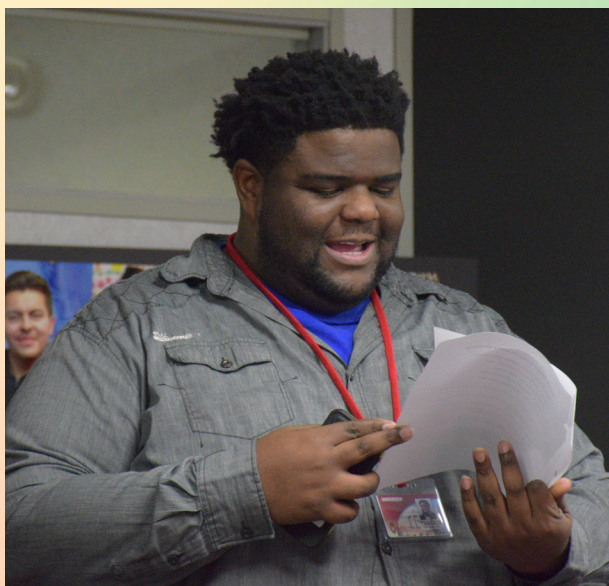


ODYSSEY ORACLE

ODYSSEY MOMENTS



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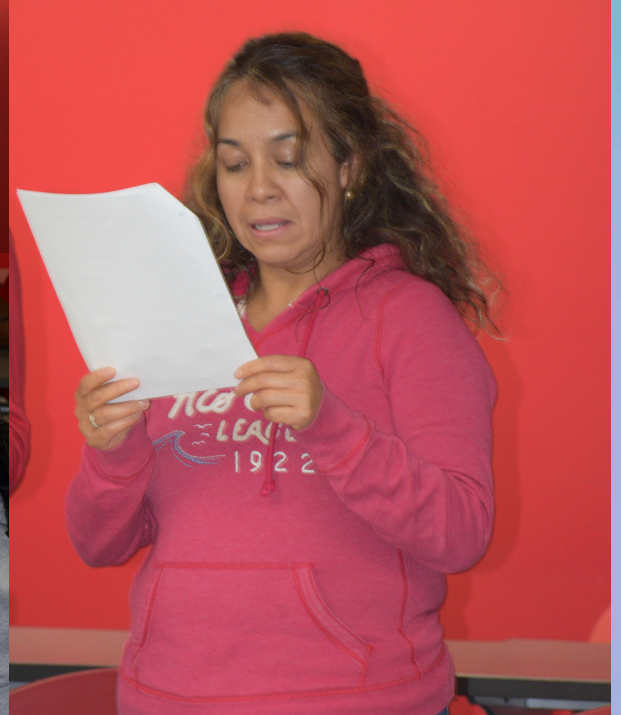
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MOMENTS OF COURAGE



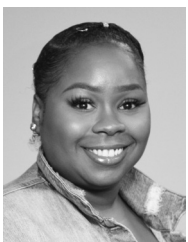
I found it difficult not just reading aloud in Odyssey class but also having to write. What I know is that my reading and writing have to improve because I have the determination to make it happen.

The first time I read aloud in class, I felt shaky, my heart beating fast. I also felt scared because I had to read my own writing, and I wasn't sure if how I wrote was good or not. After reading aloud, I felt better for having shared with the class. **(Carmen Tinajero)**



I remember the first day that I decided to read aloud in the class in front of my classmates, I felt like everyone was staring at me. My heart started racing, and I felt a shift in my tummy (like butterflies). I started getting hot. I took a deep breath, held my head down towards

the story in the Oracle I was about to read, and just did it quickly. **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**



I was courageous in this class by coming out of my comfort zone in reading out loud. I have always had a fear of speaking in front of large crowds of people. Even speaking with a PowerPoint in a class for two minutes was like the end of the world for me. Odyssey has helped

me come out of my shell. Listening to others speak out loud encourages me to share as well. However, it's still hard for me, but I still want to share. So I'll ask someone else to share my thoughts [until I feel ready]. **(Jyneeva Hunt)**



It takes a lot of courage to read in front of everyone. I wasn't always the best reader in middle school. I had to be in a reading class called "Reading LD." The kids at school used to call us Legally Dumb! I'm laughing as I write this because I overcame it, but it killed my pride a

little, no lie. But I'm glad I did. I am a much better

reader today. It still takes me a little courage to read, but I enjoy my voice being heard. **(Tina Marie Martinez)**



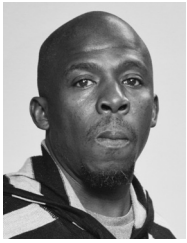
Moment on the Stage! My heart is pounding, my throat is tight, sweat is rolling down the side of my face, my stomach is turning, and I am having trouble remembering the words. This is how I feel pretty much every time I am going to sing or speak before a crowd of people.

Even today in class, I felt anxiety before I started to read, even though it may seem as if I am simply a natural! And though that may prove true, it takes a lot of courage to do! **(Ron Burford)**



I believe that in this moment of my life, I have no choice but to be courageous, to not let my fear get in the way. I have been put in a difficult situation which at times seems impossible to get myself out of, but I know if I keep pushing and do not give up, I will get where I need to be.

I have always taken the easy way out, even if there are negative consequences, but I have learned that the easy way is not always the best. I have must have courage and believe in myself, not give up, and remember that I have daughters who need me and who look up to me. I want them to know I will give it my all to do what's best for them so they will do the same. I must push through these hard times and be courageous. **(Savannah Torres)**



My courage came at the cost of my freedom at the age of sixteen years. I was given thirty years away from the loved ones who have guided me until this point. Standing only four-foot-four and sent to a very dangerous place, I would experience what others became: victims in many ways.

One night, I looked deep within myself and saw the man I am today. No, it wasn't a dream but my desire to be the best. So I used the tools of reading and applied the truth to my footsteps. So I've built my courage by using my voice. **(Rasaki Emmanuel)**



I was 20 years old when I had my son. I became a single parent one year later. I was filled with despair at the loss of my partner and terrified that I would not be a fit parent. Although my mind was swarming with fears for my baby (How can I raise a son without a dad? How will I financially support him? etc.), something in

me kept pushing me through. I worked hard and many hours so I could support him. The courage that overcame me was fueled with the love I felt for him. Courage to me was in simply putting one foot in front of the other until my sadness faded. **(Krista Mellott)**



My own moment of courage was when I was about 19 years old; I didn't even realize I was that young until writing it down on paper. Anyway, when I was 19, my grandma had been in the hospital for a while, and we knew that she was getting ready to pass within days. One night,

I was with her after my mom had gone home. I stayed next to her until about 11 P.M. or so. I would have stayed longer but my boyfriend at the time, now my ex, was at home drinking like always and was calling me nonstop. He then got ahold of my grandma's number in her room and would not stop calling. So of course I had to leave.

That night we had a big fight, but before I left my grandma, I sat next to her and told her that it was okay for her to go if she wanted to, and that we were all okay with her letting go. I gave her a kiss and said goodbye. Later that night, my ex ended up in jail, and I thought he was non-stop calling from jail. Around 3 A.M. I find that my door bell is ringing.

To my surprise, it's my mom and dad telling me that my grandma had passed. **(Margarita Barajas)**



A courageous moment for me is when I had my son at sixteen. I was only a sophomore in high school at the time. Going to school was super hard for me every day. My stomach got bigger every month, and so did the judgment. It was so hard and tiring walking up three flights of

stairs, down three, and from class to class. I didn't want to give up, though, so it took a lot of courage out of me to finish my sophomore year.

Towards June, there were finals, and that was my due month. My feet were swollen, stomach huge, and I was out of breath and sick. Those end-of-trimester sicknesses had nothing on the beginning. I would rush out of class just to puke every five minutes and come back to class so tired. I didn't give up or drop out. I took those finals and made it to junior year. I want my son never to give up and to never worry about what people say. **(Natia Saffold)**



A time I showed a moment of courage was walking through the doors of Odyssey to come to class. It was a moment of courage because it had only been a week and a half since my mother passed, and I felt as if life served no purpose anymore. I was giving up. I felt weak, hopeless,

scared, and unsure. But when I rang the bell and saw Kevin, Emily, and my classmates, it brought me back to reality that I did serve a purpose and that I wasn't alone anymore. **(Tiffany Dixon)**





Every once in a while, everybody is in a ditch, feeling insecure, exposed, or ashamed. Personally, I have experienced insecurity in myself. Speaking in public is something that I have to find a lot of courage to do. There was one occasion I had to speak in front of a group

of people to share my testimony of my past and how I became a born-again Christian. This was in a crusade when I was in my country. **(Elíazar Martínez-Munguía)**



Last year, my grandparents renewed their marriage vows. As their oldest grandchild, I was asked to give a speech in front of twenty-or-so people. I hate speaking in front of people, but I also knew how much it would mean to them. When it came time to speak, I was so nervous I

could feel myself shaking. It took courage for me to do that, and it felt nice knowing it made my grandparents happy. **(Riley Sessions)**



My pops—well, the man that raised me as his own—always had two or three jobs in order to provide for his family. He worked hard every day and took pride in making things happen for us. He was working for this garbage company in my hometown Chicago, and one day he

slipped and fell off his truck. The fall resulted in him shattering his knee cap and not being able to work again. Being the man he was, I knew this would severely damage his manhood. To be so prideful in taking care of his family and making sure we were taken care of, then not to be able to fulfill those same purposes can be gut wrenching. That's exactly what it did to him: it turned his whole world upside down. He was no longer the man he worked and prided himself to be.

He had to start taking all these medications on top of already feeling less of a man now. These things sent him into depression. So one day after getting home from school and taking a nap (I was a

junior or sophomore in high school at the time), I was awakened by my mama. I was upset at first because I had just gone into a deep sleep, and now here was my mama waking me up. But when I came to and realized what exactly she was saying, I jumped up instantly. She had come to tell me that my pops was in the basement with a gun to his head threatening to kill himself. I couldn't believe what I was hearing at the moment. I was scared and mind-boggled because I didn't understand what I had just been woken up to. So I slipped on some shoes and raced down to the basement. My mama tried to follow me, but I told her, "No, just let me handle this."

My pops and I had our fallouts before, but there was always this high respect level between us. So here I am now, standing in the basement, and sure enough he was right here in my face with a gun up to his head. He said, "Tim, get out of here. I don't want you to see this!" I replied by telling him that I wasn't going anywhere and that if he was going to kill himself, he would have to do it right in front of me. I knew I had him now because he was the type that would bring harm to his kids. He wouldn't want us to witness anything so horrific either. He begged and pleaded for me to leave, but I just stood there and told him, "No, if you're going to do this, then I'm going to be right here to witness it." He eventually saw that I wasn't playing and wasn't going to give up my ground, so he handed me the gun.

My mama had already called the police while we were down in the basement. So by the time I was taking the gun from him, the police were at the door and on their way down the stairs to us. My pops had spent some time in the Navy, so the police took it easy on him, but they did take away his right to bear arms.

That was probably one of the craziest days of my life, and I still get emotional when I think about it. But I knew that if I didn't take matters into my own hands that day, my pops would've most likely killed himself. He ended up passing away years later, but at least it wasn't like that. **(Timothy Mosley)**





A moment of courage for me was standing up and taking in a drug-addicted father who I didn't know much about after the passing of my stepfather. This man came into my life, and it was beautiful having my biological father around until realizing we both were battling the use of drugs and alcohol. He stole not only materials but also peace and joy. I was very happy to have him leave, and I never want anything to do with him. **(Arkeia Cameron)**

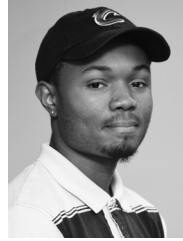


A moment of courage for me was during my senior year of high school. I took a music class alongside my best friend in the whole world, Tyler Brunsell. We both were damn near new to music creation, but on the first day of class, we were all told that we would be performing individual/small group social justice pieces in front of two groups of 300 people back-to-back. Hell, nah!

I damn near dropped out of high school altogether after they said that to my face like that. But Tyler and I tackled the challenge as a team. We spent all our time at our part-time car-detailing job practicing together and coming up with lines. When the day came, I could have sworn I ate anvils for breakfast. We walked to the "regular high school," performed our social justice song, and watched others do the same. We were so proud, and we haven't looked back since. **(Corey Dean)**



After leaving court in January 2010, I was facing life in prison for defending myself after being stabbed in my back. I vividly recalled that day. Feeling a knife penetrate your skin and leave a gaping hole is by far the weirdest feeling in the world. To pursue a person who just stabbed you, and you see him stab your friend as well, truly kicked in the fight or flight mode, and I chose to fight. I swallowed any and all doubt and fear and selflessly charged a guy I felt could very easily kill or seriously hurt my friends and me. I successfully disarmed him and was able to do so with minimal injuries; however, that courageous act, although it saved my life and those of my friends, took the life of the guy who set out to harm us. No courageous act is done without someone appearing to be the bad guy. **(Jerome Sanders)**



A moment of recent courage would have been the first day of class. Although I was confident I'd fit in and everything would be fine, it still took a lot of courage to walk through the door and introduce myself to everyone. I know I wasn't the only one who had butterflies in their stomach. It took courage from everyone. It also takes courage to show up every Wednesday. The first day felt like the first day of high school all over again, not knowing what to expect or knowing who's going to be in the class with you. Walking into a room full of 29 strangers can be overwhelming. Once again, it takes courage to show up every week. **(Jaision Thomas)**



All of my past relationships have been unhealthy. There was a point in my life when I thrived on drama. I got a rush when I caught my man being unfaithful because that meant for a day or two I'd get the attention I so desperately longed for. These types of relationships consumed the best and fruitful years of my young adulthood. I never kept my word and always ended up tumbling through the same manipulative and abusive cycle I was so accustomed to.

A year and a half ago, I kept my word, though. I told the man I had been seeing I was done and no longer wanted him in my life. This is something he'd heard come out of my mouth time and time again, but this time I meant it. I could feel myself get stronger by each "no caller ID" I ignored that popped up on my phone screen.

I don't know what sparked my newfound courage, but I liked it. It was liberating, to say the least. I wonder how many tears, stomach aches, and chipped teeth I would have avoided had I been that courageous years before. It's hard not to dwell on the woulda, coulda, shouldas. **(Nina Salisbury)**



As I sit here writing these words, I find a moment of courage. When I wake up to go to work, I find a moment of courage. As I get in the car, I find a moment of courage. When I walk into rooms, I find a moment of courage. **(Marcello Segovia)**



Courage in my life: in these last six months, some incredible things have happened to me. Some are so good I feel like a bird that just learned how to fly, looking at the world from up above, trying to find balance. I must just push through, fight, and not give up; it's like we've marched across a desert, run out of water, and lost lots of men. But quit? That would be impossible. I have to get up and push harder, even though I don't think that I can.

I have to push past failure, or being afraid to not go on, being afraid of the unknown, going through things that make me feel "it's the end" or "could it even get any worse?"

But a thought: it might just get better, so I stand. I stand tall and strong next to my brothahs & sistahs that stand beside me and fight this fight we call life.

But I need courage to stand tall next to you, walk beside you, my fellow soldiers, my brothahs and sistahs of the Odyssey Program. I need the courage to stand strong, grow, and get to know you all: so very far to go, very eager, but courage is needed to finish the journey. I ask you stand with me and fight, my fellow Odysseians, LOL. **(Ashton McDonald)**



My moment of courage was moving to Madison from Milwaukee without family, friends, or much money. I just moved with a car full of clothes and faith. I had only been to Madison a few times before moving, but I knew I needed a change. I wanted a change close enough that I could visit my family whenever, but far enough to get away from stress and distractions. I left my students, my mother, my home, etc.

Another time is when I drove on the freeway for the first time by myself from Milwaukee to Madison. After arriving to my destination, I had a moment of realization. I needed to challenge myself to do new things. Fearing the unknown doesn't take anyone closer to their goals.

After I had gotten completely frustrated with the limited streetlights and how long it was taking me, I had to put on my grown-up pants and face the

highway alone. I was scared of something without even trying it first. I think that took a small amount of courage. **(Moriah Parker)**



When my cousin was killed, I was distraught. I was on the scene after it happened. I couldn't believe that was my cousin lying under a white sheet – his car crashed into a hotel wall. Someone had shot him at a gas station while in the car. He drove down East Washington trying to get help, I assume. On the way, he expired. His foot smashed on the gas. He was a dead man driving. His car smashed into a hotel; that was where I'd come to discover his body under that white sheet.

I couldn't believe it. He had come to my house almost every day, cracking jokes with my boys and me, talking loud and telling funny stories about his lil' "hood life." He could make light of any situation.

My kids were so saddened by his death. My youngest had a hard time at school and at home for a while. My oldest is quieter, but he was hurt. He says he's getting his name tattooed on him. That's how I know he was sad about it, sadder than he expressed. I had to be strong for them—and for me. We've had a lot of people die back to back. Although that's sad, I can't fall apart. Who's going to hold them together? **(Laisha Cooke)**





According to the dictionary, courage is defined as the ability to do something that frightens one. For me, courage is when you are able to take some risks to do something. For example, when I was moving to the United States in 2015, I left my three-month-old daughter with my mom and came here by myself to look for a better opportunity. It wasn't easy for me to come to a strange country, not knowing anybody, and not knowing how to speak even one word in English because my first language is French. I needed a lot of courage and perseverance to go through all that.

First, I got a job, and then I had to start an ESL class. It wasn't easy to go to school after finishing eight hours at a housekeeping job. But now I am so happy that after all that, I can read, write, and speak English with someone. Also, my daughter is doing fine [back in Togo]. She will be five years in July next year, and I am already planning to bring her to stay with me in the U.S.A. **(Kossiawavi Elo)**



At my previous place of employment, the owners were Muslim, and obviously I am not. I have nothing against people with different religions because I come from a multiracial family. The Malaysian side of my family is Muslim, and then the Indian side is Hindi.

My boss would always make ugly comments about everyone who was not Moroccan and Muslim. One time she said, "I don't like these African Americans. I hate them. They are not people. They are animals."

I didn't like what she said, and I told her so many times, "You cannot base your opinion on an entire race simply because one black person was mean to you."

She would always say, "Loché, you're not African American, so why do you have to get angry?"

"Well, because I am a human, that's why."

Then they tried to convert me to Islam. Whenever her friends came over, she would tell them that I was going to become Muslim. Their sheik, or whatever he is called, came over too, thinking that he could convince me to convert. They started not wanting to give me time off to go to church. They told me if I was Muslim, I wouldn't need to

go to church. I was constantly asked by the Muslim community, "Why are you not Muslim? You should be Muslim."

One day, I was honestly just so over it. They asked me again, "Why are you not Muslim?" and I said, "Why are you not Christian?" They just stared at me because normally I would just be quiet and let it go, but I was over it. I told them to respect my religion the same way I have been respectful towards everyone. If I eat my bacon, let me eat it without making sounds. If being Muslim means I have to dislike everyone who's not Muslim, then no thank you because that's not very godly. I no longer work there, and thankfully so. **(Loché Mothoa)**



It takes courage to be a CNA or a medical assistant. Many healthcare professionals strive to make a difference in people's everyday lives. However, working as a medical assistant, you work with different people and their different backgrounds. While training as a new MA, I saw that people had different views than me. It just took courage for me to say I prefer to do things how I was taught in school. **(Ashley Lee)**



We will keep this short and sweet. My moment of courage was when I made the decision to get my puppy. Yes, she is very cute and cuddly, but man, oh man, she is a lot of work! Of course, my girls wanted her because she was cute, but they had no idea the amount of time and work she

needed. Here we are, two months later, and they tell me, "We don't want a puppy anymore!" Well, buck up, buttercup, because she's here to stay!

Before the puppy, the girls were "bored" with their quarter-sized turtles they got for Christmas last year. Now they wish they had never asked for a puppy! **(Shiloh Simonsen)**



CHANNELING FREDERICK DOUGLASS

It is 1852, and escaped slave Frederick Douglass has just read a review in The Southern Quarterly Review stating that slaves cannot dream of liberty because it is "a conception which belongs so naturally to the white man." The essay goes on to argue that it is "a cruel task to disturb him in the enjoyment of that life—slavery—to which God has destined him," that slaves "bask in the sunshine and are happy," and that "Christian slavery . . . is the brightest sunbeam which Omniscience has destined for his existence." Frederick Douglass responds:

Dear Editor:

We, as black people, do dream just like everyone else. The only difference is that we dream of being free and being able to go to school. In my life, I have learned how to read and write. I also have taught others like myself how to read. It was not God who has destined black people to slavery.

We do not enjoy the life of slavery. We do not like being ripped away from our family. We most certainly do not like being abused, whipped, or starved. We are not "legalized kidnappers," as you are, and we will not commit the most savage deed of enslaving people into living a living death against their will. So, if that is your conception, we do not want it until you absorb the concept of equality, liberty and freedom. You, Sir, cannot preach a sermon of the true Christian faith of God, who held up the emancipation of the Hebrew children of Israel from their cruel master, the Pharaoh of Egypt. **(Margarita Barajas)**

How can a man that is valued to be less than a dog ever be happy or enjoy his life? Mr. Editor, please take a moment and peer beyond your scope of "all-knowing" privilege, knowledge, and education and allow room for insight. Have you ever lived without a place to call home, or been among crowds with no friends? Can you even imagine starving for food, when you work from sunup till sundown, surrounded by plenty, but dare not ask because of the fear of being beaten till near death? How about being sold away from your family to a possibly worse condition, and if you choose to run, you find yourself surrounded on all sides - being hunted by sophisticated savage men, stranded in dreary, dark, and silent places, with no knowledge of who you are, where you are, or where to go? I have! I even considered suicide at the tender age of twelve once I realized I might live the rest of my life as a slave. Surely it would have been a merciful escape from this helpless and seemingly hopeless condition.

In the Christian faith, one scripture reads, "Love God with all your heart, all your mind, and all your soul, and love your neighbor as you love yourself." Would what you are currently doing or even writing be honoring the God of your tradition? Does not your scripture also read, "All men are God's children?"

Mr. Editor, with all due respect, I find this article you wrote to be both blissfully appalling and faithfully ignorant. It has become obvious that this article serves for one purpose, to use pretty language and Godless false omniscience to help further advance your blinding fear of losing personal comforts and security. **(Ron Burford)**

I take up my pen to lay before you my sadness after reading in the newspaper *The Southern Quarterly* your offensive opinion on slavery.

Sir, with all due respect, I might enlighten you on slavery: black people did not ask to be enslaved. They were peacefully living in Africa when the white man came along, bought them, put them in shackles, and shipped them to America to work in the plantations. I will not tell you the condition in which they were shipped because it was so inhumane that I can compare these scenes to animal cruelty.

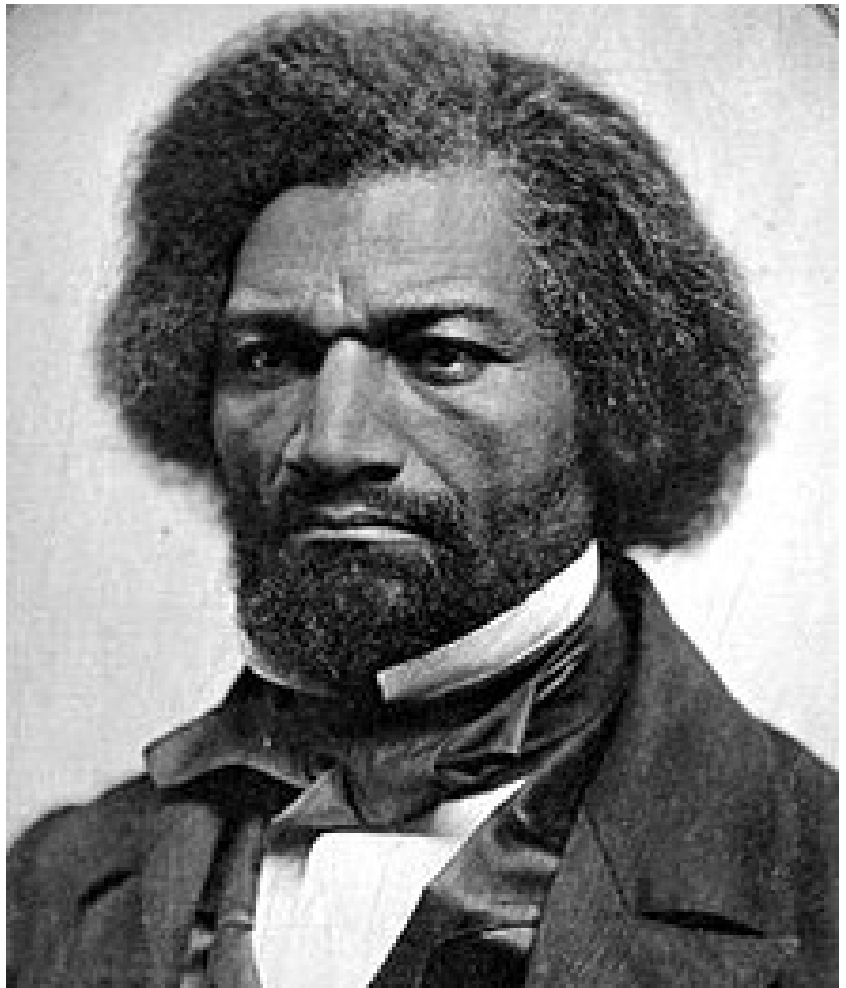
In addition, as a child, I have witnessed my own aunt being whipped until the skin came off her body, and I have witnessed the horrific abuse to which all the slaves were subject to. Again, sometimes the slaves had to confess to crimes they didn't commit just to avoid punishment. You see, Sir, how unfairly we were treated. After all that, you have to agree with me that slavery is the worst condition that can ever happen to a human being. Why do we have to be treated as less than nothing? Are we not also the children of God? **(Kossiwavi Elohi)**

I, Frederick Douglass, have endured some of the most despicable moments of one's lifetime in such a short time. You have tarnished my spirit and reduced my name to "the slave." Through it all, I managed to learn and teach myself how to read and write. Every shipyard letter showed me the early-on stages of how to begin with words. Every word said over my head, every textbook, every child I battled to prove I could write and make sense of it brought me to who I am now. Still I rise! Still, I, a slave, come forward!

These words you speak of me as in "hateful love" and "cruel kindness" are still piercing my spirit. I feel pity for your lack of sympathy. You as part of the merciless men-hunters will reap what you sow. "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man." **(Jyneeva Hunt)**

"Have not I as good a right to be free as you?" The Declaration of Independence states that everyone has the equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Therefore, I have every right to be a free man. If everyone is created equal and is entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, why do you interfere with my enjoyment of life? You say a "slave does not dream of liberty." During my time as a slave, I have always wanted to be free. I never liked the idea of having to ask someone for permission to do things I am a man that can control my own destiny.

While being a slave, I had no clothing, little to no food, little pay, and no family to celebrate birthdays with. I was separated from my family at a young age, so I had to grow up with no guidance, love, or knowledge. You say that "God has destined for me to be a slave." How can you be a Christian if being a Christian means that you should be caring, peaceful, and loving? It is very hypocritical to practice the Christianity of Christ if you then take away our privileges and beat and murder us. Shakespeare said, "Ignorance is the curse of God." So, you should educate yourself on slavery because not one slave is "happy and basking in sunshine." We all dream of life, liberty, and happiness. **(Ashley Lee)**



Under your premeditated malice you have violated, assaulted, and denigrated my being. Against my consent, you have subjected me to a physical, emotional, and psychological yoke, reducing me to the aberrant condition of slavery, taking away my autonomy and freedom in the vilest manner. My life has been destroyed and shattered into countless fragments.

Slavery is wrong! I prefer death than to live without freedom. You have broken your creator's commandments. "You shall not adulterate"; "You shall not steal"; "Love your neighbor like thy self"; "Do unto others as you wish them to do unto you." The doctrine that guides your life is called hypocrisy. You pretend to be a devoted follower of the creator of the universe, but your actions betray you, exposing you to eternal damnation.

Your joy has been my sorrow. Your richness has been my despair, your laugh my cry, your impurity my vulnerability, your freedom my captivity. Admit your sin, and let me be free. **(Eliazar Martinez)**

You say I do not dream of liberty; I say my dreams of liberty began when I was but a mere child. My master was my father; my brother was his son. To my father, my brother was family, cared for and loved; to my father, I was property, beaten and despised. I contemplated the unfairness of my being when encountering the other white children who had luxuries while I did not, with nothing but color separating us. Did my dreams of liberty not begin when I longed to be free as they were?

The white men keep us confined by the whip in order to inhibit our thoughts, but our thoughts remain. The ideas and concepts of slavery were maliciously conceived when your grandfathers kidnapped us from our natural habitat in Africa, tore us from our homes, and forced us by threats of violence and death to serve the white man. These ideals have been taught to you from generations before you.

The happiness referred to in the Declaration's "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" cannot be found in mothers forced to give up infants, children shriveling up from the consequences of enduring prolonged malnourishment, the starving children succumbing to the elements of the seasons with little to no clothing, women being violently raped by their masters, whippings so monstrous the crimson pool of their blood stains the ground beneath them while they hang shackled unable even to weep amid their utter exhaustion from the agonizing torture. To say slaves are happy and that slavery is part of God's divine plan is delusional. If you were to "love thy neighbor as thyself" and treat "all men equal," would you still enforce these horrific conditions upon the slaves if you were to experience the same conditions upon yourself?

(Krista Mellott)

To believe one should be enslaved due to his or her race is an outrage. My people have suffered enough lashings and cruelty from their masters. To believe that we enjoy being treated worse than animals is ignorance at its highest. I have seen my people beaten and verbally abused all because they dream of being free, free from the oppression of slavery. So how can one as yourself have the audacity to speak on my people's hardship?

Tell me, white man, have you ever been pried out of your mother's loving arms to be sold to a master that thinks nothing of you, to a master that beats

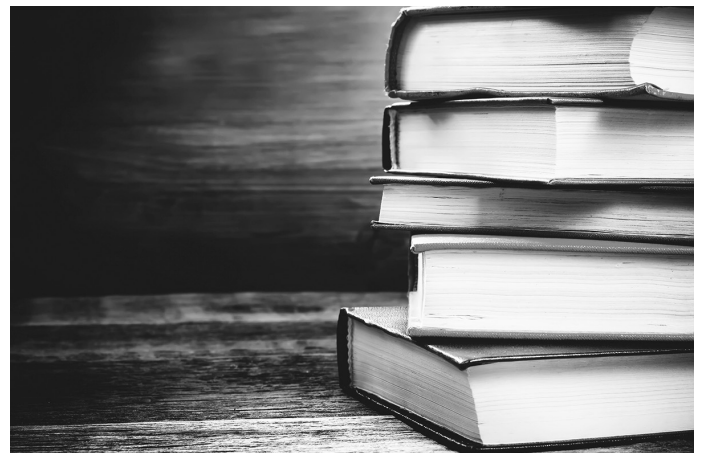
and humiliates you every single chance he gets, to a master who rapes and degrades women right in front of you, to a master that makes you and your people work day and night in the fields no matter the conditions outside? How can one not dream of being free of this oppression? We cannot even have the right to read or write because it is believed these things will empower us. As long as we are not aware of knowledge, we will forever be enslaved physically and mentally. So I say to you, white man, speak not of what you do not know because until you have gone through the hardships of being a slave, you know of not of what we feel nor think!

(Timothy Mosley)

It is easy to say that, "The Negro, left to himself, does not dream of liberty." Slavery is not only a type of physical control but also a type of mental control. I am someone who has escaped mental and physical slavery and embraced education and articulation. I am both the demeaned self who experienced slavery and the liberated, educated self who can interpret the institution of slavery.

I have experienced the inhumanity of slavery. I have witnessed white men killing black men and suffering no legal consequences. One of my master's pronouncements—that "education ruins slaves"—enlightened me. I suddenly understood that owners gain and keep power over slaves by depriving them of education. I realized I must become educated to become free. With education comes enlightenment – specifically, enlightenment about the oppressive and wrongful nature of slavery.

God has not destined me to slavery, I know this. There were times I questioned God's existence. But it is also thanks to Him that I knew I will not be a slave forever. **(Loché Mothoa)**





Slavery is wrong because it obliterates a man's sovereignty. Editor, if all men are created equal, according to the Declaration of Independence, then no man is better or seen in a better light in God's eyes. We all have two eyes, one nose, two legs, five toes, and five fingers.

God never designed any group of people to be slaves. In Galatians 3:28, it says, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," meaning that no matter what you are, we're all one in the eyes of Jesus.

As a free person, I have done great things. I have moved with free will from one city to another. I am free to get an education and read whatever material I want. I am free to go to speaking events. I am praying for you. **(Moriah Parker)**

Why do white men have to be the only ones to grasp knowledge? Does it scare you that because of me your slaves might become smart and someday free? Most of my life I spent as a slave. I suffered starvation and abuse. I watched my fellow brothers and sisters get whipped and killed. I slept on a cold ground with one blanket that had to be shared. I ate with my fellow brothers and sisters like rats sharing scraps of food!

You have never struggled, been whipped, had people killed in front of you, been starved, suffered from the cold, or been separated from your family! I taught myself the education I thought I needed to know, while you sat and had a teacher! You cannot tell me what liberty is. God did not destine me to slavery; the white men did! **(Natia Saffold)**

It is insulting to say we do not dream of freedom, for that is all I dreamt of. At a young age I knew that reading and writing was the way out of captivity and actively sought out education until I obtained it. I used all the resources I had to get an education; I ran errands which gave me access to white children who in their innocence taught me how to read; I even had my master's wife help me, though cut short by my cruelest and most hateful master. I wanted to be free so terribly and badly that I risked my own life and wellbeing to get it.

Christian faith played a devastating role in slavery. The religious literature was twisted and helped our merciless, cruel, and obdurate masters defend their vicious actions. When using God to justify the evil actions of your people, you must recognize there are two types of Christianity. One is the true and real version, which has nothing to do with the murders and the brutal, bloody beatings, while the other kind is merely your justification of slavery.

I think this piece is biased and blasphemous, a poor and distasteful attempt to justify the inhumane treatment of your fellow human beings. To even insinuate that slavery was enjoyable amongst the rapes, lashes, murders and separation of families is sadistic to say the least. I hope you sleep well at night trying to ease the guilt of your fellow captors. **(Nina Salisbury)**

In all my experiences as a member of the enslaved population of the South, not a day went by that I did not dream of freedom. The fact that animals had a better life than I did "roused my soul to eternal wakefulness." For me, freedom "was heard in every sound, and seen in everything." Indeed, not only did I dream of freedom, I eternally hungered for it.

I learned that the path of freedom was not an exclusive avenue for whites, but that through reading, freedom was possible for me as well. I was full of enraged joy! I was so close to freedom and yet so far. Speaking for the enslaved, you erroneously insist that slavery is an 'enjoyment' for those who must live and experience such as way of life. No! To be enslaved is the antithesis of joy.

We were told when to wake, when to sleep, when to eat; we had no agency over our daily lives. And if we refused to follow orders, we were whipped or shot in the face. Our lives were worth less than the cost of the paper and pen I currently write this letter to you on. **(Marcello Segovia)**

First and foremost, I am sorry that you are so small-minded and cannot grasp the fact that we all should be equal. Many of us dream of liberty, life, and the pursuit of happiness. We are looked down upon because of the color of our skin when our mentality and energy is so rich. I, unlike many, took it upon myself to educate myself by any means necessary so I can one day fight back against the white men. I have proved time and time again my want for better in many ways, from learning to read to bribing the white children with bread in exchange for knowledge. My knowledge and education led to my ultimate escape from slavery.

It is my hope that standing as a witness to the atrocities laid upon the slaves, I am here today to say that history will judge the owners both in practice and in ideological vengeance. My hope is that through my humanity imbedded in my narrative, people will one day be able to identify with my story. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**

I was a slave, and I know firsthand how horrible it is to wake up in the morning before the sun rises, how hard is it to work so many hours with no food, how difficult is to work in the field no matter the weather, with barely any clothing, and not enough food, being whipped for no reason at all.

You said that we enjoy being slaves and that God gave us this destiny. This is not true, and you cover up all your evil acts under a white God's name. I have had several masters, and the ones that were more "religious" were the meanest ones. Captain Auld, after attending the Methodist camp-meeting, converted to religion, but instead of becoming a better master he became worse because he used God to justify his cruelty.

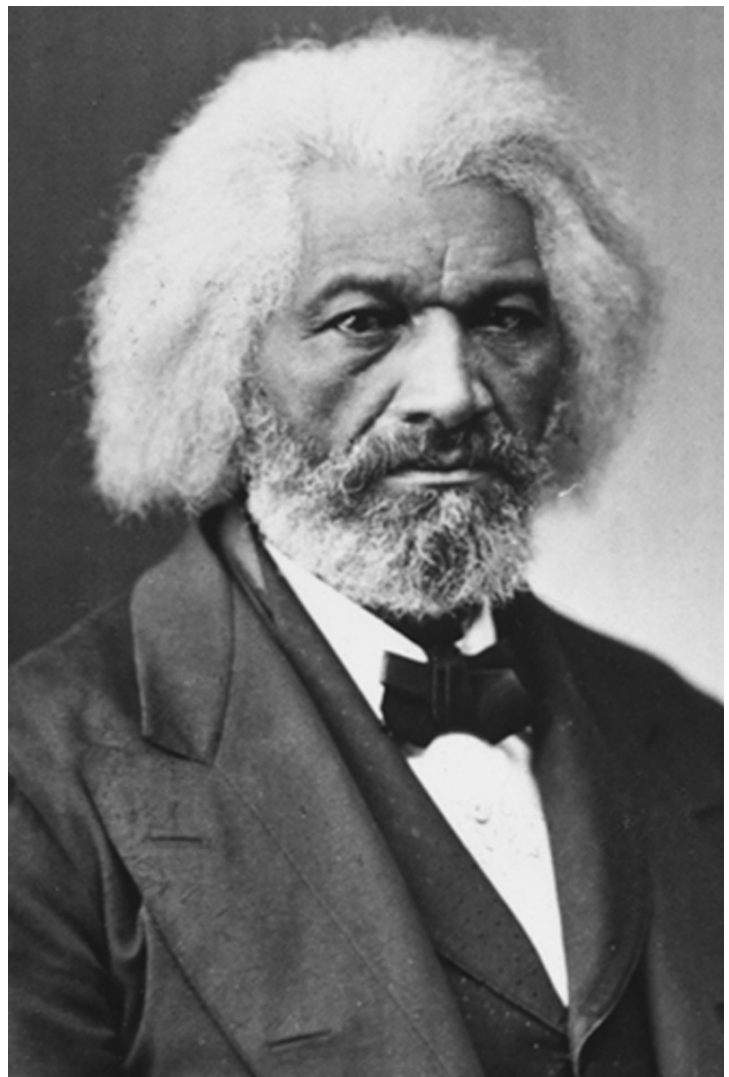
My "benevolent" master Thomas used the Bible to justify whipping a young woman who was unable to work. He whipped her two times a day, as if he wanted her to disappear because she was an expense for him. He was one of many "pious" slaveholders. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

Why is it that you think a Negro slave does not dream of liberty? Does every man not dream of liberty, to be free? Every white man and child everywhere has every right to liberty, so why not the Negro man and child?

It is cruel to not give a man choice, to choose what his life should be. Slavery is not a choice: it is something forced on the less fortunate for the benefits of those more fortunate to create wealth and power without a cost to them. Is that not cruel?

No man is able to enjoy life, sunshine, nature, and family or to be happy knowing that they have no freedom, no rights, and no liberty. **(O'Shane Wilmoth)**

*Sincerely yours,
Frederick Douglass*



WOMEN WITH THE COURAGE TO WRITE

MAYA ANGELOU, "Still I Rise"

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise. . . .*



I believe "Still I Rise" was written to illustrate to people that Maya Angelou overcomes all oppression thrown her way. Maya is a black woman who dealt with racism for being black and discrimination because she's a female. In addition, I think this poem is also speaking in general about overcoming life's trials and tribulations. Every day, people have struggles that they deal with, but on a socioeconomic standpoint, black women have a lot more struggles than most. People are intimidated by strong personalities, especially courageous ones. For Maya to be such an excellent and respected writer, it took a lot of courage. People hate what they can't imitate.

I can relate to this poem in more ways than one because I am a strong, biracial woman. I always speak my mind, and not a lot of people like that. In addition, I am resistant to life like the way Maya portrays herself. I know I intimidate people by the way I carry myself, and I know that what others think of me is not my business because my character defines me. **(Aerial Bailey)**

I chose to write about Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" poem. This poem stuck out to me the most because although other writers like Emily Dickinson are incredibly creative and Alice Walker is incredibly punchy, Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise" is an empowerment powerhouse. Coming fresh off of reading Frederick Douglass's narrative, I realized that we only got half of the story, but through Maya Angelou I feel like I was able to dive back in time and get a glimpse of what a female abolitionist might have thought when going up against the great oppression that still lingers in the air to this day. Her confidence overflows in this poem with lines like, "Does my sexiness upset you? / Does it come as a surprise / That I dance like I've got diamonds at the meeting of my thighs." And

she writes one of the coldest things I've ever heard when she describes herself as a "black ocean."

This whole poem is about rising up through everything you are going toe-to-toe with and winning. I love how she even invites people to try and tarnish her reputation in the first line; it's almost as if she is taking the power away from the people who were going to do that by forcibly taking the ball into her court. While reading this poem and Frederick Douglass back-to-back,

I really appreciate what our people have already achieved. It gives me hope as to what we can do since they have already laid the groundwork with brilliant writing and brilliance in general. Women are just as smart as the fellas, and both deserve respect for what they've done and what they can do! **(Corey Dean)**

I chose the poem "Still I Rise" because I can relate to her words. I can relate because no matter what happens in life, God allows me to overcome and be great. I respond to her saying "I rise" after phrases like, "I am the dream and the hope of the slave," and it makes me feel powerful. Also, it reminds me of racism in a way, like what she's saying about how it may offend others that we smile as if we're rich. We walk with confidence because we are just as important as any other human. My favorite part is, "Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave." This means they paved the way for us to be free and feel important and treated as equals.

(Jyneeva Hunt)

I chose to write about the poem "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou. In my opinion, the poem is about someone who dislikes her either because of her race or because she's a woman. She may also be talking about someone who personally just doesn't like her. It appears that she is telling the listener that no matter how much someone bashes you, you should always love yourself and never point out your flaws; only pay attention to the positive things about yourself. No matter what anyone says, always push forward and prosper. **(Jaison Thomas)**

I love “Still I Rise” by the late and great Maya Angelou because it shows me that you can overcome any obstacle even if you doubt it. “Up from a past that’s rooted in pain I rise.” We have all experienced pain in our past, and things may have scarred those like me for life. I’ve been sexually molested as a child, and until this very day, I still remember it as if it happened a couple of hours ago. I was angry for a very long time and, to be honest, I hardly remember why I was angry—maybe at my uncle for doing it to me several times, and maybe I was angry at myself for not fighting back harder. Once that anger faded, I spent my time volunteering at orphanages and years later became a child sponsor. I think that is why I love working with children. I turned my anger and my past into something positive, but still, like air, I’ll rise. **(Loché Mothoa)**

I have been profoundly inspired and motivated to unite and create genuine expressions from my heart from the lines I’ve read in “Still I Rise.” I get deeply encouraged and filled with hope about all opportunities and possibilities life offers. I feel her poem is an ode to women of all ages and sizes to be resilient, not allowing anyone or anything to keep them down. “Still I Rise” has been applied to my life in more ways than one. From reading her book, I know in *Why the Caged Bird Sings* and “Still I Rise” that Maya Angelou paints vivid, real, and detailed depictions of the poverty, hardship, and triumph her life colorfully created.

(Jerome Sanders)

I really enjoy Maya Angelou and the message this poem has. To me, she’s talking about the fight against racism and injustices towards black people. I also think she’s talking about the struggle women have gone and continue to go through. The thing I enjoy most about this poem is that when you read it, it really gives you strength and courage. When you read it aloud, it really feels like an anthem or even a fight song. You can feel the emotions swell up in you. **(Riley Sessions)**

I got a lot out of this poem. I believe that she is speaking as if people look at her as if she is not good enough, but she always rises and believes the best of herself. I can apply this to my life right now a lot because I have been looked down upon by my peers since my boyfriend has been in jail. My faith in myself has also gone down, but still I rise, and I don’t let anything break me. **(Shiloh Simonsen)**



ALICE WALKER, *The Color Purple*

“If you wait to find God in a church, that’s who’s bound to show up, ‘cause that’s the one in the white people’s bible. . . . Here’s the thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else.”

When reading “*The Color Purple*,” I really liked that there were two different points of view, Celie’s and Shug’s. Both were completely different: Shug said God is inside of us and how God loves everything you do; Celie doesn’t feel like God ever has done anything good for her. In real life, I have felt both opinions. I used to question God myself. Growing older and wiser, I now have a better knowledge and understanding. I believe whatever it is that you believe or whoever, if that is God or a higher power, you should still breathe in all the beautiful things life has to offer. Don’t let the small things go unnoticed. **(Tina Marie Martinez)**

I think that “*The Color Purple*” is not the book for some people if they object to blunt language about sexuality and strong language in general. I think that each woman in *The Color Purple* has her own unique story, but they are all linked by the different forms of abuse, prejudice, or oppression that they have suffered.

Rape and child abuse are not easy things to read about, but Walker makes you confront these realities head on. One of my favorite parts of the book was when Shug Avery talks to Celie about her views on God and how she doesn’t view Him as the stereotypical single entity of a white man with a long beard, but He surrounds us all. **(Moriah Parker)**

Shug has different views of God than Celie does. Shug feels the white God in the bible was forced upon people, but she doesn't believe that. Shug was basically saying Celie believes in what she was taught, but Shug believes God is everything and God is within you. Celie feels the white God does and did nothing for her, but Shug explains God differently. God loves everything you love and the joy you feel is God, is what Celie was explaining.

(Natia Saffold)

From this writing, I think it's about how these African Americans are tired from so much suffering. Some of them even believe God doesn't exist. Also, one of them thinks God is white like mankind; the other one thinks God is inside of everybody. So it depends on each person and how they live and see the world.

This writing can apply to my life because I was raised by a Catholic family so I had to attend church every Sunday. As time passed, I realized that people can see religion differently depending on how they live their lives. **(Carmen Tinajero)**

ALICE WALKER, "Women"

My mamma's generation . . .

How they led

Armies

Headragged Generals

Across mined

Fields. . . .

How they knew what we

Must know

Without knowing a page

Of it

Themselves.

The way I interpreted this poem was that I see this woman describing the women who escaped slavery. These women were willing to risk their lives for their children. They believed that their children needed to have the ability to learn to read and write even though the women never learned themselves. This, I believe, represents the courage a mother has for her child. This courage allows this woman to withstand all the treacherous fields in hopes of a better future for her children. (Krista Mellott)



EMILY DICKINSON, "#970"

Color—Caste—Denomination—

These—are Time's Affair—

Death's diviner Classifying

Does not know they are— . . .

This poem was hard to understand at first, but when I got it, it was deep. She's saying that no matter who you are, we are all equal, and no one is above or beneath anyone. Once we die, everyone will be treated the same, so why not follow that while we're alive?

This poem really hit home for me, because I don't believe I'm better than anyone, and I dislike people that believe they are. No race, color, religion, etc. should give anyone the right or audacity to believe that they're better than the next person. This world would be such a better place if everyone felt the way that she and I feel. (Timothy Mosley)



SHARON OLDS, "35/10"

*Brushing out my daughter's dark
Silken hair before the mirror
I see the grey gleaming on my head,
The silver-haired servant behind her. . . .*

This poem to me is about a mother or older person coming to realize how the world works, or about the circle of life. Sharon Olds is sitting with her daughter in front of a mirror. Sharon looks in the mirror and realizes she is getting older. She thinks about everything she herself has gone through in life. Soon it will be her daughter's turn. Sharon's daughter is a kid now, then a teen, later an adult, and then finally her daughter will be getting married and having a family of her own. Then, soon, it will be her daughter's turn to be replaced by her son or daughter.

The crazy thing about me relative to this is I have no daughters. I have three sons. When I look at my sons and watch them grow into young men, I can't help but to think the way Sharon Olds does, except without the jealousy. One day, I had always thought my parents knew everything. Now I'm in my parents' shoes. I now know my parents really didn't know much. They were just kids, working with what they had or knew, and now I am their seed. One day, I will be gone and my seeds, my young men, will still live on. Then one day, it will be time for them to leave this world and their seeds will live on, and so on. That is the circle of life.

I like this poem. It makes me realize I have to teach my kids about life and how to respect it. Most of all, this poem teaches me (us) that Sharon Olds has a very dark mind or way of thinking. Last but not least, we as parents should not be jealous of our children. We should always help and push our children to be better, to gain more knowledge and pass it on. **(Margie Barajas)**

I think this poem is about a mother wanting more time to see her daughter grow into a young woman and wanting more time (life) for herself. She is seeing her daughter turning into a woman while she is fading (getting older). Then she realizes at the end of the poem that it's been that way from the start of time: the young replaces the old.

I can relate this poem to my own life watching my sons grow up and me getting older and grayer. Soon enough they will be the Wilmoths of tomorrow. **(O'Shane Omar Wilmoth)**

EMMA LAZARUS, "The New Colossus"

*. . . "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

The poem gives the statue herself a voice. She speaks directly to the nations, telling them she wants no part of their showy displays of power. Though she is a silent statue, the poem suggests that her symbolic message is clear. She goes on to command the ancient European nations to send its impoverished citizens, the thousands who long for freedom. These people have been forgotten and rejected in their overly-populated countries with limited resources. She beckons these immigrants like myself toward her with her torch, which metaphorically illuminates the entryway to America and all the opportunities it offers.

(Elíazar Martínez-Munguía)



ILLEANA'S QUINCEAÑERA

BY SAVANNAH TORRES



A quinceañera is about becoming a young woman and leaving your childhood behind. When I was younger, I never thought about having a quinceañera. We had a rough childhood, and money was always tight. I don't think it was even an option.

When my daughter asked me about one, I knew that I couldn't afford it. There was no way. But because of the traditional meaning of one in Mexican culture, I felt she really deserved one. With the help of her aunt who had helped take care of her, we were going to make things happen. She deserved it. I wanted her to forget the bad things in her childhood, overcome them, and be a young lady on a mission for success. I wanted her not to dwell on the past but focus on her future, have a better life and direction, something I never had.



It all seemed so easy to make this happen. But it wasn't—far from it. From the planning to the funds, it was stressful, almost impossible, and it seemed nothing was working out, with no communication between the ones planning it to not being prepared. I was terrified of the outcome. But the look on my daughter's face and seeing her in the dress looking so beautiful and so happy made it worth it. She deserved it. I hope that she uses the experience of her quinceañera in a way that helps her go forward.



A NIGHT AT THE OPERA



I want you to know that I had an amazing time at the opera last Friday. It made my first experience one to remember. When my friend and I first got there, the staff were super friendly and we were able to find our tickets and seats promptly. And speaking of seats... OHMYGOSH! I expected to be in the balcony or somewhere far off where it would be hard to see, but the seats we got were right in the lower level in the orchestra section! We were able to read everything on the screen and see the characters up close! I was sooo excited! I could see everything! I was/am so grateful.

The play itself was great. I read what happened in the booklet before the Acts started, so I could know what was going on and not have to read so much during the acting. I hated that it was a tragedy, but some parts were extremely funny, and others made me want to punch some characters. Lol. I just enjoyed it overall, and the story line was very good.

Please tell the donors that I had an amazing time and for it to be my first experience, it exceeded my expectations. I would never be able to afford to go if it weren't for them, let alone get the seats we did. I appreciate the donation and am honored to have been the person to receive them. Please see pictures below.

Thanks for everything!

—Tai’Kiah Phillips ‘12

Yes, the opera was so nice. Even though the songs were in French, it was really neat. They had subtitles in English, which helped a lot. However, just off body language and the different tones of voice while singing gave me a clear picture of what was going on. It was a very romantic play but at the same time the opera. I brought my boyfriend along and he enjoyed it just as much as I did. I loved the sparkly costumes and jewelry on the cast! The orchestra was phenomenal! I really enjoyed all of the pieces. The orchestra and opera singers intertwined were like a letter from heaven! So Divine.

—Jyneeva Hunt ‘20





First I want to give a big thanks to the people that donated the tickets so I was able to see this wonderful show. In addition to my husband (Victor Rojas '18), I took my 17-year-old son and he loved it. This was his first time, and he said it was mind-blowing.

I loved the story. It made me reflect on my own life as an immigrant and the lives of many of us in the same circumstances I am in.

We made sacrifices in the name of love. We emigrated, leaving our loved ones behind. The love for our families, culture, and country is deep in us, but we must sacrifice in order for our families to have food in their mouths. We spend most of our time working so our children can have everything they need, but many times they just need our presence.

It also makes me think about money. Even though money is important to live, it doesn't buy love, health, or happiness. Some people get too attached to their money that they forget about the real meaning of life until it's too late. I also think of the prejudices that we have as a society and how harsh we can be with people who have a different economic status. The walls we build around us to keep us apart from people who are different than us show the lack of humility in the society.



Seeing Miss Cecilia Violetta Lopez in her role as the main character and knowing her background as a poor immigrant when she was a child makes me feel that it's possible to break any barriers that get in my way to success. She is a real role model for many immigrants like me. She is an extraordinary opera singer and actress. I am so glad she fought to make her dream come true. She gives me the strength to keep moving forward with mine.

Thank you so much for helping us to experience this wonderful performance because without your generosity, we wouldn't be able to do it.

—Marisol Gonzalez '17



Last night's opera was so good. La Traviata is known for being fancy, and it certainly did not disappoint. Not only were the sets interesting and changed frequently, the wardrobes were gorgeous, particularly Violetta's dresses. I loved her voice and the presence she had onstage. It was extra special to understand the singer in the role of Violetta was a child of immigrant farmers in Idaho... and now she is an opera singer.



A longtime friend of mine came along with me. It was her first opera and thanks to generous donors to The Odyssey Project, it was my second. We were seated center stage on the balcony, essentially, the best seats. We could see the composer and musicians in the orchestra and have a fantastic view of the Opera singers. The final scene was so moving, it nearly brought me to tears. It was a truly stunning performance and a wonderful experience to be able to enjoy it with my good friend.

Gratefully,

—Jamie Lovely '14



A Night at the Opera

My friend Denise and I attended the opera La Traviata. The opening scene began with much revelry and drinking. Violetta, one of the main characters, has thrown a party. (Fittingly, we attended the opera on a Friday night downtown!) Later that night Alfredo declares his love for Violetta and a relationship ensues. There's a subsequent plot twist involving Alfredo's family. I especially enjoyed the different set designs and the costumes. They helped to transport you into the scene and were very important in drawing you



into the moment. I found myself transported to a different place and time!

The characters were so flamboyant and lively that you felt just as jovial and fun-spirited. The story line was a rollercoaster ride of emotions. Overall, I was pleased with the entire show. This was a great experience for me to be able to be part of. I was able to connect with other Odyssey Program alumni and take in some culture at the Overture as well. On another note, some closer and better parking choices please? I really appreciate the generous gesture that these tickets were. I am thankful for the opportunity to enrich my mind and I am grateful for the ticket. Thanks for another great experience, Odyssey!

—Eunice Conley '13

Eunice and I enjoyed the show. Thanks sooo much!

—Denise Hardnett '05



REMEMBERING JUANITA WILSON '07

Emily Auerbach's remarks at Juanita's memorial service, November 3, 2019

In my almost 40 years at UW as an English professor, including the last 17 years with the Odyssey Project, I've worked with thousands of students, but out of all those students there's one that stands out to me as the embodiment of grace and lifelong learning: Juanita Wilson. As fellow Odyssey teacher Jean Feraca wrote, "Dear Juanita will always be remembered by those of us privileged to watch her come to a new life in Odyssey. She never lost that spark and bore all her infirmities with inspirational dignity and kindness." I remember when I visited Juanita in the hospital, she'd spend more time asking how I was than talking about herself—always caring about others.

Juanita adored her family. Her face would light up when she talked about her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and she called them her jewels. She also loved her church community at Fountain of Life. She inspired all 30 of her Odyssey classmates in the Class of 2007 by her



perseverance and determination to learn. They watched as she came to class in a walker when battling gout in order to discuss Plato, Shakespeare, Martin Luther King, Emily Dickinson, and so many others. All of us felt her excitement about learning. She was so thrilled to travel to campus to get her UW photo ID card and visit the art museum. She recorded an editorial on healthier school lunches (opening sentence was "What are you feeding my grandson?") for broadcast on WORT radio. She got to meet one of Martin Luther King's daughters, and Henry Louis Gates kissed her hand. Juanita was Odyssey royalty.



I want to share a few things Juanita wrote while in Odyssey. After reading Martin Luther King's I have a dream speech, Juanita wrote her own dream: "I have a dream that black people will not be in the majority in jails, that security guards and policemen will stop following black people just because they are black, that when black people sit down next to a person of another color, that person will not get up and move away, and that all children can learn on an equal level and not have the best educational tools be only for the rich."



Juanita also chose when asked to compose a paper on a woman of courage to write about her daughter Stephanie and her courage in becoming a teacher.



I'll conclude by sharing what Juanita read when she came to the podium to speak at her graduation in May 2007 at age 71, our oldest graduate:

"I love Odyssey because before Odyssey I always felt like an outsider when I was among a group of people. I now feel that I can contribute to the conversation and feel that I am no longer a slow learner. I am going to be a lifelong learner. I feel that I am loved by my teachers and classmates. I feel blessed."

Then she said, "I will close by reading a poem by Langston Hughes that demonstrates me. It's called 'Still Here':

I've been scared and battered.
My hopes the wind done scattered.
Snow has frizz 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!"

And Juanita IS still here, in our hearts, in our minds, in our memories, forever inspiring us and soothing us with her love and grace.