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ODYSSEY SENIOR



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THE SOUNDS OF CHILDHOOD

SUNDAY MORNING SOUNDS BY MARY WELLS '07

As a child, one of my favorite sounds happened every Sunday morning, rain, snow, sleet, hail, or sunshine. It was like an alarm clock to let us children know it was time to get up and come down for breakfast. Some mornings we would go to Grandma's for breakfast, and she played this song also. "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" came bellowing from our record player that played 78s, 45s and 33s.

Precious Lord, take my hand
Lead me on, let me stand
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn
Through the storm,
through the night
Lead me on through the light
Take my hand, precious Lord
And lead me home

When my way grows dreary
Precious Lord, lead me near
When my life is almost gone
At the river I will stand
Guide my feet, hold my hand
Take my hand, precious Lord
And lead me home



This particular song was one of my mother's favorite songs, and she played it many times throughout the years, so I learned the lyrics, too. This song is by the one and only Mahalia Jackson. She had a very distinct voice. I love the fact that she was very good friends with Martin Luther King, Jr., and was actually on stage with him when he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.



SOUNDS OF SILENCE AND VIOLENCE BY LENORA RODIN '15

Sounds from my childhood were always loud and violent, but sometimes, especially after a very turbulent night, the sounds were quiet—graveyard quiet, so quiet that, like they used to say, "You can hear a mice piss on cotton." On those days I was really scared because I had no idea what was coming. Was peace coming? or was a storm a' coming?

Oh, how I wished the thrashing and wallops along with the clobbering, slapping, thumps, thwacks, and victimizing would stop.

The sounds in my childhood were fear, remorse, heartache, and pain covered with wanting to die.

I saw, heard, and smelled more death as a child than I cared to, but now as an adult my daily sounds are the sounds of peace smothered with love and the sound of my cat purring while I rub her head.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE NAME JESUS**BY SHERRI BESTER '08**

There is something about that name Jesus
 It's the sweetest name I know . . .
 Some people say I'm crazy but I can't explain
 The power that I feel yeah, when I call Your name (When I call Your name)
 Said it's just like fire, shut up in my bones (shut up in my bones)
 When the holy ghost is moving (oh yeah)
 I'll know it won't leave us alone and it all because there's something, yeah
 Something about the name Jesus
 Something about the name Jesus
 It's the sweetest name, yeah It is the sweetest name (sweetest name I know . . .)

The words and meaning to this song penetrate throughout my heart, mind, body, soul, and spirit, a memory I have of the sounds of my childhood.

There were many times in my childhood in Greenville, Mississippi when racist acts of terror overcame me in my life. I would hear this song playing in my mind keeping me comforted and protected from what was going on all around me in such terrorizing madness. When I say I would hear this song playing in my mind, this song was just written then (1970) and the name of Jesus and praying the name of Jesus brought me a wall of protection and safety throughout my every being.



The words to this song are exactly what I felt in those times of terror. I would say the name of Jesus as things overwhelmed me; seriously calling out the name of Jesus in my mind set me free from the terror before me. When I concentrated my mind on the name of Jesus, then things seemed to overflow with hope and healings to come after all things had fallen apart so quickly. The name of Jesus birthed forth a mighty hope and healing past all the pain and suffering from my childhood to the freedom of victory.

One day my teacher said that some of the lunch money that she collected for the day was missing from her desk. She had an assistant teacher come to the classroom. She took the two African American students from the class to the bathroom to search for the money. I was one of the two. She touched me inappropriately all over my body, and she even looked in my panties. As she said mean things to me under her breath, I prayed in my mind and called on the name of Jesus. I was having problems breathing, and my heart was racing quickly and beating fast with horror. I kept praying and saying the name of Jesus in my mind, which helped me not faint and kept my nerves calming down slowly.

My teacher did not find the money on neither me nor the other African American student. Neither of us took the lunch money from her desk. This is one day of many days I remember in my childhood that I called of the name of Jesus in great desperation and despair. This is a clear memory of victory that helped me make it through such terrorizing racist events of my life.

THE SOUNDS OF THE PROJECTS**MARCIA D. BROWN '11**

I grew up in the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago, IL. When my family and I moved there in 1961, it was newly built and quiet. As more families moved in, the sounds of children playing in the playground resonated throughout the neighborhood. Basketballs bouncing on the concrete, the swishing of the jump ropes turning, and the patter of feet jumping up and down were happy and welcoming sounds to my ears.

As the neighborhood flourished with so many families with teenagers and young adults, the welcoming sounds dissipated, replaced with loud and scary ones. The steady pop of bullets from gang wars can be very unsettling. If you were coming home from wherever you had been, and it was unusually quiet, you had better run for cover. Either the gangs were getting ready to war or the war had just ended.

When I was a teenager, I remember the birds chirping early in the morning. On a nice day when there was a slight breeze in the air, people would leave their doors open and their screen door locked. You could hear families talking with each other at dinner tables and the clanging of silverware against the plates with each spoonful of food being deposited in their mouths. I could hear the easy chattering of families recounting to each other how their work or school day had fared. Sometimes their voices changed to shouting as an argument ensued.



The sweet sound from the pitter patter of feet from children playing in the playground was replaced with the blaring sound of police sirens and the screeching of ambulances on their way to an emergency situation.

When I came home from college in 1977, I was astonished to see how the projects had declined. The last sounds I heard before I went to sleep at night were the pop pop of bullets being fired from a gun.

I thank God that I was able to move from the projects to a very nice neighborhood in Hyde Park at the age of 22.

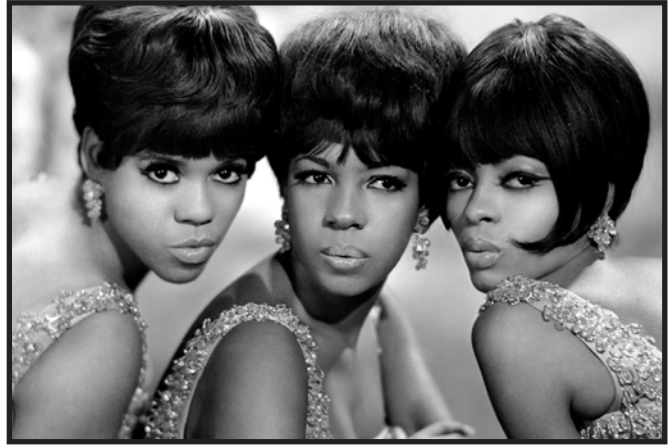
THE SWEET, SOULFUL SOUNDS OF MOTOWN MUSIC IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD**ROSLYN PHILLIPS '07**

The joyful music of Motown could be heard in Chicago in the 1960s and 1970s from every apartment, car, transistor radio, and boom box for miles and miles. Motown Music was a natural high, happy, happy, happy. In the sixties, seventies, and eighties, Fridays, Saturdays, and, yes, some Sundays in my house were filled with the soul-stirring sound of music. Fridays after dinner my parents would play that wonderful music on a phonograph (record player) on 45s and albums (vinyl records). They would have a few family members over around 8 p.m. to play cards: BID Whisk and Spades. We would come in from playing outside by dusk. When the streetlights came on, you could see all the kids scrambling and running home.

Entering my house was such a happy feeling, watching my parents dance into the night. Now Saturday was a day of chores, and with the chores came more of the sounds of Motown music: Gladys Knight & the Pips, Jackson 5, Tempting Temptations, sexy Marvin Gaye, the soulful sexy voice of Smokey Robinson, and the list goes on. I remember my sister Gail and I would use the mop and broom as a standing microphone.

We were the Supremes, Mar Valette's singing and mocking their steps. My baby brother Russell had happy feet, and he could do all of James Brown's moves, splits and sounds.

Then Sunday mornings come gospel. My sister, brother, and I would attend church with our grandparents, but returning home the door would swing open to the savory smells of Sunday dinner and Motown Music blaring. Yes, we were a happy family that loved to sing and dance. Now it's 2023, and I still dance and sing to what they call "dusties."



My kids and grandkids have their own genre of music, but at Grandma Roz and Grandpa Flex's house, we mix it up. Music is still important to me.

Three and a half years ago, I took my kids and grandkids to Detroit, MI. At the Motown Museum, we stood on the steps where the greatest music was sung and recorded and produced by Barry Gordon. Music is in my soul. Yes, it calms the savage beast.

THE TASTES OF CHILDHOOD

HOMEGROWN TOMATOES

BY CHRIS WAGNER, VOLUNTEER LIBRARIAN

In his song "Homegrown Tomatoes," John Denver says, "Only two things money can't buy / that's true love and homegrown tomatoes." Whenever I hear those words, I remember Grandpa's garden and his very scrumptious "homegrown tomatoes"!



After my grandmother died when I was eight, Grandpa helped my parents buy a bigger house so that he could live with us—and have a garden. Grandpa grew up on a farm and always had a big garden, even after he moved to the city. He grew beans, peppers, potatoes, onions, watermelon, corn, and—best of all—tomatoes.

Grandpa was a lifelong learner as well as a teacher and looked at his garden as a giant experiment. Therefore, we didn't just have one or two types of tomatoes; we had several different varieties which he carefully tended.

I'll never forget the joy of having the first ripe

tomatoes of the season or trying a new variety—inhaling the earthy, spicy fragrance and then biting into the soft, juicy, round tomato with its unique combination of sweet and sour, depending on the

ripeness and variety. The tomato juices would roll down my chin, and I inevitably made a mess on my face, clothes, and the tablecloth. I loved how tomatoes made everything else taste so much richer. I remember thinking, "Tomatoes taste like a picnic" because the aroma of summer came right into the kitchen with them. Some meals were unthinkable without them—club sandwiches, for example, with bacon, lettuce, and tomatoes with mayonnaise smeared on soft bread.

I remember trying the different varieties of tomatoes Grandpa grew, at first balking at the yellow, orange, and purple varieties. But eventually,

I grew to enjoy all varieties and declared yellow tomatoes my favorite because they were the most sugary-tasting.

In my adult life, I have only lived somewhere that I could have a garden for a few of my years. Currently, I grow my tomatoes in large pots because the land my house sits on used to be a dump. I think using pots takes away a little of that special aroma I remember. I am hoping this year to build a raised garden—just a little patch—so I can savor my own homegrown tomatoes once again.

WORST MEAL EVER

BY PAMELA BRACEY, MOTHER OF MAYA BRACEY '18

Worst meal ever is when we had Spanish rice every week, it seemed. I didn't know how it was prepared, canned or packaged, but every time I would see it on my plate, I had issues—one, because we had to eat everything on our plate, and two, because it seemed to always come with something else that I didn't like but can't remember now—maybe fish sticks. Spanish rice had such a different taste that I don't even think I could pass it on to my siblings. It was red rice with green things in it. So, there I sat at the table until everyone finished and disappeared. Then deep into the trash it went, and no one was the wiser to catch me.

Another food was chitterlings. The smell of it being prepared and cooked was enough for me to know that I NEVER wanted to try them. I didn't know what that smell was until I moved to Madison and drove past Oscar Mayer on the east side; that's the smell, I thought . . . pigs. My mother never made me eat it, but my stepmother asked me one day, "Have you ever tried them?" She shoved chitterlings into



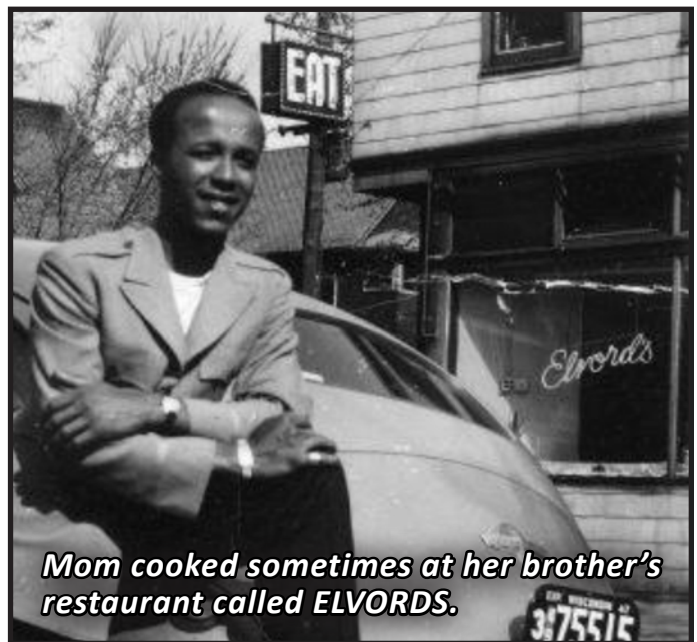
my mouth so fast my brain had no clue as to what they even tasted like. Then she asked, "Do you like them?" I said "No!" and that was my experience.

MOM'S COOKING SMELLED GREAT!

BY MS. SARAH WELLS, MOTHER OF MARY WELLS '07

My mother, Alice Elvord, was always in the kitchen baking or cooking something. Every day walking down the sidewalk outside before you got inside of the house, you could smell different aromas. Mom cooked for our family every day. She made homemade soups, baked breads, dinner rolls, cinnamon rolls, cakes, pies, cookies and pastries, baked turkey, sweet potatoes, and fresh vegetables. I can smell it right now! She would use fresh vegetables out of the garden. She cooked fried chicken, stews, steak, shrimp, oyster soup—you name it. Everything!

Everyone was crazy about her cooking. She knew what she was doing. Never did she look in a cookbook for a recipe. Several men would come over on their lunch break to enjoy her food. They were porters from the railroad, doctors, and some were hobos. She fed them all. She also cooked on the UW Madison campus right on Langdon Street. She cooked and dished up the food, and I would serve it. My mother learned to cook because my grandmother died at a young age so she was left to raise her four brothers, which of course included cooking.



Mom cooked sometimes at her brother's restaurant called ELVORDS.

MOMENTS OF COURAGE



DIRECTING THE CHOIR BY ROSLYN PHILLIPS

Courage. I remember in the early years of 2000 I was singing in a church choir. We had traveled to Milwaukee, to fellowship with another church. It was a Musical Jamboree. When they announced our choir's name, the choir was lost and looked dumbfounded. What the heck, our choir director didn't show up. Guess what? I immediately without thinking stepped out of the choir, walked over to the musicians (organist and drums), and whispered to them, "I got this." Yes, Roslyn directed that choir like she had directed before. Now, mind you, I sing but never did I think I had the courage to save the day and in faith to lead and direct that choir.



A WAKE-UP CALL BY MARCIA BROWN

When I joined the Army in 1979, I was so excited to be leaving Chicago to start a new adventure in my life. While I was in Basic Training, I encountered a wake-up call! We had to wake up at 5:30 a.m. every day. I was not used to getting up from slumber so early. My job was to mop the latrine floor after everyone finished their morning routine in the bathroom, showering, brushing teeth, etc. I felt that since my duty was the last job to be completed before we were to go downstairs for roll call and physical training, I should be allowed to sleep later. [But I was not able to do so.]



**NOT A DUMB-DUMB
BY JAMES MORGAN '13**

Several years ago I began to share my experience with not being able to find employment with some colleagues. Shortly thereafter it was suggested I testify before the state legislature about that experience. Hesitantly, and in recalling my childhood nickname “dumb, dumb,” I decided that now was the time to break the shackles of fear and invisibility to accept their confidence in my ability to step into the “halls of power.” With resiliency and courage, “Mr. James goes to the Capitol.”



**FIGHTING FOR FAMILY
BY MS. SARAH WELLS**

When I was protecting my sister, I had to fight. After school and on the playground are places the fights occurred. It got to the point where the principal of the school said, “If you will stop fighting for one week, I will buy you the biggest Easter bunny candy there is.” I told him to tell those kids to stop hitting my sister. My mother told me if my sister came home crying that she would whip me. So that was it. That’s why I had to fight and beat up boys.



**PRAYING FOR PROTECTION
BY PAM BRACEY**

Life is my courage: facing it when I wake up and when I go to sleep. I wake up every day in a positive way. I pray for all my family, friends, and the world that we have all we need to make it through each day. Protect us from the elements that may distract us from our purpose. Each of us has our own destination. My courage and beliefs get me motivated through the appointments and disappointments, the wills and the won’ts, the dos and the don’ts.



**RESCUE
BY LENORA RODIN**

At about age five I found the courage to pull the heater off my mother’s legs. She was drunk again. She had fallen, and the space heater had fallen on her leg.

Another moment of courage later on was when I faced my shame and gathered the courage to come back to school.



**BATTLING DEPRESSION
BY SHERRI BESTER**

One day it was very difficult for me to get out of bed because I was very depressed. So I tossed and turned in my

bed for hours. I finally got out of bed and faced my day with strength. I made it through my day doing the things I need to do. I even found myself joyful part of that day with love from my husband James overflowing into my life journey. James was so loving and kind to me that it brought me out of my depression and I ended the day with joy.



**FEAR OF MOVING
BY MS. BEA CHATMAN,
MOTHER OF CHAR BRAXTON '06**

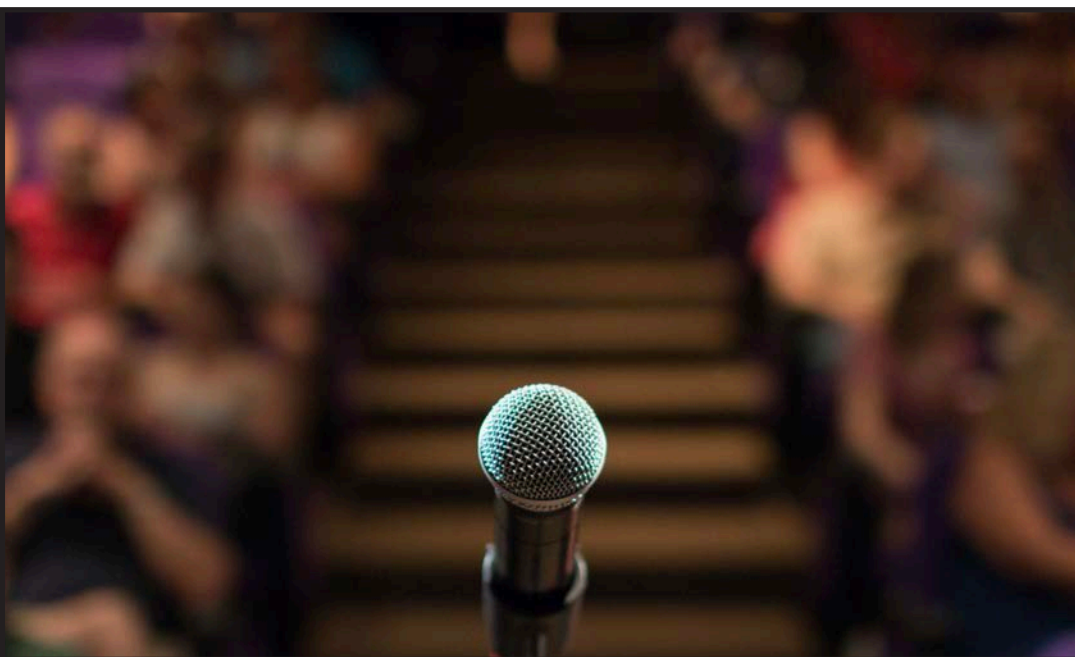
I am afraid of elevators. Riding on the elevator by myself, even if it is only going to the second floor and no more, is too much and I will walk up.

Flying- I always was afraid of flying. I do fly sometimes, and now I am always stressed out, nervous, etc. before I get in the plane. Once I arrive safely, I am so happy.



**NAKED FEAR
BY BRIAN BENFORD '07**

When I first ran for political office, I had to overcome the fear of public speaking. Some say that speaking in front of a large group of unfamiliar people is one of the scariest things we have to do as people. It has been suggested it is even scarier than jumping out of an airplane. With meditation and self-reflection, along with guided imagery I learned to overcome this fear.



The guided imagery called for me to imagine that my audience members were nude. Now I fear being permanently traumatized and scarred for life by the thousands of naked unattractive people over the years. Ultimately, I've come to understand that message is always more important than the messenger.

THINKING METAPHORICALLY

I used to be a mouse,
you wouldn't know I was in the house.
I am now a lion,
hear my roar! **(Roslyn Phillips)**



I am a bouquet of flowers with a bright and colorful personality, making someone's day **(Mary Wells)**



I am a burst of sunshine on a backdrop of a cloudy sky. My enthusiasm shines when I am given a task to complete. I love to talk and give my unadulterated opinion on any subject in a conversation. When I walk into a room, I will be noticed because I am full of energy and anticipation. Just like the sun competes with the clouds, I will shine regardless of the outcome. **(Marcia Brown)**

I am a waterlily continuing reaching for the sun.
In my addiction I was in the dark
at the bottom of a swamp,
but just like the lily seeks light, so did I.
(Lenora Rodin)



I am a blank piece of paper . . . to be continued.
(Ms. Bea Chatman)



I am a butterfly, beautiful as can be, fluttering gracefully without making a sound. My vibrant, colorful wings are delicate as I flutter by with grace and poise. I'm always seen but never heard. I have transformed from a caterpillar in a cocoon to a butterfly, spreading my wings and soaring peacefully through life.
(Shalonda Hilliard-Jones '13, granddaughter of Edith Hilliard)

I am a rainbow. I am complete with colors of many bright rainbows. I also am complete with a pot of golden sunshine. My many colors make my joyful shine. My pot of gold makes me rich with gifts of valuable riches galore. (Sherri Bester)

I am a tree, the strong ones you see.
I used to be a branch that kids pulled on and eventually broke,
but you can't break me.
I am now a tree with strong roots implanted in me.
Life's experiences did this to me.
I'm now deeply rooted, strong as I can be,
branching out, full of life,
now you can't break me. (Pam Bracey)



Deeply rooted, sprouting the seasons of life.
Flourishing, greens, gold, and amber, rejuvenating;
reaching for the sun—
I am a tree. (James Morgan)

I am a tree, with deep roots and strong, sturdy branches.
My exterior is weathered and rough,
but inside are layers that tell stories of generations,
connecting ancestors to the fruit I bear.
My leaves harvest rays of sunshine to feed my soul;
I drink heavenly dew and stretch my arms
to reach the sky in her star-lit show.
All of my friends take a comfort in my cool shade;
I give them refuge from weary travels and drop sweet
treats to nourish them another day,
until they meet the loving soil,
and I welcome them home.
(Tamara Thompson '16, daughter of Abigail Israel)

MEMOIR PROPOSALS

STARTED FROM THE BOTTOM, NOW I'M HERE

BY ROSLYN PHILLIPS

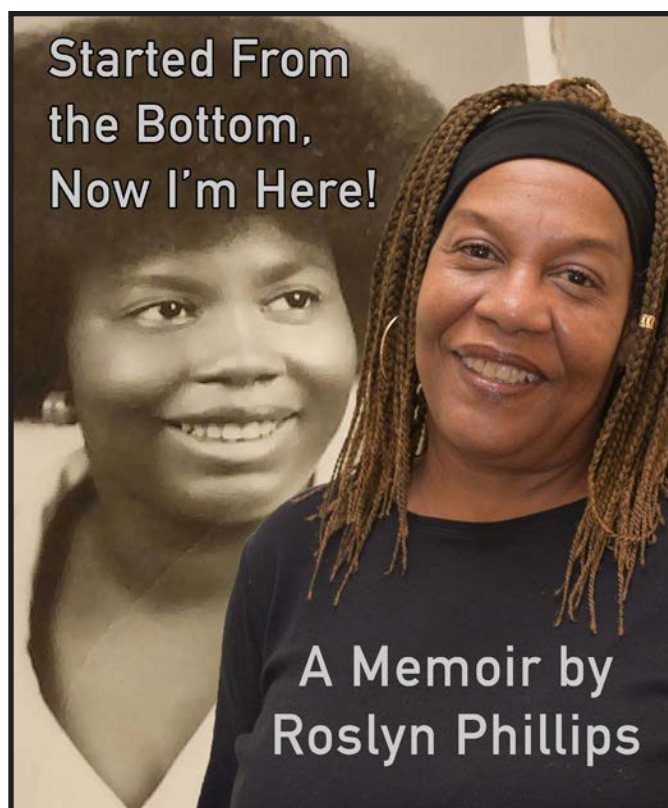
Greetings. My name is Roslyn Phillips, and I thank you for taking the time to read a sneak peak of a magnificent, raw, emotional, riveting, greatly in-depth look into my life. Now, I would like to say this is a three-novel adventure. Yes, it will take three books to get to now—2023.

The first novel will be of my early life as an infant as told by my parents. I was at the time the eldest child of three. My sister was Gal, the baby girl, followed a year later by my baby brother, Russel. My parents in their early twenties were saddled with three kids burning in a musty, wet basemen apartment. I'm told they couldn't turn off lights for fear the rats and roaches would feast upon us. In the early 1960s Mayor Daley of Chicago had built and opened the housing projects, massive high rise apartment buildings across Chicagoland. Well, my parents had a brand smacking new apartment at 730 E 39th Street, formerly known as Darrow Homes/ Ida B Wells Housing. We got a two-bedroom apartment on the sixth floor, apartment 602. My parents had their bedroom, and I shared a bedroom with my siblings. When my brother got older, we moved to a three-bedroom apartment. I'll stop here!

The second novel will include the birth of my first child, my son Lee, in 1974 and my marriage in 1975. I moved out of the housing authority with my son and husband and got a beautiful one-bedroom apartment in the Hyde Park area. My baby girl was born in 1981 but developed Meningococcal Meningitis, C Menges of the brain, at nine months (1982). I struggled with my daughter's illness and recovery. Yes, by the grace of God, my baby girl (Stephanie) struggled with cardiac arrest three times, had IV burns to her legs, etc. Then I had to deal with her cognitive disability. She survived and I stayed strong. Unfortunately, after all that and after keeping my son gang free and after struggles and many sleepless crying nights, finally my marriage crumbled. I struggled and got a short time with drugs quickly beat. That wasn't for me. Yes, these novels would not be for the weary.

Finally, Novel 3 will be the final saga, 1993-Present. My life and struggles now show me sitting on a Greyhound bus bound for Madison, WI with my daughter aged 12. My son had started his family at 19 and came to Madison two years later. Now my journey to happiness, success, and pride started. I admit I'm far from perfect, but I'm righteous with great morals, values, sympathy, empathy, and a big heart for others. I obtained my divorce and started living a decent life. I'll share the many perils I endured from my journey at a later date.

Again, sign me up, and you won't be sorry.





**THE GREATEST THING IS LOVE
BY SHERRI BESTER**

I am going to write a book about my life. The title of my book is The Greatest Thing is Love. My book will include the years of my childhood unto my present adulthood of my experiences where “LOVE” prevailed and “LOVE” provoked victory in my life situations. I will tell many stories about positive and negative experiences in which “LOVE” was the most important thing that mattered in the end of it all that was told in truth and clarity. “LOVE” stories will be told of my endless creative journey that I have experienced in my lifetime of heartfelt joy and sorrow complete. The book will capture how important “LOVE” is out of everything that exists in life and that happens in my lifetime of experiences complete from my birth unto my present day life experiences overflowing into my future.

**WHEN THE HEART CRIES OUT, THE SOUL TAKES NOTES
BY LENORA RODIN**

This book is an assortment of experiences along with poems based on my life, the good, the bad, and the unexplainable. With each story there is a poem that goes along with the storyline explaining the situation and how I felt.

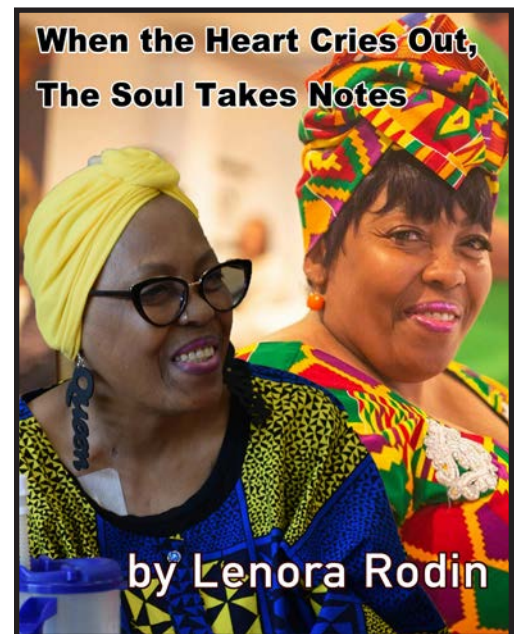
I realized a long time ago that when you cry, whether it is out loud or in silence, the tears must go somewhere. What I mean by that is the residue from whatever situation made the tears to begin with. I believe that each tear that I have shed my soul picked up and kept notes and slowly helped me to heal.

Here are two poems:

I Never Grieved

I never grieved for the little white, blonde-headed boy that died at the hands of a friend of mine.
I never grieved for the man that was shot dead in front of me as I came down the stairs of a friend’s house.
I never grieved for the man that was stabbed in front of me multiple times at the night club right at the table where I sat.
I never grieved for the man that got shot right in front of me as I was on my way to the store. He fell in front of me with his cigarette still lit in his hand. His life was gone, but life as I knew it went on.
I never grieved for my father or the life that was taken from me, but I know today that when the heart cries out the soul takes notes.

You don’t see me, You don’t hear me, You don’t know my name
No matter how eloquent or persuasive my words are, you don’t hear me.
You see the movement of my mouth and you hear the phrases that come out of it, but you don’t hear me.
You see me, but you don’t see me. You look around me, through me, at me, but you don’t see me.
No matter how I scream out, jump, and shout, you don’t see or hear me because you don’t know my name.



A SCARRING TIME
BY MARCIA BROWN

I have memories of my childhood since the tender age of three. My family and I lived in one of two brown seven-story apartment buildings on the westside of Chicago, IL. We lived on the fourth floor in apartment 407. My home phone # was CE8-3747.

One sunny day, when I was five years old, my sisters Mickey, Lynette, and I were playing in the playground near our apartment building. We climbed up the stairs of the sliding board and slid down the slide, laughing and clapping our hands. On one of my trips down the sliding board, I noticed the two long poles on each side of the sliding board. I thought to myself, I bet I can slide down one of the poles instead of the sliding board. I climbed the steps of the sliding board. When I reached the top, I slid down to the ground landing upright on my two feet. I clapped my hands, delighted that I had performed this small feat. I turned to my two sisters saying, "You can do it too." My sister Lynette climbed to the top of the sliding board, grabbed the pole, slid down, landed on her feet just like I did. We both screamed in delight, clapped our hands, then tried to persuade my sister Mickey to do the same. Mickey climbed to the top of the sliding board, hesitated. Then she looked down at Lynette and me with fear in her eyes. She said, "I'm scared, I don't think I can."

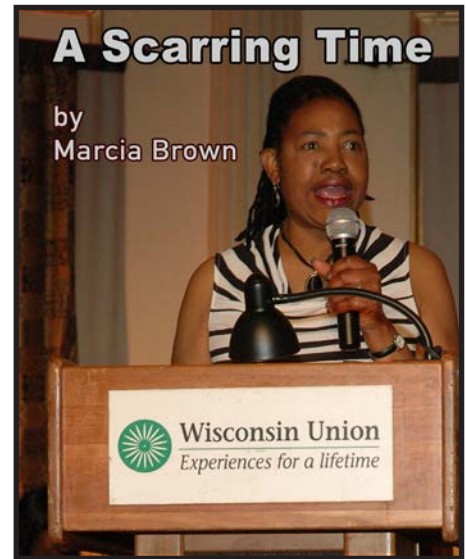
Lynette and I egged her on, saying, "You can do it." Mickey reached out for the pole, missed, and fell head first onto the ground. Lynette and I screamed, "Somebody help my sister!" I looked down at my sister on the ground with blood streaming from her head, screaming and writhing like a snake, obviously in pain. I looked at my new white shoes, now splattered with blood, and started to cry. I ran toward my apartment building looking for someone to help my sister Mickey.

The maintenance man appeared, walking toward me with a concerned look on his face. The maintenance man was deformed and scary looking. He had one normal arm with one thumb and five fingers on it. His other arm was short with a thumb and two fingers on the hand. All the children, including my sisters and I, would laugh at and run from him whenever we saw him. I explained to him how my sister fell off the sliding board and needed some help. The man ran to my sister, who was now barley moving, bleeding profusely. As he picked my sister up from where she had fallen, I said, "Don't you touch my sister! I am going to get my mother." The man picked my sister up and carried her to our apartment. All the while, my sister Lynette and I were screaming, "Get your hands off my sister now!" Lynette and I followed the maintenance man up to our apartment crying. I was afraid that my sister Mickey was dying, and it was all my fault.

When we got to our apartment, my mother opened the door, eyes as big as saucers and a bewildered look on her face. My mother asked, "What happened to Mickey?" She directed the maintenance man over to the couch in the living room. He placed Mickey delicately onto the couch while my mother left to get some First Aid supplies. My mother thanked the maintenance man, and he left our apartment. My mother placed some bath towels over my sister's head wound and called 911. As we waited for the paramedics, my mother asked me, "How did this happen? What were you girls doing?" I started crying and said, "It's my fault. I told Mickey to slide down the pole instead of the sliding board." The ambulance arrived and my mother and Mickey left with the paramedics.

When I woke up the next morning and saw my sister Mickey, I screamed. She had gauze and bandages wrapped over her face and head. She resembled a mummy.

Thank God, my sister recovered from this terrible fall! She now lives with a small scar in the middle of her forehead.



BEST AND WORST MOMENTS

“It was the best of times and the worst of times.”—Charles Dickens



One of the best moments in my life was when I took a vacation in April 2023 with Nimrod Andrew Hilliard

III, my adult son. His name comes from the Bible in Genesis: “Great and mighty hunter before the Lord.” We flew out of the small but unique Dane County Airport. Nimrod has a fear of flying because he hates it when you have to transfer to a second plane in a large airport with numerous different sections.



bed to put your clothes and hooks on the wall to hang your clothes. The TV was on the wall with directions of use on the screen. The room had one phone and twin beds with a small table between.

On our first day we decided to take a walk. My son was concerned as I was still recovering from a complete knee replacement of January 6th. My spirit and my knee were ready for the challenge. As we walked through the Georgetown

We arrived in DC to the amazement of an airport with African American artwork on the walls and restaurants with ethnic cuisine. We booked a taxi and immediately smelled the magnolia flower blooming everywhere as we rode to our hotel. Our hotel was a micro hotel. Everything was minimized. There was no closet, only a small box under the

area on a beautiful 70- degree day in April, you could smell and see the magnificent beauty of the pink and purple cherry blossoms.

The architectural features of the tall glass and brass building felt as if they were floating from the sky. We were able to see the White House girded behind a tall wrought iron fence which screamed NO TRESPASSING. Pennsylvania Ave was busy with a police presence on motorcycles, horseback, and with canines.

Day two we arrived by taxi at 9:30 to a 10:00 a.m. opening of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. We started at level 4 with a wheelchair for me and worked our way down to the basement. This was a history lesson on every level done with clarity and the attention to detail to showcase the African American experience dating back to the 1700s.

Day three was the adventure of a lifetime for my son, an animal connoisseur of ALL kinds, to the Smithsonian National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute. It is on 163 acres of land at Rock

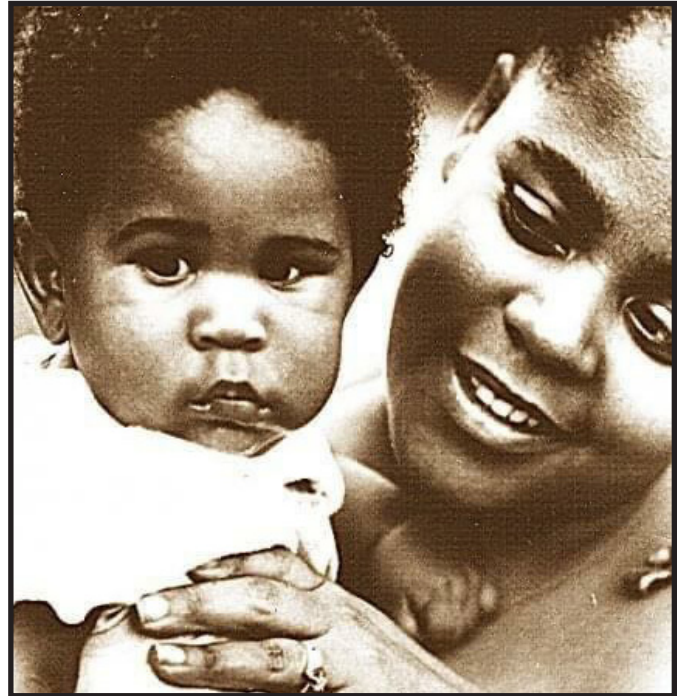


Creek National Park with over 400 animal species. I rented a motorized cart for our five-hour trip around the park.

Day three also was another day of walking to see all the monuments. It was quite interesting to see each monument and all the quotes written in the stone. Our favorite was Martin Luther King Jr. A carved granite statue designed with him standing on the mountain of despair was breathtaking.

This trip was something I will always remember, a wonderful memory of a mother and son vacation. I am blessed to have a son who is an excellent example of a husband, father, and caring son.

(Edith Hilliard)



Although this best moment I experienced three times, the first moment was such a thrill. Giving birth to my oldest son, Corey, was a blessing that I never knew I would get the chance to have. All my friends or at least most of them had their first babies in high school, and if nothing else I was a babysitter for a long time but never a mother.

After going in the day before with labor pains, I thought this was it. I had a smile on my face and was ready to go, whatever that meant. They sent me home. My mother said, "You weren't ready. You were smiling too much." So I waited.

The next day was a Sunday. I went in in fear. My mother said "Now, you're ready." I was in labor all day. Corey's father had all his family and friends there ☺. It had gotten late into the day, and I was in and out between labor pains when they decided I needed a C-section. I'm thinking whatever works to stop this pain. So I went under the knife and woke up to a little boy's head full of hair and one of the best smiles ever. The nurses loved him. They were always taking him away to wash his hair to see it curl up, adding to his wonderful smile.

(Pam Bracey)



One of my best moments in life was the day my wife and I decided it was time to make our years together official. We were together for eight years before we decided to get married on June 9th, 1988. We went to the courthouse with our children and my brother, Parris Jones. We have now been together a total of 42 blissful years. That decision was the beginning of many positive changes in my life. **(Sanford Jones)**



The best moment of my whole life—my whole life is ongoing. One moment in my life I would consider my best is when my children started their families. We have 16 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. We opened our home to operate a family daycare, which we operated for over 11 years. It was the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done—to raise my grandchildren along with my daycare family. My daycare children and my grandchildren still today call me “Granny.” I love it. I am blessed. **(Yolanda Jones)**



The best moment in my life . . . There I stood looking into the eyes of James Bester. My heart was beating fast and clearly. As we stood face to face, I felt like I was flying over the highest mountain in the forest of green trees and sparkling waterfalls. I said “I do” to all the wedding vows stated, and I promised to keep these vows forever, until death parted us. **(Sherri Bester)**



One of the worst moments in my life had to be when I came home after work and saw that the house next to ours was on fire. I watched as they brought the dead, burnt fireman out of the building.

He had managed to save the child, but his own life could not be saved. Since that day, I have had a special place in my heart for all firemen. **(Lenora Rodin)**



One of the worst moments in my whole life was when my mother passed away in January 2013. She was so kindhearted and loving, among other good things. We were considered poor but always managed to help other people out. She had a beautiful vegetable garden. She always gave vegetables away to the needy and others.



The doctor at UW Hospital came into my room and said, "We need to talk." As soon as he said this, my chest starting hurting, my heart began to race, and my asthma started acting out. What does he want to tell me? I started to question God about my time on earth and what I felt I needed to do before leaving my children and grandchildren forever. The negotiations began in my head.

When my mother passed away, I thought I wouldn't survive. But I am still here. My mother is up above (in Heaven) watching and praying for me. God bless her soul. **(Ms Beatrice Chatman)**



My cell phone rang after I finished preparing lunch for the five beautiful siblings that were in my care. As a childcare specialist at the Respite Center, I was accustomed to witnessing traumatic events in the lives of those that I served.

As the five brothers, ages 5-14, dined on fruit and sandwiches, I picked up the phone with the hopes of a quick call.

On the other end was my doctor, who I thought was on a month-long vacation to the Swiss Alps.

"Brian, I really hate to call you with this type of news," said Dr. Smith, "but you have to go to the hospital tomorrow."

"What! Why?" I said.

"Your test results indicate that you have advanced cancer," he said with concern in his voice.

After a disjointed conversation that I don't remember, I cleaned up after the boys' lunch and went outside to cry before I faced my children. **(Brian Benford)**

The doctor said, "You need a pacemaker." I said a strong "No! I am here for another procedure, and a pacemaker is not one." I argued with every surgeon and cardiologist that came in my room for two days. They made me sketches on the board, and they explained really well why I needed it. They sent me home.

Two days later, I returned to the emergency room, and so the cardiologist visits began again.

I finally understood why and agreed to the surgery. I prayed and let God take control. I relaxed. **(Socorro Lopez)**



MEET OUR NEWEST SENIORS

Welcome to four seniors joining us for the summer session: Sanford Jones, Odyssey '10, and his wife, Yolanda Jones, plus Edith Hilliard (grandmother of Shalonda Hilliard-Jones, Odyssey '13), and Abigail Israel, mother of Tamara Thompson, Odyssey '16.



EDITH HILLIARD

I can trace my family history back 275 years—218 years in Wisconsin, and 133 in Madison.

I retired three times: 30 years at WPL Alliant Energy, 15 years at MPI International, and 5 years at Goodman Community Center.

I have three adult children, 11 adult grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren.



My childhood was full of unconditional love, encouragement, and support. I hated eating green peas as a little child, and as an adult I still do. When I was a child growing up in beautiful Madison, I watched many changes in the city for children.

I signed up for Odyssey Senior because it sounded interesting. I love to find fellowship with other seniors. I have no fears.



ABIGAIL ISRAEL

I am into sports, health, and fitness (certified for four years of training). I have four grown children and seven grandchildren. I have been married for 19 years to my second husband.

I signed up for Odyssey Senior for inspiration and to hear and see others. I hope to receive comfort and meet a friend or let someone know I am just like them because I have been told all my life that I am different.





SANFORD JONES

As the oldest of four brothers, my most interesting moment in childhood was the day my father sat us all down to teach us a lesson about togetherness. With four popsicle sticks, he broke each one and showed us how easy it was to break one. Then putting them all together they did not break. The moral of the story was individually you can be broken, but together you will bend but you won't break.

My mother's fried chicken with mashed potatoes and greens, corn bread was an absolute favorite. There were never any leftovers.

In my youth we played outside games like cricket, horseshoes, and baseball. Kids today spend most of their time on the phone.

I joined Odyssey Senior because I wanted to get reunited with the Odyssey Program and maybe get motivated to try to continue my education.



YOLANDA JONES

I am a very caring and giving person. I like to shop for myself and others. My spouse and I have built a strong, solid foundation for ourselves and our children.

I remember my younger siblings coming home from the hospital and the crib being set up in my room.

One unforgettable moment was when my dad brought home "take out"—it was whole baked fish! I almost passed out. I could not eat it—and I could not throw it away. I spent the

night at the table. Dad finally felt sorry and allowed me to go to bed after he scolded me about starving children in Africa.

Growing up, we could not watch TV. We had to ask permission to turn on the TV. We spent our summers reading and writing. We could not talk on the phone without permission, and when we did it was limited to ten minutes.

I signed up for Odyssey Senior to do a project with my spouse and to observe the Odyssey community.

