimbrew)

I was a caterpillar at the beginning of Odyssey
not knowing what to expect
I was a caterpillar that didn't know
what its end would be.
Starting to read and coming to class
gave me the necessary tools
for my continuous transformation and
intellectual growth.
Now I can say that the little caterpillar that
started this Odyssey
today has become a colorful butterfly
that flies through its dreams.
(Maricela Martinez)



I used to work in the field
As my heart shone like a star
The field would be my
Soft soil where I sowed all
my dreams.
Then, when the spring came,
Brown and earth colors
Flowered all around.
No one would know how
Strong my love for the field was,
But when the corn,
Quinoa, and potatoes came out,
All would sit around to
Enjoy the flavors of the grains
And feel just like their
Soul revived again.
(Aida Inuca)

I am a backpack
closed until I need to open up.
(Keely Nelson-Gray)

WHAT IS ODYSSEY?

METAPHORS AND MUSINGS



Odyssey is a pool.
Full of bright faces like children lined up in the summer,
ready to learn how to swim.
Moving through waves of culture and differences,
learning at their own pace.
But like the water, coming together as one.
(Keely Nelson-Gray)

Odyssey is a journey of obstacles that we all face, and it's our duty to get through them. Odyssey is the accomplishment of goals in life to do our best and meet those certain goals. Odyssey is totally epic and we will do what's needed for our loved ones. **(Curtrice Foster)**

Odyssey is a place where growth is achieved through reading and writing. A place where mind sets are changed, where new connections are possible and where new visions follow. Odyssey is a day a week where stress and anxiety become learning experiences, and the rest of the week is wondering and putting into practice what we learn in class.

Odyssey is a place where a future has a place in the hearts of the ones who meet the end. Odyssey is a word that I came familiar with, and I'm proud to be part of it. But in all, Odyssey is a thought in my mind that gives me the tools and hope that tomorrow will be a new and different day for me, a place where the only benefit I have is to try new ways with no fears to make mistakes. **(Saúl Naxi)**

Odyssey Is a table.
With pillars of support, I remain stable.
Comfortably at this table I am seated,
A little late, but not yet defeated.
I prepare my tastebuds and clear my palate,
For this smorgasbord of knowledge
for me to grab it.
To appease my chary appetite
I indulgently savor every bite.
As the combinations of flavors communicate,
With the main purpose to educate,
My insecurities you begin to manipulate,
selflessly providing a lane for me to elevate.
Igniting in me this hunger
so at this table I remain seated a little longer.
(Dominique Smith)



Odyssey is a big quilt. Everyone is their own piece of little blanket with beautiful colors, but we all make one big blanket. **(Gael Rodriguez)**

Odyssey is a fertile field obsessed with providing fertile soil for those who work it, for those who put in the effort, love, and commitment, selflessly providing minerals and materials to sow an infinite number of things that will in turn bear pleasant fruit for the development of well-being. From the one who sows it, this field invites more men and women regardless of their color, race, or religion to join a single vision and mission in cultivating fruit trees of perseverance, orchards of curiosity, self-management flowers, wild plants to have the courage to continue working on this beautiful journey called the Odyssey. **(Maricela Martinez)**

Odyssey is an achievement,
A gate to success.
If I dream freedom,
Odyssey is by my side.
Many readings on the way,
Inspiring literatures in the play,
Every Wednesday,
in Odyssey I say:
I dream a world
With freedom and no war
I am beckoning liberty.
To wisdom, for future children
A land with enough span
Full of love and equity as well. **(Aida Inuca)**



Odyssey is a family of lions in the field. We have baby cubs, fathers, mothers, aunts, and uncles. We all move as one pack; no one is left behind. When one is down, we pick them up. When one is suffering from a bite, we are all suffering from that same bite. When we go hunt for our prey, we all go together. We might be different sizes, play different roles, but we are a family. **(Tameia Allen)**

Odyssey is as real as it gets; you can get real.
All the different races and different skin tones,
and those smiles we all will never regret.
Why not join the team and get locked in?
Odyssey is so much more than books and pencils.
It becomes more like a family.
If you don't want to grow and play,
then this is not the place to play or stay.
Be honest with who you are. You will go far.
(Kiana Sims)

Odyssey is a light of new beginnings, a light of answered dreams, and a light that turns strangers into family! **(Mark Español)**

Odyssey is a pair of wings that I was given to soar through my journey in becoming better, to be a voice, and to honor my adventure that's headed before me. **(Lavinia Miller)**



Odyssey is our cannon. Our drive holds the match, our minds are the gunpowder. Education is our battleship.
(Kaitlin Birdsall)

Odyssey is an adventure to further your education. You learn a lot about yourself and what you can do. Odyssey is a blessing for anyone who wants to go back to school.
(Tyrone Hudson Sr.)

Odyssey is infinite in possibilities. The only chains we face are a caged mind. Winning the race at any pace I'm on turtle time. Meeting with the River Cooters at the Mississippi line. **(Monél Long)**

Odyssey is a jazz band, a band with many members.
A collection of talents brought together from different walks of life.
A band that composes a perfect melody.
Each member playing a different instrument but all at the same pace.
The band leader smiling with much grace
as she leads us through the chords, our notes become complete,
as we reach the end of the sheet. **(Sarah Branch)**

Odyssey is the sunrise, filling your life with light and overcoming the darkness. Odyssey is a nest, where new life is born and we will prepare ourselves to learn to fly.
(Fredy Carcano)

Odyssey is a surprise party,
Unknown but rewarding
Strategically planned and yet everything
Happens unexpectedly.
Realization that you are special
You deserve a chance and you are
To be celebrated! **(Tiara Smith)**



Odyssey is an ocean.
We're all fish in this big ocean
as the strong waves guide us to each other,
creating a new family full of different creatures. **(Sinetra Wilson)**

Odyssey is a dysfunctional family that comes together every single week, no matter the troubles or grudges one may hold. Laughing, crying, and just loving one another. Fussy arguments and sometimes pointless debates, but laughing shortly after like nothing happened. The good food and good vibes, loving one another through it all. That's how I describe my Odyssey family.
(Gabrielle Brown)

METAPHORS ABOUT OUR LIVES

My mother was a Purple Rose,
My first love, the first color I chose,
The only one I want because you're my Purple Rose.
The comfort of your petals made me feel secure.
Where fears and worries had no pleasure.
The sweet smell of pollen that you emanated
Was a scent of Mother Nature that never faded.
Sentiments of affection
Through thorns of protection.
Solidified our blood connection.
Often taken for granted,
Because I didn't understand it.
The uniqueness you embodied
Was of hereditary quality.
A legacy that would someday follow me.
No other color measures up to you,
Not orange, yellow, or even blue.
(Dominique Smith)



Sunflowers end up facing the sun,
but they go through a lot of dirt to find their way there.
Wherever life plants you, bloom with grace.
(Gabrielle Brown)

My family is the sun.
They give me light
and add hope to my days.
(Fredy Carcano)





Motherhood is sailing in the sea,
big, challenging, high waves, low waves,
but also beautiful, bringing illegible messages.
Never again is it the same wave
that pushes us to shore to rest
to take a break from the life of motherhood. . . .

(Maricela Martinez)

I am strong, sometimes get tired.
I am always so gentle and loving.
I care, this is my life.
I am parenthood.

(Zykia Wilson)

Life is a race, moving fast
but still feeling like you're not moving fast enough
to reach the finish line.
Every step you feel closer.
Sometimes you feel like giving up but you don't.
You keep pushing until you reach the finish line,
through the pain, sweat, and tears
until the race is done.

(Keely Nelson-Gray)



Love is cement,
Rough and hard.
Love is candy,
Sweet and soft.
Sometimes it's gum on the cement.
Sometimes it's hugs and kisses,
Turns into Mrs.

(Roxanna Sobrevilla)



Life is a game of Spades.
You never know what cards you are going to get.
You just gotta work with the hand you've been dealt.
(Amanda Willis)

Faith is the internet.
You can't see it but you know it's there.
When things go wrong in our life,
we need a higher power to rely on;
we need a source of guidance.
This is where our mechanism kicks in to get energy.
We can't see our higher power,
we can't touch it, taste it, or see it,
but we know it's there for when we need it.
(Saúl Naxi)

I am fire, I am hot.
Sparks are flying.
Feed me cloth, I'll get bigger.
Give me a drink
And I will die.
(Curtrice Foster)

Words are fire,
Fuel to my flames,
Rain to my wildfire,
Literature ignites my soul.
(Kaitlin Birdsall)



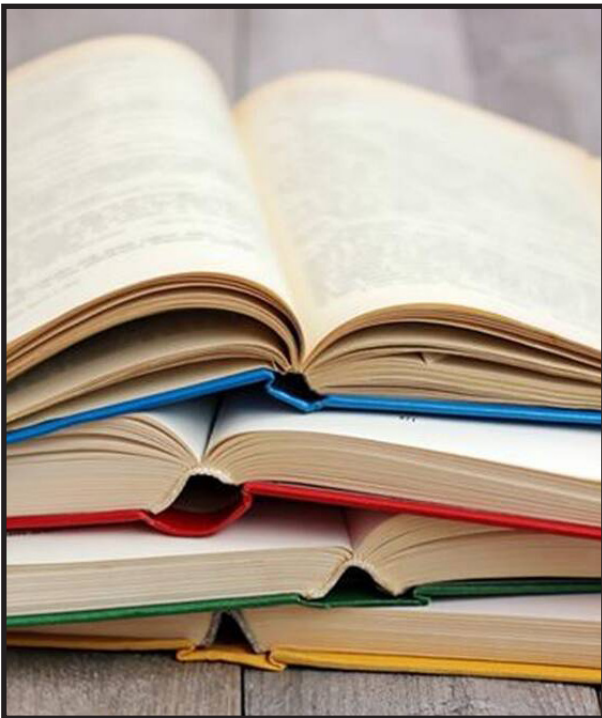
Cell phones are a drug.
We can't go a day without one.
Once we put it down, we pick it back up.
The call never stops.
The endless scrolling has us addicted.
Cell phones are a drug we can't live without.
Cell phones bring us all closer together
while making us so far apart.
Cell phones hold our complete life
while sometimes taking moments away from it.
We use them to capture the moment,
the moment which is no longer near,
because now our faces are glued to a screen.
Cell phones can help save a life, change a life,
or they can become someone's life.
Cell phones are now the new joy of life,
instead of the joy just being life.
(Sarah Branch)

My daughter Dream is a lion.
 She is a protector of her little cub (little sister).
 She is a loner if she doesn't know you.
 She isn't afraid of doing what she wants.
 She does what she wants to do.

(Tameia Allen)

Children are a dream,
 When they're good, they are the best
 When not, there's no rest
 When they're sweet, you want more
 And before you know it, they're out the door.

(Mya Whitson)



Music is my soul,
 The rhythm moves my body,
 The beat pounding harder than my heart.
 Bodies colliding like cymbals,
 Crashing like waves on the beach,
 Moving my hips like the palm trees.

(Sinetra Wilson)

Music is the wind
 Blowing on a cool summer night, relaxing.
 Music is roaring thunder and tornadoes
 Music is a roaring river flowing so rapidly.

(Tyrone Hudson Sr.)



Life is a book,
 you get to write your own chapters and read at any pace.
 Life is your own book.

You can decide what you want to do in life
 and reflect on the bad and good you've done,
 and things you can improve on in the future.
 If you think life is getting hard sometimes,
 just take a step back, take a breather,
 and go at a slower pace. Don't rush anything.

(Gael Rodriguez)



Labor is the hope after the long hours of uncertainty
 Labor is the profound expression of transformation. . . .
 Labor is the roller coaster of the hormone avenues
 Labor is the rebirth of a new life from my ancestors
 Labor is the stay of many nights in starlight
 Labor is the brief pause of a ride in the rain.

(Aida Inuca)

Life is a roller coaster,
 full of twists and turns.
 It at times plunges straight down,
 and at times it rises rapidly.
 It can make you smile
 and it can make you sick.
 In order to get through the complete ride
 there is a trick:
 never let go of the ride
 and maintain a tight grip.

(Mark Español)



Love is a roller coaster,
 A ride of thrill and fear,
 Suspenseful turns, no clue if the end is near,
 Ups and downs that make you queasy,
 Over exaggerated and can seem cheesy.

(Tiara Smith)

Writing is a carnival ride.
 Writing is disorienting.
 There's a lot to focus on
 and try to keep up with all at once.
 Writing is a carnival ride.
 It's spinning and disorienting,
 but I like it.

(Lavinia Miller)



LOVING LANGSTON HUGHES

My People

The night is beautiful,
So the faces of my people.

The stars are beautiful,
So the eyes of my people.

Beautiful, also, is the sun.
Beautiful, also, are the souls of my people.



I believe he is explaining how beautiful his people are inside and out by comparing it to experiences that people enjoy regardless of race, like the stars in the sky or the sun shining bright.

I personally like shorter poems because they are straight to the point and very transparent with just a few words. This poem made me happy because it's positive and sends a powerful message.

I take from this poem just to remain humble and see every soul as beautiful. **(Jonathan Booe)**

The first line stood out a lot; it pretty much gave me the "picture" of the poem. The night is beautiful, so the faces of my people. Dark skinned people. No matter how dark our skin may be (or light), we're unique and beautiful. The way he described our people was very unique and basically describing how different we are in a sense. Not different because of our skin color, but beautifully different.

No matter how white or dark your skin is, you're beautiful and unique in your own way. Long or short hair, fat or skinny, rich or poor, we all are beautiful, unique, and powerful. We all matter. **(Gabrielle Brown)**

I picked "My People." I enjoyed this poem because he relates the beauty of nature to the beauty of people. Each word he wrote made me believe

that each person has their own unique traits and characteristics. Something different about everybody that makes you... you.

He speaks about how the sun and our souls are similar, almost as if our creators or our souls are stored in nature. I guess it makes me understand why they call it human nature. **(Monél Long)**

Dreams

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

I think "Dreams" by Langston Hughes is about how people need to have dreams or desires. I relate to this poem "Dreams" because I followed my dream, the American dream. I migrated from Mexico to the US, and I was able to get a good job, have a loving and supportive family, and a wonderful house. I succeeded because I never stopped following my dream. **(Fredy Carcano)**

April Rain Song

Let the rain kiss you.
 Let the rain beat upon your hand with silver
 liquid drops.
 Let the rain sing you a lullaby.

The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.
 The rain makes running pools in the gutter.
 The rain plays a little sleep-song on our roof at
 night—

And I love the rain.

“April Rain Song” is one of my favorite poems from Hughes. It’s such a simple poem, yet it’s enough to leave you reminiscing over nostalgic memories.

Who doesn’t remember playing in the rain as a kid, yanking off your hood and letting the rain hit your hair and face? Or jumping into puddles, staring into their reflections pretending the child’s face staring back at you on the other side belongs to a whole new world more magical than your own.

Falling asleep to the soft rhythmic throws of the rain hitting your roof and window. Allowing the sound to drift you off to sleep. Whether the day had been a stressful one or the perfect send off from a restful day, the rain is a wonderful thing.
(Kaitlin Birdsall)

Justice

That justice is a blind goddess
 Is a thing to which we black are wise.
 Her bandage hides two festering sores
 That once perhaps were eyes.

I think it means the world does not have justice for us all. My personal response is that I know we are living in an unjust world and are not always treated well. **(Lavinia Miller)**

Aspiration

I wonder how it feels
 To do cart wheels?
 I sure would like to know.

To walk a high wire
 Is another desire,
 In this world before
 I go.

In this poem, I believe Mr. Hughes was expressing just a small part of his dreams—things he may have felt he wanted to do at that time of his life. He was using words like “I would sure like to know” when referring to doing a cartwheel, expressing that it was something he wanted to do passionately.

I chose this poem because the title spoke to me and because it was written during the time my mother was born. The poem itself for me was something that made me reflect on my aspirations. I apply it to my life in that my aspirations can also be poetic to my soul when I think of reaching them.
(Mark Español)



Freedom's Plow

. . . America!
 Land created in common,
 Dreams nourished in common,
 Keep your hand on the plow! Hold on!
 If the house is not yet finished,
 Don't be discouraged, builder!
 If the fight is not yet won,
 Don't be weary, soldier!
 The plan and the pattern is here,
 Woven from the beginning
 Into the warp and woof of America
 ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL. . .

I think the meaning of the lines is the hard work of slaves and immigrants to build a dream land, and not the dream of the slaves but the dream of the white man.

In both the fifth and seventh lines, I understand that the dream of the slave was the right of freedom, and the only thing they wished was to stop from being exploited. That is why they said, "keep your hands on the plow! Hold on." It is like a hope that someday and somehow, their freedom will come; till then, they are encouraging themselves to continue in the fight.

The image that Hughes uses is of a tireless soldier fighting in a battle who is represented by the person (could be a slave) who is holding the plow. Hughes also uses the image of a land that is just made for those with privilege only. It says in the second line, "Land created in common"; also in the eighth line, it says that pattern was woven from the beginning and is also in here. These last lines in the poem show an image of the plan of white privilege that has not been changed yet.

I chose these lines for many reasons, and one of them is the way the writer states the power of courage. In the fifth line, it says, "If the house is not yet finished, don't be discouraged, builder." I love these lines because this idea connects to me when I can feel sad or I can be going through difficult situations. I can keep going no matter what. I also picked this part of the poem because I love the

image of a soldier that the writer uses. It helps me to compare my life to that of a soldier because every day I think we are fighter soldiers to survive in this life.

What I can take away from the poem into my own life is that a triumph without a fight might not be the same worth as a triumph with a lot of fight. My own experiences have taught me that the best reward in life is not to be the winner but to know I fought with all my heart my own battles.

(Aida Inuca)

Island

Wave of sorrow,
 Do not drown me now:

I see the island
 Still ahead somehow.

I see the island
 And its sands are fair:

Wave of sorrow,
 Take me there.

My poem of choice is "Island." It's describing overwhelming feelings of sadness, disappointments and misfortunes experienced, yet still trying to remain hopeful and see that there will be relief from all that is a burden. One may perceive it as living in the next life from a religious aspect, or it could be perceived as paying dues to earn a reward.

This poem resonated with me because there was a point in my life where I felt like I was on an emotional rollercoaster. From losing my mother, to the loss of my first child, I felt no sense of relief from pain and sorrow. It wasn't until I was fortunate to have my daughter Camilla that I really began to find purpose in myself again. I saw the light in my future as a mother and wife. After my second daughter was born, I wanted more of what was available to me. I was able to start seeing me and all that these experiences have built me to be.

(Dominique Smith)

The Negro Mother

Children, I come back today
 To tell you a story of the long dark way
 That I had to climb, that I had to know
 In order that the race might live and grow.
 Look at my face - dark as the night -
 Yet shining like the sun with love's true light.
 I am the dark girl who crossed the red sea
 Carrying in my body the seed of the free.
 I am the woman who worked in the field
 Bringing the cotton and the corn to yield.
 I am the one who labored as a slave,
 Beaten and mistreated for the work that I gave -
 Children sold away from me, my husband sold, too.
 No safety, no love, no respect was I due.

Three hundred years in the deepest South:
 But God put a song and a prayer in my mouth.
 God put a dream like steel in my soul.
 Now, through my children, I'm reaching the goal. . . .

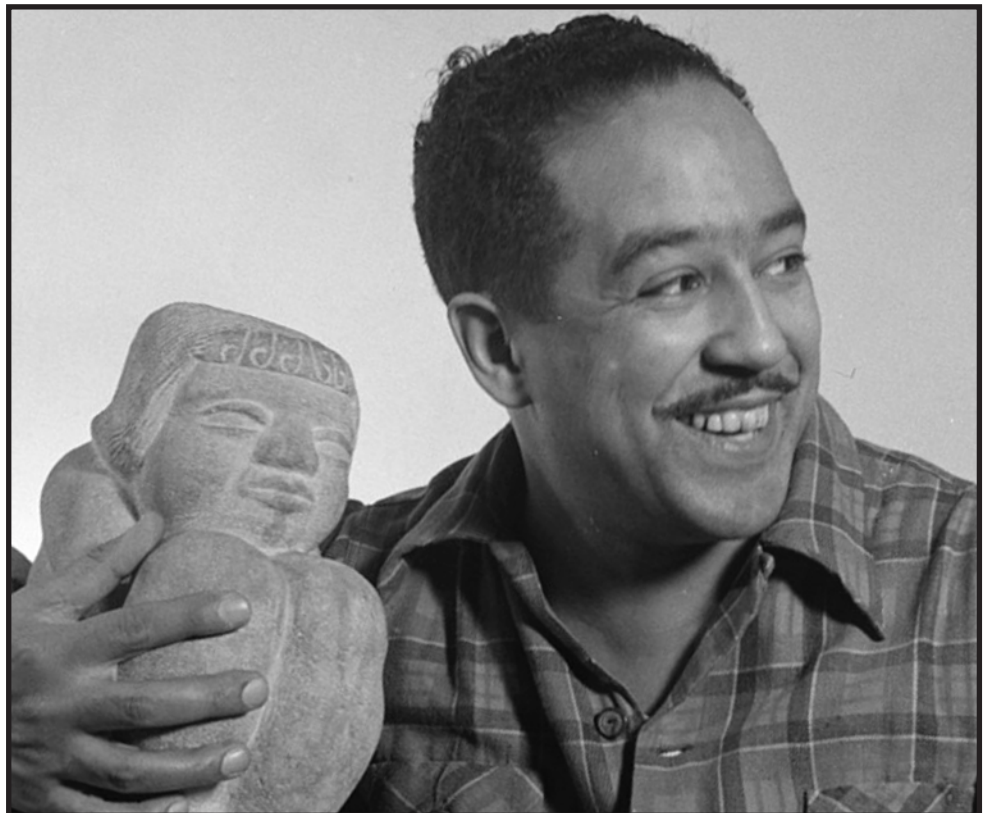
I chose this poem because although it is about the history of black people, it is also written for all minorities. All minorities experience racism where there is white ideology. This grabbed my attention because the poem "The Negro Mother" speaks the truth of racism whether of the past, the present, or the future.

It made me feel sad and angry. It made me feel sad because minorities have had and continue to have suffering due to the mere skin color. Sad because we have not completely obtained freedom. And angry because all the power, the reputation, the social position, and all the money of the world... It is all in vain to live for! Due to these worthless desires, we the people of color have suffered since the beginning.

What I take into my life is wisdom of the past. I must use the past as a fuel to keep educating myself. Use the past to heal my soul and enjoy the little freedom I have. And hope that my daughters and everyone's daughters and sons will end the racism of the world. **(Saúl Naxi)**

The poem "The Negro Mother" is about the history of black people in the USA and their roots. This poem advises new generations to evolve but never forget where they came from, and especially remember the sacrifices people of the past have made.

For so long no respect was given to black people. The future generation: this is your chance to change and fight for real freedom. There was no rest for blacks no matter what. Black people of today remember the past and keep fighting until racism towards black people is completely gone. . . .



Still Here

I been scarred and battered.
 My hopes the wind done scattered.
 Snow has friz me,
 Sun has baked me,

Looks like between 'em they done
 Tried to make me

Stop laughin', stop lovin', stop livin'--
 But I don't care!
 I'm still here!

He has been beaten and worked in the fields no matter what season it was. They tried to break his spirit by trying to make him stop being himself.

I chose this poem because I have been through some things in my life where I felt like I have been scarred and battered for my trials and tribulations and for how I was living my life.

(Tyrone Hudson Sr.)

I think it means that he's faced so many obstacles in life but he's alive. The image I see is him freezing from all the negatives as the sun bakes him. Everyone was laughing and trying to beat him, but he doesn't care: he's going to keep living.

I personally connected because a lot is going on in my life and sometimes feel like I'm frozen and being burned internally.

(Sinetra Wilson)

I believe this poem means life has brought forth many hardships, pain, trials, and tribulations, but regardless, he is still standing, and not only standing, but without bitterness. Instead of being broken and jaded, he has love and joy in his heart.

I chose this poem because it represents resilience, which I believe I have. No matter how nasty the world is to me or others, I will always believe things will get better and that there are still good honest people out here.

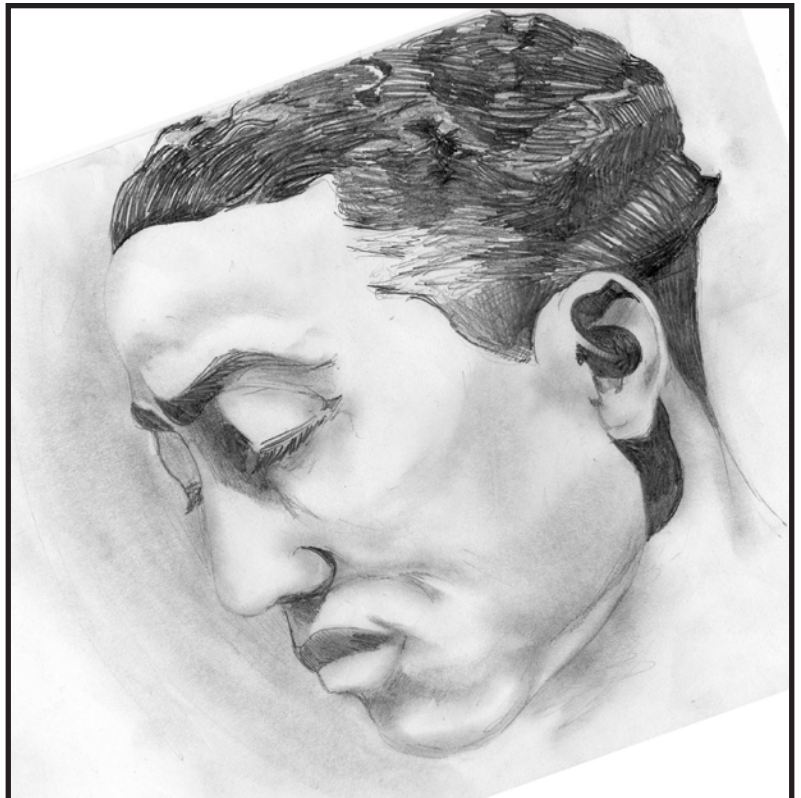
(Jekeiria Booker)

"Black Workers"

The bees work.
 Their work is taken from them.
 We are like the bees,
 but it won't last forever.

Langston Hughes is saying how black workers represent the bees. All the hard work of building this country was done by Black people and they have nothing to show for it. The bees work extremely hard for their honey, and it is taken away by humans and sold on the shelves at stores. It also reminds me of the slave trade and how families were torn apart and sold away from everything they knew. Oppression in America.

I am like the bees. I work hard just to live paycheck to paycheck. About 70% of my check goes to rent not including the other bills like electricity and other utilities. Like Langston Hughes mentioned, "it won't last forever" because I am taking action. I am diving into the swimming pool of knowledge and success, so that all my hard work will no longer be taken from me! **(Amanda Willis)**



I, Too

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

I choose the poem "I, Too." I think it means that he is saying he is a dark gentleman that works for a wealthy family, and when company comes over, instead of him eating with everyone they send him to the kitchen. But it doesn't affect him at all; he eats well and laughs. I think he is trying to represent racism and how not everyone is treated equally.

I choose this poem because it's the first one that caught my eye. It made me feel like not everyone is treated equally but eventually he would be able to eat with everyone at the table. Others will regret what they said about him. What I can take from this poem is if you keep on working on yourself without comparing yourself to somebody, you'll be better than they are. And they'll never stand up to you and will be ashamed of what they thought of you. **(Gael Rodriguez)**

Advice

Folks, I'm telling you,
Birthing is hard
And dying is mean—
So get yourself
A little loving
In between

I love all his poems. It's hard to just pick one. My poem I love would be "Advice." I think the poem means live life to the fullest. Life is too short. Enjoy your loved ones and life! Love people, love life, and just love love. He's telling us he knows how hard it is for a woman to give birth. Also, dying hurts and is painful. In his words, "dying is mean"!

I chose this poem because life and having kids is hard, as a single mother of three knows. Death is not easy; it's mean. Life is short. We need to enjoy it and just live a happy positive life with a little loving between!

(Roxanna Sobrevilla)

"The Weary Blues"

Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
I heard a Negro play.
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
He did a lazy sway . . .
He did a lazy sway . . .
To the tune o' those Weary Blues . . .

This poem describes a man going through things but expressing himself through the soulful music of blues. It can mean that life problems can be hard but dealt with in alternative ways.

I chose this poem because it is the first Langston Hughes poem I ever heard. It makes me feel relatable, 'cause although I go through things, music has been a way to express myself and help me cope with the good, bad, and ugly. **(Tiara Smith)**

Mother to Son

Well, son, I'll tell you:
 Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
 It's had tacks in it,
 And splinters,
 And boards torn up,
 And places with no carpet on the floor—
 Bare.
 But all the time
 I've been a-climbin' on,
 And reachin' landin's,
 And turnin' corners,
 And sometimes goin' in the dark
 Where there ain't been no light.
 So boy, don't you turn back.
 Don't you set down on the steps
 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
 Don't you fall now—
 For I've still goin', honey,
 I've still climbin',
 And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

"Mother to Son" has been my favorite poem by Langston Hughes since the fifth grade when I first read it. This poem has so much imagery that it plays in the mind like a movie. I can see all the things this mother is describing as she tells them to her son.

Another reason this poem means so much to me is that I can relate to it personally. I have had times in my life that resemble this poem. While the poem speaks of an old, raggedy house, it also relates to situations in life that feel the way those split and bare floors do. This poem reminds me that yes, life is hard, but those that came before me bore just as many trials and never gave up so that I could have the opportunities that I have now. If they didn't give up, neither will I. **(Mya Whitson)**

This poem to me means that she is talking to her son about how challenging life is, that she faced so many obstacles and roadblocks about being a parent. She had hardships in life but keeps climbing and never turns back. Never fall, keep climbing, 'cause life is hard.

What I got out of this is that she did so much hard work, making things happen, and it seems like she was failing, but she never gave up. She kept it moving and didn't look back at the negative things in life. With this statement, it's how I feel right now in my journey of moving forward in life. This taught me to never give up. Keep on pushing, no matter what. **(Curtrice Foster)**

"Mother to Son" means that life is very hard, and she does not want her son to ever go back and live the life she had, but she is still making it or has made it in life.

I think it is about having a hard life and wanting to give up. The mother is telling her son to keep pushing on because hard times don't last forever. Just because things are not going how you want them to go now doesn't mean it's the end of the road. The image Hughes uses to express his ideas "don't set down on the steps" means don't give up. **(Zykia Wilson)**



Life hasn't been easy. Her life had some trials and challenges to overcome. Although it was challenging, she never gave up, encouraging the son to stay strong and keep going just like she did.

I picked this poem because it's relevant to my life experiences. My life hasn't been a crystal stair. Through low self-esteem, depression, trauma, and family issues, I'm still striving. No matter how challenging one's life is, it's important to never give up. **(Sarah Branch)**

I think this poem is saying that life itself hasn't been a straight and narrow path. You're going to hit rock bottom, but that doesn't mean give up. You're going to go through trials, but hold on because something is at the end of the tunnel for you. He expressed his ideas by saying, "Don't set down on the steps 'cause you finds it kinder hard." What I get from this line is don't give up because things haven't been how you would like them to go. Don't give up: things will get better. He also stated, "Don't fall now for I'se still goin, honey. I'se still climbin'," and what I get from this line is even if you do sit down, your problems will still be going on and you need to keep climbing.

I chose this poem because life for me hasn't been peaches and cream. I have my days where I want to stop and sit on those stairs, but I can't because whatever it is that I'm going through will still be climbin'. Even when things get tiring and I just want to give up, I can't. I have children depending on me, and sometimes I have to act fast no matter what I'm going through. There is not sitting down for me until I take care and do what I have to do. This poem made me put myself in those shoes to realize that I'm not the only one who wants to give

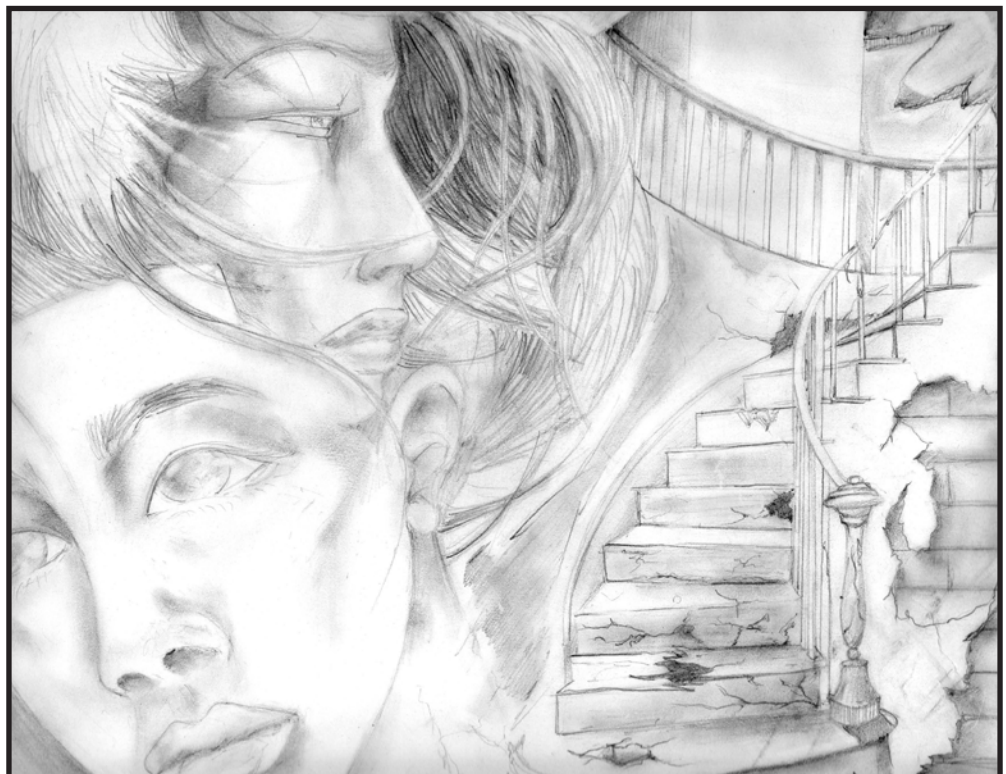
up sometimes because "life ain't been no crystal stair." But you have to take that deep breath and continue. Don't give up: that outcome will be much prettier. **(Tameia Allen)**

I believe this poem is a representation of not giving up through hard times. He paints a picture in my head right away of being in a home that is not anything close to luxury. It's a home with no carpet, no furniture, nothing—but she still has hope.

I chose this poem because it was easiest for me to relate to. I've slept on pallets on the floor and struggled with feeling hopeless for the future. But I never gave up even through the darkest of times. Now I truly feel like I am living on my "crystal stairs." **(Keely Nelson-Gray)**

Hughes use the example of glass stairs and hard floors as a reference.

As a mother of four kids, I give advice to my kids about life and how many times life has hardship moments, but we cannot turn back. They must push through the hardships. Sometimes there are good days, and sometimes there are bad days. **(Maricela Martinez)**



MOVED BY MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

After reading Dr. King's eloquent "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," students wrote letters to him as if he were still alive, letting him know what aspects of the letter moved them and how ideas in it remain relevant to struggles today.

Dear Dr. King,



As I was reading your letter, several interesting quotes stood out to me. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere!" What this quote means to me is what brought you to Birmingham was the injustice there; if you were

going to practice justice in Atlanta and injustice is happening in Birmingham, then it was your duty to go to Birmingham to make sure justice is everywhere. This quote is important to you because justice is what you want for all your brothers and sisters; if one is practicing injustice, then it's a threat to everyone's justice.

In 2023, injustice is still happening. We hear about police killing our people, and it seems like men and women with a badge take advantage. Since nothing has been done about the injustice in the matter, it gives them something like an okay to keep killing off our people.

"Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor. It must be demanded by the oppressed." This is why we people protest today: those in power won't give up their spot without people protesting. If we don't make any noise letting the oppressor know we mean business, nothing will be done. This quote is important to us today because it justifies the need to protest. We have a voice and right, and we should be able to utilize it like everyone else.

"Wait too often means 'Never!'" This quote is important to you because you're tired of waiting. Nothing gets done; our voices and rights don't get across, and never means no! White people have

often told people of color to "wait a bit longer for rights," but they never give those rights without protest. You have been waiting too long and nothing ever gets done.

Your letter was written 60 years ago, and still to this day we have been told to wait. Justice still hasn't been done to those that experience different situations. We're still protesting for our rights, and injustice is still happening and has an effect on all of us! Something has to be done! When the police kill us and nothing has been done, what do we do next? We protest! Show these people that we mean business; let them know that we all are equal. Everyone is sewn together. Like you stated, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere!" **(Tameia Allen)**



Thank you for being the voice of the people. Here it is, the year of 2023, and we are still fighting for everything you stood for. Black people are still living in fear every day of these unjust laws in society. When you stated, "When you see hate-filled policeman curse, kick, and even kill your black brothers and sisters," this is one of the major issues we have still to this day. It's so scary that this day and age we are still going through things that were fought for decades ago. It's so scary to have sons knowing that the people who took the job to help are the very ones they need to look out for. But we are not weak, and we will continue to fight. I will continue to fight. I just pray that we can one day live in a world of peace and equality. **(Antoneah Armour)**



I normally find great difficulties in searching for the right words to say, even in a normal conversation,

but with reading your letter from Birmingham, I find myself at a new level of a loss for words.

You helped create the very bricks for us all to lay on the path ahead of us...

So, what are we waiting for?

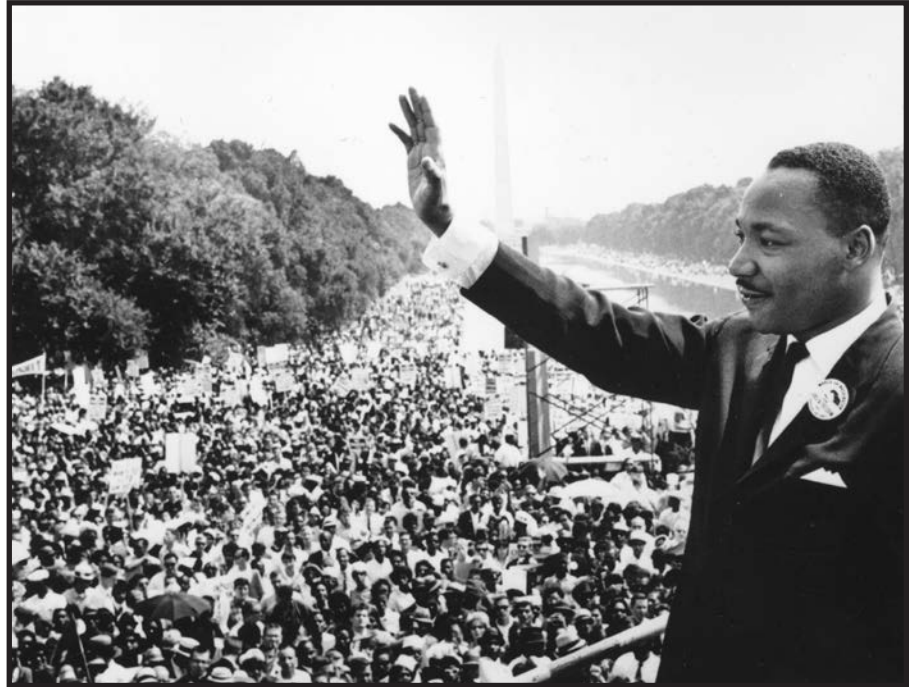
It's been 60 years since you wrote this letter, and I wish I could say that more progress has been made. The very notion that your actions were "unwise and untimely" is still to this day egregiously absurd.

Untimely??

Exactly how long do they expect people to sit in this period of wait? What I can say for certain is the supposedly infinite amount of patience doesn't exist and the time for "waiting" has long passed. The time for action has most certainly arrived. I would much rather follow in your footsteps and be an extension of justice rather than sitting idly by in the preservation of injustice.

No parent should have to feel the sting of telling their child that they're not allowed somewhere. No couples should be driving out of town because of dangerous flags being waved proudly. No soul should have to feel the pain of being beaten, knocked down, or the ultimate pain of loss of life, simply because of one's own melanin. These are hard and brutal facts indeed.

It's very seldom if when asked, someone can answer the question honestly, "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" I can say for certainty that if the person in question who said "wait" had to feel the stings of the pains



mentioned earlier, direct actions would have been granted long ago.

You were right 60 years ago, and you are still right today. The time of waiting is over.

Kindest Regards to you from an Extremist of Love.
(Kaitlin Kyle Birdsall)



It says that people have a moral responsibility to break unjust laws and to take action rather than waiting potentially forever for justice to come through the courts.

A quote that stood out to me the most was, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Living in this day and time, I can finally understand it all!

Unfortunately, we're still living in injustice, and honestly, I don't think the world will ever be normal. Racism is still a huge factor that the majority of the nation has or is experiencing. We as people still live in fear, some more than others.

But I just want to say thank you for what you have done, not only for yourself but for all African Americans all around the world. **(Gabrielle Brown)**



After reading the letter you wrote in Birmingham Jail, I fully understood the magnitude of the reason why you protested. Sixty years have passed, and I'll tell you my thoughts. Your dreams make me think about the futility of building a wall between Mexico and your country. Can you imagine? Also, I think of the massive deportation of my compatriots who have contributed substantially to the US economy. Like you, I refuse to support the injustice that happens in this country. What would you say about xenophobia if you could make a speech now? Surely this would go against your dream.

Latino people in your country, including Mexicans, will face racism because a revitalizer of freedom and equality has not yet arrived. The criminal accusations leveled at them are unworthy and far from the truth. Their work is essential to the US economy. While it is true that they arrive without official documents, it is also true that there is a demand for their work. We aspire to walk the path of racial justice.

Currently, we read xenophobic messages towards Latino people posted on walls and social networks, so I remember when you said, "We will never be satisfied while our children have their being taken away and their dignity stolen with signs that say: only for whites."

Dear Martin Luther King Jr., as you can see, we have not been able to make much progress in your dream, a dream that is ours and that should belong to all humanity. But we still have the hope that one day all this can change for the good of humanity. Hopefully there will continue to be more men like you with dreams of freedom of equality.

(Fredy Carcano)



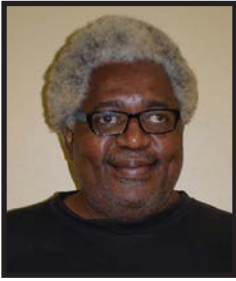
I want to give thanks for those spoken and written words. Racism is a sin that divides the human dignity of those called to be children of the same father (Jesus), the idea that some human beings are genetically superior and others intellectual inferiors because of their race.



Any change of law without a matched change of heart will not bring a lasting change. But there is a change of heart that cries out to be proclaimed and recognized, that each of us commits personally. We give testimony to our family because we know that a lasting change for the better often comes from the strong and faithful family, sorrow for the past and gratitude for the present.

Over 50 years ago you were cautioned not to do anything unwise or untimely, yet your actions this day reflect your wisdom and belief in a supernatural power. I want to say thank you for being a great leader.

(Curtrice Foster)



My name is Tyrone Ozea Hudson Sr. I am writing you this letter to let you and your organization know that we as Negroes have suffered more than 300 years in captivity, with unjust laws, for too long. We as people of color should have the same rights as the white moderates who have been trying to keep our voices silent for many years. As our forefathers wrote, all men and women are entitled to the rights of freedom and freedom of speech. The white moderates still don't believe that we as people of color should have any rights. We have been fighting for the rights to be heard and to vote for our rights to be humans. Being able to protest is a way for our people to be heard without violence. It's a way for us to voice our opinion about how we are being treated unjustly under the white moderates' unjust laws. Violence is never the way to go when you are protecting for equal rights of being free from the unjust laws that have held us down for more than 300 years. We as people want the same rights that white moderates have, that all men and women are free to choose and voice their opinion. **(Tyrone Hudson Sr.)**



As a person of color who has experienced oppression, racism, and a lot of human violence in my life, it is an honor to read your *Letter from Birmingham Jail* (1963). Your words moved me in many different ways: it

moved me when you mentioned, "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here, and whatever affect one directly affects all indirectly"; when you mention that through history, "privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily; and freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, but demanded by the oppressed"; and how oppression can promote tension through a situation. "Wait" and "deny," justice delayed is justice denied, and nothingism.

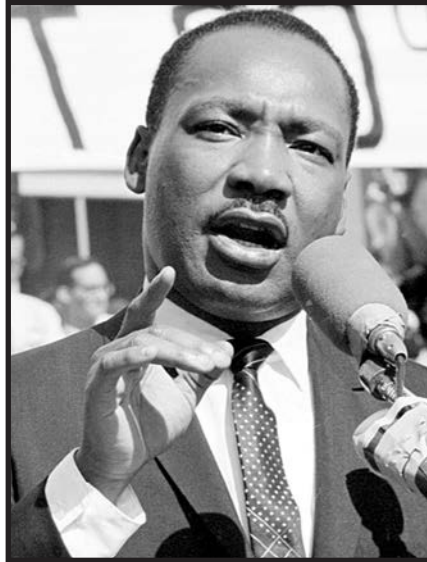
The phrase that reminds me of my history is, "I am in Birmingham because injustice is here." This phrase reminds me of my ancestors' words, who told me, never stop fighting for your rights. I believe that I'm where I am because I am their messenger. I have a community or social responsibility to pass the courage of fighting for rights to my kids, the future generation. Also, when you mention that injustice is in Birmingham, for me, it means that injustice is here and everywhere in our communities; your words sound like an invitation to be aware of that.

I also like when you mention the historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily, and freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor, but demanded by the oppressed. I totally agree. When we talk about white supremacy, white people will never give up their privileges. I think privileged people are born knowing how to use their privileges since they were in the cradle, when their parents took them to paid piano classes every week, when they always had food on their table every day. They learned that if they go to ask for a job, they would be picked over brown applicants. They will never resign these privileges. This is not just happening in the United States only, but also in all countries on the American continent. On the other hand, it might be easy to fall into the desire to jump into the oppressor-whiteness treasure box and forget the years of fighting for the rights for our communities.



Let me share my own story. In my country of origin, Ecuador, as an indigenous woman I was denied the right to speak my native language of Kichwa inside public service buildings because indigenous people were not allowed inside those spaces. So, many times I had to deny my own language for fear of being bullied or bitten.

If the oppressed don't fight, raise their voices, or ask for services, the government will never go to the community to offer help.



and resentful, and they deserve to raise their voice because they carry a long history of oppression and violence. I would be worried if people fall into "do-nothingism" because that would be rejecting or shouting down their own voices and the voices of their ancestors. They would be leaning into the box of "privilege," not fitting in there, and feeling confused about their own identity.

Your letter impacted me in many ways: about injustice, privilege, denied rights, and justice delays.

Another thing I liked in your letter is that you use an excellent stylistic way of explaining how oppression can promote tension through the tactic of wait and deny. And you mention inviting the clergymen to generate that tension to create union and communication and brotherhood, instead of creating that tension that only harms the integrity of our community and disbelief.

In my job, the work of a community health worker as well as doula, the structure of work is person to person. It is the working sector that closely looks at the true essence of the needs that a family is going through in our community. We doulas have been in many system meetings raising our voice for the rights of doulas for reimbursement. Even though we tried to create that tension to invite them to talk and discuss with the hope that our voice can be heard, the system thinks the work of a CHW or a Doula's job is not as valid as that of a doctor or nurse. There has been meeting after meeting to discuss this issue, and they always postpone the possibility of talking. The work of doulas might never be reimbursed in Wisconsin. This is another example of justice delayed and justice denied in our community.

Another word that impacted me is the word do-nothingism. Sometimes, when I talk to people about oppression or privilege or racism, there are some people who have told me to get over it and go and live in the present. As you mention in your letter, I agree that it is normal that people get angry

All these facts impact the wellbeing of a community that has been oppressed for centuries. There is a lot to be done still to have the system changed for the sake of the community's equity. Hopefully, more people can become more aware. Hopefully, more people will recognize that being angry can give them the courage to raise their voice and see the possibility that their voice can be heard. Our communities deserve to live with equal rights and maintain their roots. **(Aida Inuca)**



The energy you used to express your viewpoints stands clear in my mind. "Justice delayed is justice denied." As I write this letter, over 60 years has passed and justice is still being delayed. Unity struck through my

ears as you reminded me, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." The war for our freedom has not ended; only a select few roles have been passed along through the grapevine, and time keeps flowing like the Nile, infinite in time.

I idolize the mindset you had at that time. No beatings, no deaths, or any source of oppression could delay your voice. You spoke up no matter the situations happening around you. One of the few super powers we possess is the ability to perform under pressure. You utilized your strengths and showed the world how to use your powers.

(Monél Long)



I want to express that reading your letter has moved me greatly, due to your great impetus and your decisive spirit of courage. After reading this letter, I feel that there is a lot of work to be done for our people, continuing in the fight for

making difficult decisions knowing that everything possible has been done and that many people are being imprisoned. It gives me a great feeling of uncertainty about what our people are facing.

I admire your position in supporting the Birmingham campaign and the movement of the whole South. In your letter I was surprised by the aggressiveness of the police and the tactic they used to intimidate our protesters. I am also very sorry for the fact that they have imprisoned you and without the possibility of being able to speak to your wife Coretta, who gave birth to your fourth child; this confinement was like carrying your cross. Knowing even that you don't like being in jail, this fact made me and the rest of us who are outside resume the demonstrations immediately not allowing the local support committee to intimidate us. Your impatience while in jail also made the situation begin to change in our favor. The photos of you being arrested were shown on television,

and the reaction has been tremendous for our nonviolent campaign.

Just as the prophets of the 8th century Before Christ abandoned their towns and went out to spread their divine message far from the limits of their original cities, so it seems to me that you have also seen yourself in this way spreading the voice of justice and freedom. This fact challenges me not to remain with my arms crossed because wherever injustice is committed, it constitutes a threat to justice everywhere.

Thank you for the objections expressed in your letter also exposing the religious basis of the nonviolent protest movement in Christian theology. . . . There is no doubt that your concern for these injustices is legitimate, and that you have shown two kinds of laws, unjust and unjust laws. You mention that an unjust law is a human law that has no origin in the eternal law and the natural law of a human being. Thank you for bringing these words to our time. All segregationist legal mandates are unjust because segregation breaks the spirit and negatively affects the personality.

Having said this, I thank you once again for the courage of your effort to encourage us to continue the fight for fair justice and freedom.



This letter helps me to remember the moral and intellectual bases in our fight for human rights that must be applied. Thanks to your leadership, you made this fight a peace movement and gave us a vision of equality, justice, and dignity. Your wisdom helps me to persist in the fight and shows that the sufferings we have gone through have not been in vain. All this has been an integral part of a plan of God for a better tomorrow. Well, as you narrate in your letter, WE KNOW FROM A PAINFUL EXPERIENCE THAT FREEDOM IS NEVER GRANTED VOLUNTARILY BY THE OPPRESSOR. IT HAS TO BE DEMANDED BY THE OPPRESSED.
(Maricela Martinez)



Dr. King, nearly 55 years after your assassination, the country still pauses today in reflection. I confess that meaningful reflection led me to learn and relearn about the hundreds of acts you made to improve race relations in our country. Many remember you for the incredible

orator you were; your words were memorialized forever.

Indisputable bravery was required of you each time you took to a podium. You leaned into discord and dangerous situations, stepping into chaos and discomfort each day. Though your words are what I remember, your bravery is what truly sets you apart and above in my mind. As a woman who lives in an era of #BlackLivesMatter with children, men, and women still being killed under a policeman who is supposed to protect and provide, who am I to expect no discomfort in a desire for change? You have inspired me to think twice about my own choices. I make a commitment to you and those I care about to begin stepping into the awkward, the uncomfortable.

Most of us, like myself, will never find ourselves on a national platform, fighting for justice. Dr. King, you said I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity... say that I was a drum major for justice, say that I was a drum major for peace, I was a drum major for righteousness. I have got to leave a committed life behind. Dr. King, in my eyes, you achieved the legacy. Finding my voice and picking up my own baton was an inspiration. In gratitude, I thank you for that. **(Lavinia Miller)**



Thank you for working tirelessly and for putting so much love and compassion to advocate for people of color. Thank you for creating the tension necessary

to talk openly about racism in this nation. And thank you for speaking the truth of the matter and for reminding me to educate myself so that I never

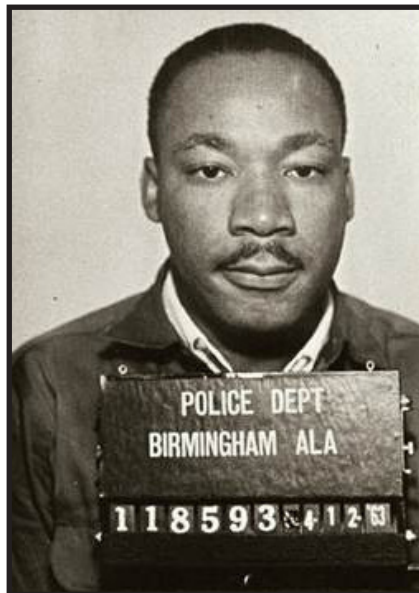
go back to the mindset of ignorance. This is also an awakening of inner peace to give love and compassion to my black brothers and sisters no matter what.

As I read your letter, I could not help but develop feelings of resentment, anger, and compassion at the same time. This mixture of feelings comes from the depths of my heart when I read and visualize all the injustice inflicted upon the minorities in both the United States of America and the world. Moreover, these feelings clouded my mind with thoughts of defeat, with tornados of what ifs, and with feelings of sadness because not much has changed since the beginning of this nation regarding racial disparities. Segregation is done legally through the laws that get passed only to benefit white supremacy. As a consequence, there are a lot of sad feelings in my mind when I read about the cruel reality people of color have to live through. Therefore, my mind has come to a conclusion: racism is very vivid today. The sick thought of one race being superior to others lives among us in 2023. It disgusts me to see and experience this ideology.

Your words ignited within me the desire to learn more about human rights and minority cultural backgrounds and made me want to contribute to the movement to end racism. Your words brought tears of sadness, but mostly of joy because you have only spoken the truth and the reality of life for minorities in this cruel white supremacy society. I feel hopeful that one day people of color will bring real freedom to themselves and live with inner

peace and eternal happiness. We the people of color never give up, we never quit, we are strong minded, and we fight and will continue to fight for what is right!

Again, thank you, Dr. King, for working tirelessly and for opening the door to create the tension necessary to bring justice for people of color in a nation where freedom is not such a thing, where equality does not exist, and where human rights get violated every day. May I one day become like you. **(Saúl Naxi)**

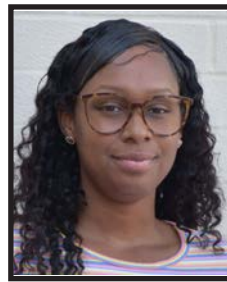




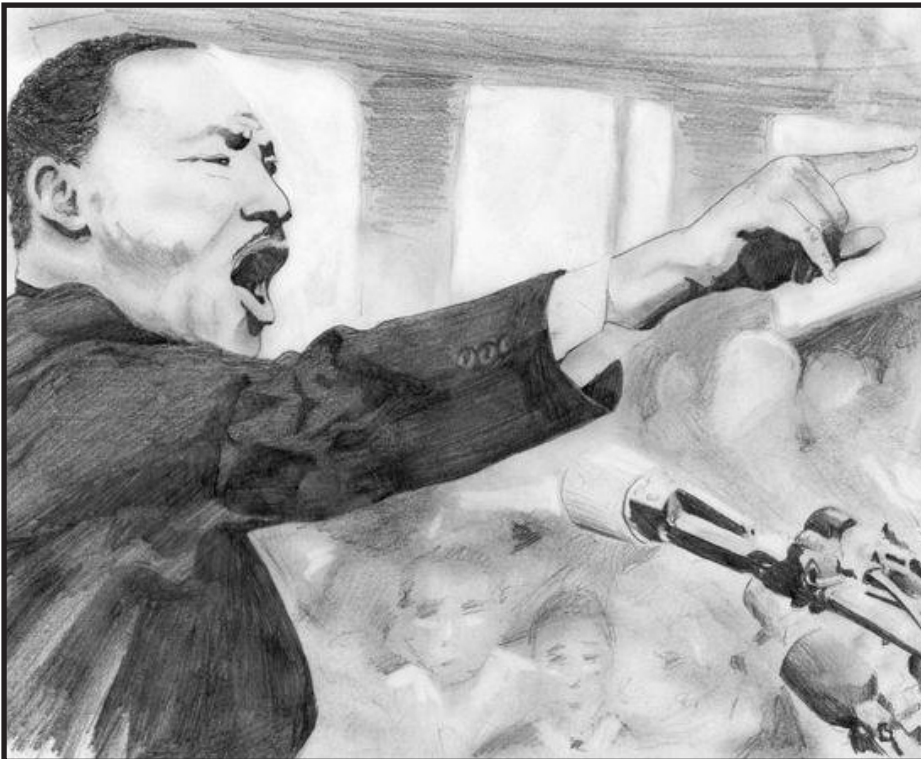
I can only imagine the strength and courage it took during this time with everything you and the Black community endured. You were nonviolently fighting for the Black community to be free but being treated as a violent man. What I see is much different than what they saw. I see a hero, I see an advocate, I see an honorable man.

It is now 2023. As a white woman in America, I am completely and utterly disgusted with humankind for the behavior throughout history. The actions of white people throughout history and even that continue to this day are deplorable. Although segregation is no longer a way of living in the twentieth century, the Black community still faces many social injustices, with police and governmental laws. I wish more than anything that this was something I myself could change for everyone still living through oppression but especially for the Black community that suffered for the last 400+ years. It breaks my heart. I myself see everyone as a person! I see their own individual selves—not the color of their skin, gender, or ethnic origin.

It weighed very heavy on my heart when you expressed the feelings you and others had when young, beautiful, innocent children had to be let down because they were not accepted, like the six-year-old child who just wished she could attend the new amusement park. It is heart wrenching especially because I have children of my own, and it's not their job to have to understand the cruel world we live in. I appreciate the impact you made in many communities to fight for what is morally right. Everyone deserves to be treated with equality and respect. Even though we cannot go back in time and only move forward, I do hope and pray that one day your wishes and dreams are granted completely. You are not only a knowledgeable, caring, and compassionate man but, like I said before, you're a hero! **(Keely Nelson-Gray)**



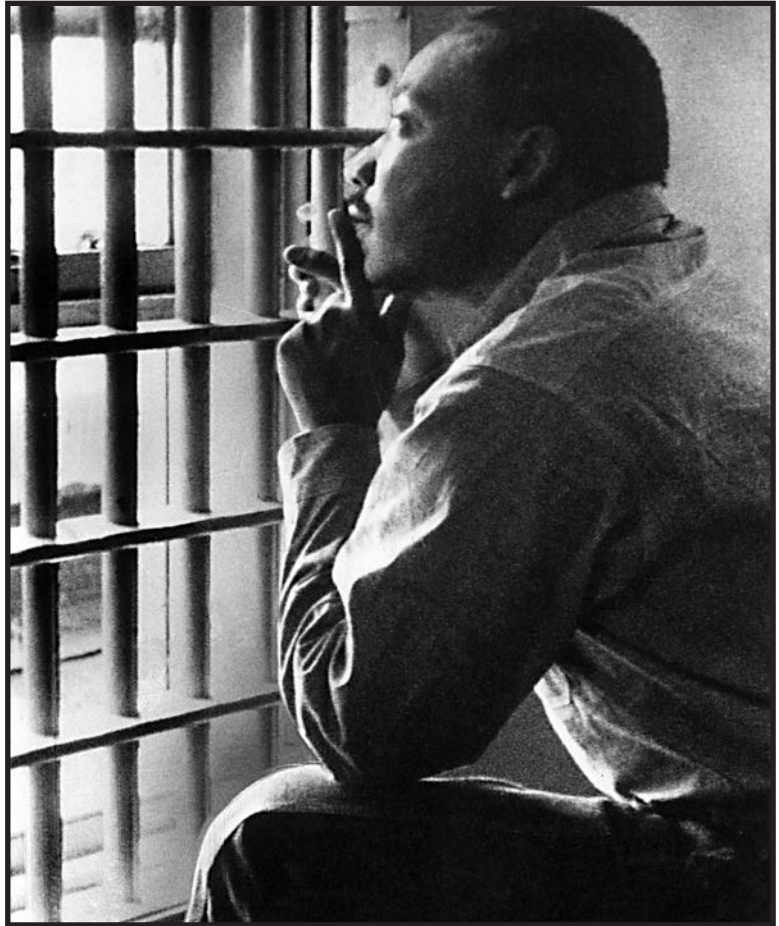
You are strong. How hard was it through all the depression of being black and a man? How did you make them join as a team, and at what point did you feel like there was light at the end of the tunnel? I feel like you sacrificed yourself for us. I know you fought for black children and adults; what about Mexicans, all colored people? I appreciated the courage you have. I teach my sons your methods of nonviolence. I live by methods still to this day. I feel like all people don't understand or appreciate you. We have gotten spoiled. Our brothers and sisters fight and kill each other. We have lost sight of things; family is not what you stood for. It saddens me. We're still fighting, but now it's more as a cover up. It's like we have forgotten. I hate the time we live in. We need to live in your time, just one day, so we can start joining as people again, what you dreamed about. **(Kiana Sims)**





Thank you for being a man of your word and following through on your promise to stand with and for the citizens of Birmingham, Alabama. Your presence holds volumes and brought

the necessary attention to the injustice being inflicted on the Negroes across the nation. Thank you for calling out the white moderates who teeter-totter between doing what is morally right and then using systematic laws set up to hinder a specific group of people as a scapegoat. I appreciate the stance you are taking as the president of the Southern Christian Leadership conference through a meticulous system of steps to prevent any gainsaying the fact that racial injustices are eclipsing the natural and moral rights of a specific group of citizens in this country. Your courage to remain nonviolent and peacefully protest in the presence of evil agitators through physical assaults is admirable at best.



Even in the face of adversity and confinement, you are staying focused and selflessly sacrificing yourself for the greater good. With a heart of gold, you remain determined, even though disappointment from the laxity of the church's involvements bewilders you. There are those who criticize your methods with no intentions to understand your purpose. Remember there are some of us who are standing beside you in this fight for what is right. Like you, we believe in our hearts that "an injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere." (**Dominique Smith**)



60 years later and we're still waiting—waiting for them to appreciate us, value us, and show us the dignity and respect we deserve. There has been no new hope. Just like in Birmingham, extreme measures are taken everywhere, used to tear our people down, diminish us like we

are nothing. Sometimes I wish everyone was color blind so the color of one's skin would not determine how they should be treated. I wish everyone followed your values so that we can be educated and make this country better for everyone. So many unjust laws have been placed to destroy minorities. They truly don't understand that an unjust law is no law at all. Nobody has morals anymore; nobody wants to be the better person. Freedom is so close but yet so far. (**Tiara Smith**)



I'm infuriated just reading the letter. I can't believe they wanted you to wait. Wait?! I salute you! I would want to fight. I don't think I could have been nice like you and written a letter. You have a way with your words, Dr. King! It's 2023 and I can say things have changed but there's sometimes certain situations or people who make it feel like we are still waiting. (**Roxanna Sobrevilla**)



After reading your letter to these non-black clergymen, I have to say I am upset that you spent so much time talking to and addressing people who can never understand who we are or what we deal with, nor do I think they really care. The

defining character of a person is not what he says but how he acts. These people who you spent so much time corresponding with have no real desire to help black people sort out the root problem with being black in America because they themselves benefit from our struggle. You said it yourself, “More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more efficiently than have the people of good will.” These words are just as true today as they were when you wrote them.

When I consider how other races of people look within to build strength, I can’t help but feel your wisdom would have been better served on us, your people. Teach the generations that follow you how to love ourselves and how to become self-sufficient. The energy spent looking for allies and sympathetic hearts and understanding minds should have been within our community. You cannot fight hate with love when that hate has killed our love, loved ones, and, for a great many of us, our spirit.

Look at where you are right now, despite how kind and generous you have been. This American system was not built for people who look like us, so please, I implore you to help us make the country that our ancestors’ blood, sweat, tears built become our true home and not a waiting room for the graveyard. **(Mya Whitson)**



I am truly grateful for all the hard work you have done for freedom and liberty in this country. You have made a decent amount of progress; however, there’s so much more work to be done! For example, you mention, “I had hoped

that the white moderate would understand that

the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface, the hidden attention that is already alive. We bring out the open, where it can be seen and dealt with.” This is a great example of order over justice.

Still to this day many laws seem to only apply to a certain group. Many of us are still out here fighting for equal rights, and it’s been how many years since you wrote the Letter from a Birmingham Jail? The oxymoron you used—“obnoxious negative peace”—is brilliant and well said. This phrase gives me flashes in my head of how my people thrived, and are still thriving, despite their struggles. Like Frederick Douglass said, “if there is no struggle, there’s no progress”...but it has been centuries of struggle with very little progress.

I often experience the struggle of being audible, my voice being silenced and treated as if I am less than. As an act of non-violent resistance, I have been secretly celebrating Black History Month with the students in the elementary school where I work. Every time I bring an idea up about a Black History spirit week or a fun activity to staff who have power to make a change, they dismiss me by saying, “it’s a great idea but that sounds really hard to do.” How much you wanna bet, in March everybody will be dressed in green, with rainbows, four-leaf clovers and shamrock shakes everywhere!!!! You say more and more people of ill-will have manipulated time much more effectively than have the people of goodwill. Now is the time for me to engage in nonviolent, direct action. I will celebrate in silence no longer; my ideas will not only be shared, they will come to life! And if anyone has any tension about my good will, we can bring it out into the open, where I can be seen and dealt with! Your letter has inspired me.

Thank you for everything you have contributed to promote liberty and justice, **(Amanda Willis)**