

YEAR 21, ISSUE 1

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ODYSSEY



ORACLE

WELCOME, CLASS OF 2024!



Contents

Graduates.....	1
From the Class of 2023	8
Alumni Corner	18
Special Odyssey Moments	21

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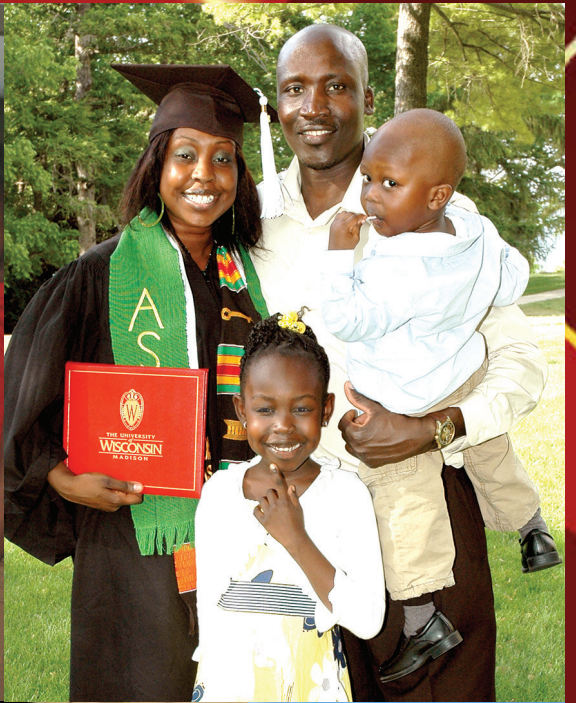
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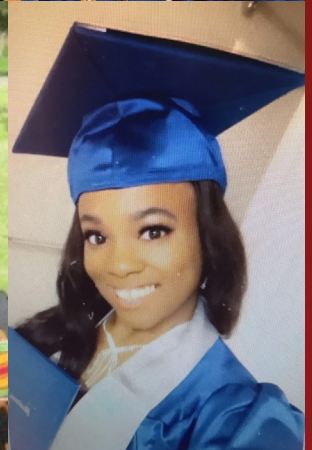
www.odyssey.wisc.edu













Pictured on pp. 1-7 are some of our many Odyssey graduates who have earned associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees from Madison College, UW-Madison, Edgewood, and other schools: Shaimaa Ahmed '16; Zeynab Ahmed '14; Ahmad Alkheder '17; Sherreallyum Allen '05; Keena Atkinson '10; Brian Benford '07; Sherri Bester '08; Michelle Bozeman '11; Char Braxton '06; Lavern Brown '09; Michelle Brown '05; Kegan Carter '04; Luci Chikowero '14; Dominique Christian '09; China Moon Crowell '13; Yolanda Cunningham '12; Cameron Daniels '07; Jelissa Edwards '16; Jayvonna Fleming '16; Tom Gardner '08; Molinda Henry '07; Tiffany Hite '04; James Horton '08; Yasmin Horton '08; Rhonda Johnson '09; Shaquida Johnson '12; Milli Lau '14; Shanita Lawrence '09; Joanna Lopez '05; Josephine Lorya '08; Michael Lozano '11; Tasha McKenzie '10; Krista Mellott '20; Adrian Molitor '18; Shirley Norman '04; Moriah Parker '20; Nicole Barnett Pecku '09; Lolita Phillips '13; Jaleah Price, Odyssey Junior; Edwina Robinson '11; Sahira Rocillo '15; Mustafa Saed '16; Umaima Saed '16; Corey Saffold '06; Cherri Sorrells '17; Kala Taylor '16; Marisela Tellez-Giron '16; Mai Neng Thao '16; Dauntrea Vance, Odyssey Junior; Hezouwe Walada '19; Anthony Ward '04; Mary Wells '07



LETTERS TO THE CLASS OF 2024 FROM THE CLASS OF 2023

Dear Odyssey Class of 2024,



You have been accepted into a fantastic class. This class will challenge you in many ways. You have to ask yourself, are you up for the challenge? Now, when I say challenge, you probably are thinking to yourself, like, what have I gotten myself into? But trust the process; you've gotten yourself into a class that wants to see you successful, a staff that will do anything in their power so that you can be successful. The real challenge is, are you going to put that work in?

The daycare is set, the food is there, the transportation is only an ask away. All the resources are here! It's your chance to put that work in. That's the challenge.

Don't forget that Ben Shannon (or next year, Kevin Mullen) is here every Tuesday for tutoring. Keep asking yourself, are you going to put the work in to be successful and to complete the program? The advice that I have for you all is to go to tutoring, get the work done, ask questions, and don't fall behind. The class is still going to go on with or without you. Don't be afraid to ask. In the back of the class are welcoming men and women ready to teach, ready to answer any question you have.

The beginning of the school year was rocky for myself. That's because I was afraid of asking, but a closed mouth doesn't get fed. Remember to ask yourself, are you up for the challenge? And go to tutoring!
(Tameia Allen)



Damn, I guess I want to be as honest as possible. Trust that Emily is a scout goddess (good at selecting students for Odyssey), and your voice is worth being heard so use it... a lot. Most of us only have a select few people we can trust. Well, just know today is the day you touched gold. Everyone invested in Odyssey is a person you can trust through and through.

This experience reminds me of a time when I was in college and we had received a book at the beginning of the semester. We didn't read it until the near end of the course, and I was so angry. I had this gem for so long and didn't read it five times already. *Tuesdays with Morrie* (read it if you're interested) was life changing, just like Odyssey. Love and light, **(Monel Antut)**





Are you ready for a life changing experience? Get ready to be pushed to your full potential and build bonds that will last a lifetime.

Odyssey is one of the BEST programs in Madison—a program where you get to learn and actually have fun while doing it.

When I was accepted into the Odyssey Program, I was so excited, but after my first day of class I got a little nervous. How was I going to juggle my 10-hour work days on top of coming home to my boys and then find a way to set aside some time for me to complete homework? It gets tough, but I can say that Emily and the other staff will not let you give up. So ASK QUESTIONS. If you fall behind, reach out to get help. And no matter what, come to class. They give you amazing support, and doors are always open. They will set you up to succeed and not let you fail.

So congratulations on your first step on your journey to a brighter future, and welcome, Class of 2024. You can do it, and you will succeed! **(Antoneah Armour)**



“Never trust your fears, they don’t know your strength.”
-Athena Singh

If you’re scared, you are not alone. I was too when I first walked into class. Actually, that’s an understatement. I was petrified cowering in the corner, too scared to look anyone in the eye and I barely spoke above a whisper.

But the beautiful part of this space that’s been created between these four walls is knowing that it’s perpetually patient and welcoming. Even if you’re scared and trembling, trust me, it’ll be okay because there is always a helping hand to guide you along the way.



Sure, the path ahead may be rocky, but you have not only the shoulders of your fellow classmates to lean on but also the amazing professors and countless alumni all around you to help brace you along your journey. **(Kaitlin Birdsall)**



I would like to first say that UW Odyssey is more than just a course and more like a second home. Everyone affiliated with this program, from the students to the staff, is very supportive and understanding, making it

feel more like a family. On this journey you’ll be tested to come out of your comfort zone, and the respectful environment makes it easier to do so. In this program you’ll learn that everyone has a voice, and if you don’t, they’ll give you the confidence to find it.

Odyssey was nothing short of a melting pot with all the diverse cultures surrounding it. I really loved being around different cultures that spoke different languages. If Emily and her amazing team select you to be a part of the Odyssey family, just know it’s an honor and take full advantage of the opportunity given. I promise you won’t regret it.

The UW Odyssey Project changed my life like it did for many other students, and I’m positive it will do the same for you. **(Jonathan Booe)**



Welcome, Odyssey 2024! You have been invited to a safe space and lifelong family. My best advice to you is to use your gift—your voice. Know that you were chosen because you're important and special. Take advantage of every opportunity that's given as in UW IDs, bus passes, theatre tickets, tutoring, free childcare, etc. Most importantly, stay on top of your homework. It's easy to get behind. I wish you the very best of luck. Know that this is just the beginning of your journey filled with success. **(Jekeiria Booker)**



Welcome to the next chapter of your life. This journey will be filled with many life-changing experiences and aha moments. I know right now some of you are nervous, but I promise you, you got this, so just relax! Odyssey is built around a supporting environment, which will encourage you to succeed. Odyssey is more than an educational program, it's a support system, it's a family, it's a lifeline, it's an opportunity for growth. Emily and staff are here to support you each step of the way.

And I know you're thinking... what if it's hard, or what if something in my life comes up that

prevents me from giving this family my all? No Problem!! Odyssey will support that as well; all one must do is ask. When or if things get challenging, don't be afraid to ask for assistance because this program supports the whole person. Enjoy every moment of learning with your peers because in the blink of an eye you'll be finished. As I write this letter, I'm reminiscing over the great times I had. In this family, learning becomes exciting and interesting; there are so many great articles, poems, and stories to be read.

We've created so many great memories together, and I know you are going to do the same. We had several opportunities to partake in extra curriculum activities outside the class with Odyssey. In these moments our class became family, forming a bond that will last a lifetime.

Welcome, Class of 2024. Your ships await.
(Sarah Branch)



Get ready and come ready because Emily does not come to play! But I wouldn't have had it any other way. Don't worry about what others think: just know what you came to do, and that's to become a successful and better you! You can do it, and you will.



I'm so thankful for this opportunity that I was able to be a part of. I wish it would never end, but Odyssey has prepared me for my journey that I'm destined for. It has prepared me, and I grew to become a more confident woman. I'm no longer scared to succeed. I'm ready for my future. I'm ready to conquer it all, and you will too! You got this.
(Gabrielle Brown)



Welcome to a new adventure and a new challenge. My name is Fredy Carcaño. I am from Mexico. Being an ESL student made it very difficult for me. Balancing school, family, homework, and work is very tough, but you can do it!

When I started this class, I was very scared because I didn't know what to expect coming into the Odyssey program. Odyssey will show you how to be a successful person. My advice to you is to keep coming to the class and do not miss any days. Also, try to always do your assignments on time. If you miss something, that means you missed a lot.

Let me tell you how happy I am for you that you got accepted. Believe me, it will be the best decision and opportunity for your life. You will learn many things and you will be a different person by the end of the year. Enjoy every moment. **(Fredy Carcaño)**



You made it, you are one of the 30! Life-changing opportunities don't come often, and right now is your moment. You are sitting in the seat you are in because it was meant for you. I may not know any of you personally, but I know what it is like

to struggle, and I know the thoughts and dreams that come to mind while you are in the middle of a storm. This is the answer to many of your questions and wishes. In this Odyssey (journey), you are going to have the love and support you wish you had to get where you want to be in life.

Before your experience is over, you will have the answer to your question of whether or not school is for you. Enjoy this experience and give it your all. Investing in you is the most important thing you will ever do in life, and right now you have a lot to gain. Stay focused, be proud of yourself, and always keep in mind that you are worth every beautiful thing life has to offer. Congratulations and God bless. Respectfully **(Mark Español)**



Congratulations, you have just begun to take a new journey in life, getting set for getting a college degree. I'm not special, but I've almost let a lot of my feelings destroy my spirit. We have challenges we face; whether it's

relationships, bank accounts, housing, or grief of losing a loved one. There were plenty of times I could have given up but didn't. I have gained a family and opened up to relationships that I could have chosen not to build.

The world is about to open up for you in magnificent ways, with new adventures and a whole new world of freedom previously unexplained or explored.

The real world is even bigger and includes even more opportunities in life. Along the way in this new chapter with the Odyssey program, there are a few things I hope you will hold close to your heart. Never give up. This will be an experience you'll enjoy and a family you'll never forget. I gained faith and a family, and I want to say I'm grateful and blessed that I've completed this program. **(Curtrice Foster)**



You are chosen! This opportunity is life-changing! Be ready to learn a handful of useful knowledge, eye-opening experiences, and discussion. Odyssey made me dive deeper into myself to figure out who I'm going to be and how

I'll get there.



Don't be afraid to ask for help! Emily makes sure none of her students go unheard. My classmates are all different, unique, and I was open to learning more about them in and out of class. Thanks to Emily and her team! I'll be going bigger than phlebotomy! I'm going to be a registered nurse. Be passionate, motivated, and, lastly, loving! **(Geresa Homesly)**



My name is Tyrone Ozea Hudson Sr., student of the Odyssey Class of 2023. No matter what you may be going through, remember that you are all worthy to

yourself and loved ones. Always believe in yourself and never quit trying to improve yourself because there's nothing more important than when it comes to wanting more out of life by getting an education. The Odyssey Project can help you in many ways to further education. During my adventure in Odyssey, I met some wonderful classmates that are like family. We bonded as a whole class and had fun in class. **(Tyrone Ozea Hudson Sr.)**



Welcome to a new Journey of experience. Let me tell you that at the beginning I was not sure how I was going to make it because English is my third language and my understanding was limited

during the class. Suddenly, class after class I felt on board and part of the crew. So don't be afraid at the beginning if you feel confused or feel that you don't know how it is going to be. Every class is so welcoming and easy to feel part of it.

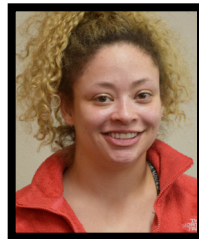
Also, I felt more confident when Emily said, "no matter what life is, come to class. If you have not completed your assignment, come to class, call me any time, if you need help." She really means that. Take it for granted that they are right there to help you, so don't hesitate to ask them for help any time you need, even just to talk with them. And if you are falling behind with late assignments, take your time to catch up with them, so you don't get overloaded. Talk to them and together you can make a plan that best works for you.

One biggest tool that helped me in Odyssey was taking advantage of tutoring. You can either do it online or in person. In person, they have Tuesdays 5 to 7:30 pm for tutoring, and they are very helpful.



If you don't have time to come on Tuesdays, you can talk to them and set up another time that works best for you.

Follow the path of your dreams, and know you are in the right place. **(Aida Inuca)**



Welcome to an experience of a lifetime! Today, a new chapter has begun. What you get out of it is completely up to you! Participate! Speak out! The sooner the better, because you are all family here.

Odyssey has been a wonderful experience not only for myself, but also for my three children, who also really have looked forward to the time spent here.

My biggest advice is to take advantage of all of the many opportunities. Everyone is here to support and see everyone realize their true potential! Don't let yourself fall behind on homework or get discouraged... But if you do, don't worry: Emily's true talent is her ability to push others to believe in themselves and never give up!

Congratulations on your newest journey. Here's to the Class of 2024! **(Tierra Kimbrew)**



I am Maricela Martinez Munguia. I'm from Atlixco Puebla. I was a student of the Odyssey Class of 2023. It is a pleasure to greet you in these lines. I want to congratulate you for being part of Odyssey. Several questions will

probably arise, and I know that many emotions are invading you right now. One of them is if, perhaps, you can achieve it, or maybe you do not see yourself fitting into this great adventure towards knowledge. I want to tell you that all these emotions will appear very often and that sometimes fear, excuses, work, and family commitments will wish to entertain themselves through your objective of why you started this Odyssey because the path of education is not always easy. If it were easy, many more would start doing this. Keep in mind that the result of your effort will be rewarded in different ways, like intellectual and emotional growth. You will look at life from another perspective and with flexibility, and you will not give up on your dreams. I wish you a year of excellent educational enrichment.

At the same time, you make new friends in your classroom where you create a supportive community because in life, to continue and get ahead, we always need to create a good group that encourages us and adds to our life, as it was in my case. I want to mention that this Odyssey Project has a phenomenal team of a teacher like Emily, tutors, professional caregivers in childcare, and activities for your teenagers who will always be willing to help you and take the backpack with you. So don't give up, and continue this challenging but rewarding Odyssey adventure. **(Maricela Martinez Munguia)**



Take the opportunity to understand your purpose. Today is the day that's going to change your life. Odyssey is a journey to never forget.

(Lavinia Miller)



On the one hand, be happy that among lots of applicants, you were a lucky one, having this life-changing opportunity given to you! On the other hand, try to relax and enjoy the ride, and if things get hard, do not get discouraged. If

you come across the reading assignments and you are having a hard time or you do not know what to write in the writing assignments—and especially if English is not your first language—, please make good use of the dictionary or the tutoring offered here.

Do reach out to the whole Odyssey team. Moreover, open your mind and let your mind be inspired by the guest speakers, and go to the events Odyssey offers. All this experience is designed for you! This is your opportunity to do the inner growth you have not been able to do in the past. This is the moment to shine, the moment to make yourself proud, and to make your kids and family proud. More importantly, this is something you get to do to better yourself and open new opportunities within you.

Good luck, and inspire others when the time comes to write this letter for the next dreamers.

(Saul Naxi Perez)





This is an amazing opportunity. Take advantage of every moment! Enjoy the time spent with classmates and all of the wonderful knowledge and opportunities. Throughout Odyssey, I met so many amazing people and was also granted a scholarship from the Business Forum!

Before Odyssey, I didn't see a chance at receiving higher education, but I will now be continuing my education in a liberal arts transfer program with Madison College in the fall. What felt impossible is no longer the impossible! Never give up.

My advice is to stay on track with homework, participate in class, and know that attendance is very important. I only missed one in-person class due to COVID, but I still attended on zoom. Let me tell you, zoom is not the same as in person. I missed the atmosphere of the classroom. I wish you all the best in your Odyssey journey!

(Keely Nelson-Gray)



You guys might be strangers for now, but once you get to know your classmates, you guys are going to have a special bond. Odyssey is one of the best things that

could happen to you, and now that you are in, take advantage of it. Not everybody got the opportunity you have right now to be in your spot.

If you ever need help with anything, literally anything, please let Emily know. She will definitely help you. Don't hesitate to ask her for help with anything happening in your life. Emily and all the staff are extremely nice and great people to talk to. **(Gael Rodriguez)**



Don't question your purpose; just know God knows your purpose. Don't worry about others. Keep your head in the game, focus on your work, and master who you want to become. Stay focused. Keep your head held high and

push forward. Dreams will come true. Have patience. UW Odyssey Projects is a creation and a step to elevate. Appreciate every moment, even if it may come with pain or happiness. Just know that you are on the right path, and focus on your purpose.

You are greater than your past. You're not your mistakes. Close out any old chapters. You're worthy of knowledge, and stay resilient. Believe in yourself. Love you. Be who you want to be, and give what you're supposed to give. You have the power and the best ability to be who you want.

Thanks, UW Odyssey. You showed me to fight and never give up. Thank you for believing in me. I am very grateful for this wonderful experience. I want to thank my classmates as well as my teachers. Emily, being a mother to us, your love is so unconditional. Brian, thanks for always being an ear to listen and for supporting me. Thank you for the tutoring classes every Tuesday. **(Kiana Sims)**





I come to you with the best intentions and sincerest advice, as you are about to embark on the opportunity of a lifetime. Be prepared to experience an eclectic variety of literature, amazing artistic talents, and a support system like no other. Open your mind and be prepared to grow beyond your wildest dreams.

Before embarking on this journey through Odyssey, I had shut out any hopes of being more than a wife and mother. Continuing my educational endeavors was out of the question. I'm too old, I thought. I had become comfortable with toning my potential down to the bare minimum—until Odyssey. Each week I attended class I was inspired to be more, to do more, and to pursue my passion. I began writing again and found the power in my pen. Poetry provided a lane for me to express my perspective creatively. People could hear and feel the emotions, and I could feel myself evolving.

I say this to say to you, allow yourself to be vulnerable with your feelings and trust your classmates, advisors, and Emily. This safe haven of support you will inherit will carry you to your desired destination, through any trials or obstacles

you may face on the way. Don't be afraid to utilize your voice and be vocal in your vision, as it is important and valued.

Congratulations on being selected to attend Odyssey Class of 2024. I would wish luck unto you, but the potential is already in you. I just hope you see it too! Best and sincerest wishes,
(Dominique Smith)



If you're reading this, congratulations. You are one of the 30 deserving students who have been accepted into the Odyssey program. Don't take this opportunity for granted because it will change your life.

I came into this program with an open mind and heart; you should too! Life comes with all kinds of challenges. Most are meant to bring you down. When I started this program, I was homeless, no car, and no real direction on where I wanted my life to go. Throughout the course of this program, I've gained everything that I didn't have. Emily and everyone on the staff supported me to great lengths, and I will forever be grateful. To be a part of something so powerful is something I will never forget. Everything I was taught here will be applied to my everyday life forever. My message may seem over exaggerated, but it's not.

Take every class seriously, push yourself to be more than who you were yesterday, and cherish the bonds you will create with your peers. They are people you will never forget. Through my trials and tribulations, everyone was there for me. In May, when you graduate, I will be graduating as well, again. From nursing school, that is, yes, a future nurse I am. So I am here to say, stay focused and dream big. You never know where this class may take you. Best of luck, Class of 2024! You made it.

(Tiara Smith)





It's an honor sitting here and congratulating the Class of 2024! I love this for y'all-- the experience, the amazing people you will get to meet, and what you'll learn. It's one of the best lifetime opportunities. Enjoy every moment. Everything is possible if you put your mind to it.

Take advantage of Tuesday tutoring. They are so helpful. I'm thankful for the Class of 2023. Thank you for the great memories. Last but not least, thank you to Wanda and Robert Auerbach. Without them there would be no Emily Auerbach. Thank you for the best experience of my life, and thank you for including my kids! Also thank you for every person involved in Odyssey. We couldn't do it without you! Thank you, and enjoy this experience, Class of 2024! **(Roxanna Sobrevilla)**



My name is Lupita, and I welcome you to a year full of learning and fun. It is important to be yourself, make friends. Odyssey helped me get out of my shell of shyness and made me feel comfortable to talk in front of other individuals. Do

your best, you got this! **(Lupita Valerio Aragon)**



You're walking into one of the most beautiful seasons of growth right now because you chose to start the Odyssey program. It's not going to be all easy—but well worth it. Over the weeks I hope you find your voice and get the

full experience of being a University of Wisconsin student. Take advantage of the fact that the entire staff is 100% there to go on this journey with you and are there to help you every step of the way. You



made the right choice by choosing this program. Good luck and congratulations on your new start! **(Andrea White)**



Welcome to the next adventure on your educational journey. If you're anything like me, you're excited about the prospects of learning more and being top of class, getting everything just right, but what I didn't expect is that my only

competition in this class was myself! So get ready for you versus you every week; you will have to push yourself to be better than you knew you could be, and you'll be surprised to find out just how many new things Odyssey will unlock inside of you.

What I loved most about this class is that just when I thought I was all out of gas and didn't have enough steam left to finish, my classmates and Odyssey staff helped me push through. You have found a new family that is willing to help you in any way to make sure you succeed, so take full advantage of it and rise to your full potential. Welcome, Class of '24! **(Mya Whitson)**

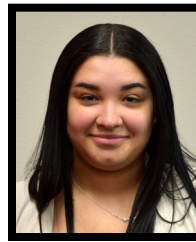


There are so many people with different stories and different journeys, but there are also so many similar journeys and stories. When you read the Oracle (student newsletter), there are so many people you can relate to and who will inspire you in many different ways.

Reading the Oracle from the Odyssey alumni of Class of 2022 just sounded too good to be true. They were saying things like judgement-free zone, loving caring community, mind opening, amazing opportunities offered, healing your mind, body, and soul, therapy sessions, making meaningful connections with your fellow classmates and staff, making dreams come true, whether you want to be a reader, a writer, an artist, a painter, a construction worker, a nurse, a lawyer, a surgeon, a doctor—whatever it is you can think of the possibilities are endless, they got your back and they will support you 1000%. When I finally started Odyssey, their truths became mine!

All Mrs. Emily wants in return from you is the best you for you!!!! Sounds too good to be true, right? Now it's your turn to find out! So get ready to have your mind blown!!!!

Congratulations and welcome to the opportunity to go onward in the open-hearted oasis of Odyssey!
(Amanda Willis)



(Sinetra Wilson)

Be you. Don't be scared to open up, cry, and share your story. I can assure you, everyone sitting in this room has their own battles they're fighting in silence. This will become another family you thought you needed.



Hey now, you did it! Great way to start this journey; you are on the right path, and Odyssey is going to get you there. This program is amazing, and it really helped me make some new friends, really, family. I was so nervous to start at first, but don't be. You are going to do great, and Emily and her team are there to help you along the way. Always come to class every day; you don't want to miss anything, and do your homework. This really helps you in the end. Stay positive, never give up, and ask questions—it's okay. I learned so much and gained so much from this program. It helped me further my education and gave me confidence. You can do it, no matter what, and don't let anyone stop you. You got this.

Don't give up, and always remember, anything is possible. Never let anyone tell you that you can't do it because you can, and this is only the beginning. **(Zykia Wilson)**



ALUMNI CORNER

DON'T QUIT

BY JOE ROBINSON '04

My advice to the new Odyssey class is don't quit. No matter how hard it gets, don't quit.

When you get off work at 5:30, and you only have 30 minutes to get the kids situated and get to class, don't quit.

When you get stuck in the middle of writing a paper or doing a project, don't quit.

When you find out that your father has cancer and has to have surgery and treatment, don't quit.

When you have circumstances that occur that make you miss a class and you get behind on your work, don't quit.

When you feel as if you're not getting anything out of a particular subject, don't quit. When people tell you you are wasting your time, don't quit. When your car breaks down, and it's twenty below outside, and the only way to get here is on the city bus, don't quit. When your spouse is complaining that your five children are driving her crazy every Wednesday night, don't quit. When one of your classmates makes you feel stupid for voicing your opinion, don't quit. When your boyfriend or girlfriend accuses you of cheating on them because you had to turn your cell phone off during class, don't quit.

And if you get to the point where you just can't find any more motivation to force yourself to keep coming to this class, my advice is to call Emily, and I guarantee you that she won't let you quit! There were many times that I wanted to just give up, but Emily would not let me. She believed in us more than some of us believed in ourselves.

Finally, I would like to say that, the first couple of weeks, I was in class trying to figure out, what is the catch? Why are these people offering us this course for free? There must be a catch. I found out what the catch was. Each one of the teachers was trying to trick us into believing that our lives would somehow be better if we completed this Odyssey class and then go on to graduate from college. I guess I must be a little naïve, because I fell for it, hook, line, and sinker.



Joe Robinson with classmate Tineisha Scott, who earned her Master's Degree at Edgewood College



Joe Robinson with his family

WE ATE DOG FOOD

BY ALICE MCDANIEL '09

WRITTEN FOR KEVIN MULLEN'S
ODYSSEY ALUMNI COMPOSITION CLASS



... You can only write about what you feel and know really. I know that my mom was not a high school graduate, but no one else would have known that unless she told you herself. She was a very well-versed, super-intelligent, beautiful, spiritual, and loving woman.

My dad, on the other hand, could hardly read or write. He has lived most of his life with those limitations. He is a very funny, kind-hearted, spiritual, and good-looking man.

While in the care of my dad, my four other siblings and I ate dog food. That is what we were told some years later, and our mom confirmed that story. You are probably wondering how that happened. Well, I will tell you what we have been told.

My dad went to the grocery store. He was in the canned goods section, or so he thought. He looked at the picture on the can of some corn beef hash. "Ha, ha!" he said and grabbed it.

When my mom arrived home from work, she asked him if we had eaten yet. His reply was "Yes." My mom asked him, "What did you feed the children?" He said, "some hash." For those of you who have never eaten it and never want to, hash, according to Webster's Dictionary, comes from the French *hacher*, to chop, and means "to chop up meat and vegetables for cooking; usually a baked mixture, a muddled mess." She asked him again, "What did you say you fed them?" My dad replied again, "Hash. The cans are in the trash can."

My mom went to the trash can. As she lifted each of the cans out, she screamed at my dad, "You fool! You gave my children dog food, with your 'no reading' ass!" It goes without saying that he was not asked to go shopping for groceries again.

***We ate dog food,
but we were rich.***

My parents didn't have the opportunity to complete their education due to obstacles. My dad was from the small town of Stamps, Arkansas. By the age of four, his mom was now a single parent. His father had left them. As the oldest of her two sons, he was now the man of the house. He went to school on a regular basis only up to the third grade. He had to work in the fields, either having to stay home or be pulled from his class at school whenever it was time for crops to be harvest.

Mother was from a large family of eleven and also from Arkansas. She got to go to school every day until she met my dad. With her parents' permission, they got married a year later.

They moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin several years later along with their two daughters. During their marriage they had some economic struggles. It was not for lack of ambition and determination and drive. Both of them would work—Dad as a laborer and Mom as a waitress or maid. I remember she would wear a black and white uniform when she rode the bus to the eastside of the city where the rich people lived. . . .

Both of my parents instilled in their children that we should do our best at whatever we chose to do in life. “Can’t” is not a word,” my mother would say. We could not use it at all as an excuse or reason not to go for things in life, like getting an education. . . .

Education is the key to freedom, to advancing your world. Wealth is not only of material and financial means; it is also knowledge.

We ate dog food, but we were rich.

ODYSSEY POEM

BY ANTHONY JEFFERSON ‘17

Odyssey is the pencil of life with which we can erase past regrets and rewrite our future.

Every “word” formed solidifies our resolve, those periods at the end a proud stamp of success.

Sentence by sentence, we forge a new tale.



SPECIAL ODYSSEY MOMENTS



UW Chancellor Mnookin at Odyssey's 20th anniversary celebration; Jasmine Banks '13 received a 2023 YWCA Woman of Distinction Award; Stanley Sallay '07 and Tosumba Welch '13 meet *Just Mercy* author Bryan Stevenson; Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway pronounces April 20, 2023 "Odyssey Day" citywide; Class of 2014 students featured on Capital City Hues cover.



TV personality Tavis Smiley and scholar Cornel West taking Odyssey students out to dinner during their Poverty Tour; Senator Tammy Baldwin meets Brian Benford '07, Char Braxton '06, and Dominique Christian '09; scholar Henry Louis Gates with Kegan Carter '04 and Josephine Lorya '08; Yolanda King (daughter of the late Martin Luther King, Jr.) with Emily Auerbach, Juanita Wilson '07, Pamela Holmes '04, and Denise Maddox '04; author Jelissa Edwards '16 on cover of BRAVA Magazine.